



City Research Online

City, University of London Institutional Repository

Citation: Stroman, S. D. (2022). Capturing the Inherent Creative Process in Making a Jazz-infused Opera. (Unpublished Doctoral thesis, Guildhall School of Music and Drama)

This is the accepted version of the paper.

This version of the publication may differ from the final published version.

Permanent repository link: <https://openaccess.city.ac.uk/id/eprint/34057/>

Link to published version:

Copyright: City Research Online aims to make research outputs of City, University of London available to a wider audience. Copyright and Moral Rights remain with the author(s) and/or copyright holders. URLs from City Research Online may be freely distributed and linked to.

Reuse: Copies of full items can be used for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge. Provided that the authors, title and full bibliographic details are credited, a hyperlink and/or URL is given for the original metadata page and the content is not changed in any way.

THE WEEKEND

OVERTURE

The CHORUS arrive and prepare the set.

SCENE 1

CHORUS: Welcome to Number Five
Japanica Drive
Home to the
Middle brow
Middle class
Middle of the road
Stephen and Virginia Febble

The CHORUS moves to the wings. STEPHEN is sitting in a chair, reading the newspaper. GINNY enters from the garden with her phone tucked under her ear.

GINNY: Alright, darling – Bye!
Lovely...
Isn't that wonderful; they're coming down for the weekend after all.

STEPHEN: This weekend?

GINNY: Yes, today.

STEPHEN: Oh, dear God – no!

GINNY: And they're bringing Pippa and Charlotte.

STEPHEN: Do you think that it's too late
To emigrate?

CHORUS: Their daughter and their son -

STEPHEN: Son-in-law!

CHORUS: - are coming for the weekend
With *their* daughter and the dog -

STEPHEN: The dog?

CHORUS: Yes, the dog!

STEPHEN: Oh God, the dog!

CHORUS MEN: Stephen is not a happy man.

CHORUS Their daughter and their son -

STEPHEN: He's not my son!

CHORUS: - are coming for the weekend
With their daughter and the dog -

STEPHEN: That tie will never be the same
How do I explain the stain?

GINNY: Don't be silly, darling
There's nothing left to see.

STEPHEN: There is for me.
I know what's lurking underneath.

CHORUS: Their daughter and their son -

STEPHEN: Son-in-law!

CHORUS: Are coming for the weekend
With their daughter and the dog -

GINNY: Well, darling
If it's not good enough
Have a go with Dab it Off!

STEPHEN Dab it Off?
On my college tie?
Are you insane?

GINNY: Well, sort it out, or don't complain.

STEPHEN: I swear that mutt's got it in for me
She crapped on that tie deliberately.

GINNY: Yes, dear.
I'll just pop up
To check the rooms are clear. *(she spots the beer bottle)*
And must you start before they get here?

STEPHEN: What do you think?
Any man would need a drink.
I don't mind having Di around.
It's her fatuous spouse
And that flatulent hound.
And as for Charlotte,
Wedded to that ghastly phone
She might as well stay at home.

GINNY: Well, please be nice when they arrive

STEPHEN: What for?
 Why pander to that world-class bore?

GINNY: He's not that bad

STEPHEN: For me, the charms of
 Cargo-transportation
 Wore off long ago.
 I've learned more about logistics
 Than I'll ever need to know.
 And yet, I bet
 Today he'll have more
 Stultifying stats to share
 So excuse me if booze
 Is how I choose
 To prepare

GINNY: He's got a good heart
 And a steady job
 For a start
 I grant he's dull,
 And all the rest of it

 But he's family

 So make the best of it.

(He defiantly drains his bottle. GINNY walks out without him noticing)

STEPHEN: I mean the man's an absolute buffoon –

There is no reply. He looks round and sees the room is empty. He looks at the bottle consideringly. Then he rises from his chair and Ninja-like, tiptoes to the cabinet, eases the door open and reaches in for another.

STEPHEN: Lovely.

DUFF pokes his head through the French Windows. He is wearing lycra he is too old for. He is red in the face and sweating. (Clearly jogging is not his thing.)

He knocks. Stephen jumps, caught red-handed, and cracks his head on the cabinet door.

STEPHEN: Duff! Come in! Have a drink?

DUFF: Bit early for me.
 I've just been...for a run.

STEPHEN: So I see.

CHORUS: Behold Duff Gardener.

CHORUS BASS 1: Friend

CHORUS BASS 2: Neighbour

CHORUS BASS 3: Traitor

SEMI- CHORUS: Hush! That bit comes later.

DUFF: Must keep in shape at our age.

STEPHEN: Sure you won't?

DUFF: Quite.
I just popped in to say:
Is it all right
To bring one extra to your 'Do' tonight?

STEPHEN: By all means.
Who?

DUFF: Hugh.

STEPHEN: Who?

DUFF: Hugh.

STEPHEN: I said that. Are you deaf?

CHORUS and DUFF: No, HUGH!
Doctor Hugh Bedales.

DUFF: Bridget's podiatrist.

CHORUS and DUFF: He's come up for the weekend.

DUFF: Watching birds,

CHORUS: So he says.

STEPHEN: Nice chap?

DUFF: Friendly.

CHORUS and DUFF: First trip to Suffolk, apparently.

STEPHEN: Well, bring him 'round
If he can face two hours of social Purgatory.

DUFF: Right-ho. See you at six, then.
Gotta fly! *(DUFF jogs out into hall)*

CHORUS Now every piece is set upon the board.
So let the game begin.

Stephen returns to drinks cupboard and extracts a fresh beer. He is just about to pulled the cap off when GINNY comes back into the room, carrying a large vase of flowers which she brings over to the sideboard and plonks down.

GINNY: What are you doing, Stephen?

STEPHEN: Nothing, dear.
Just sorting out in here.

GINNY: Was that Duff I saw?

STEPHEN: Sure.
Came to ask if they could bring
an extra guest tonight;
some bloke called Bedales.

GINNY: Ah - the famous Hugh - poor Duff.

STEPHEN: Poor Duff?

GINNY: Poor Duff.

STEPHEN: Poor Duff?

GINNY: Oh, come on darling,
Use your eyes.
Bridget's lost weight,
Dyed her hair,
She's clearly having an affair.
The whole village knows.

CHORUS: Explains the lycra,
We suppose.

STEPHEN: Well, I'll be damned. Poor Duff!
I wonder what this Bedale's got -

GINNY: That's quite enough!
Of course our friends can bring their guest.
I'll phone them and say yes.

STEPHEN: I don't see why we have to do this,
Why you have to put me through this,

GINNY: It's our turn to host..

CHORUS: ...And it was cocktails or a bridge night!

STEPHEN: Right. You're quite sure there's no way out?

CHORUS 1: A doctor's note?

CHORUS 2: Attack of gout?

CHORUS 1: Six feet of snow?

CHORUS 2: A tidal wave?

CHORUS: A UFO?
Bubonic plague?

GINNY: Don't be silly, darling – it's only drinks with friends
Just smile and pour the wine and be polite
It won't kill you to behave tonight.

CHORUS: Don't be silly, Stephen
It's only drinks with friends

STEPHEN: All right! I'll do my bit...

CHORUS: Just smile and pour the wine
And be polite,...

STEPHEN: ...but don't blame me...

CHORUS: ...We wonder how you will behave tonight

STEPHEN: ...if they can see
how much I hate
forced jollity.

They are interrupted by a loud peal on the doorbell

GINNY: They're here!

GINNY rushes out into the hall. STEPHEN immediately picks up the bottle and opens it.

STEPHEN: Thank you, Stephen,
Don't mind if I do...

CHORUS: Whatever it takes to get you through.

STEPHEN: Bridget Gardner – seriously?

CHORUS: How desperate must this foot guy be?

STEPHEN: Oh well, you never know. It goes to show -

CHORUS: Still waters can hide fire below.

STEPHEN: Who'd guess that Bridget has been putting it about?

CHORUS: He'll be some dried-up, tweedy stick, no doubt.

STEPHEN: You don't suppose that Ginny'd ever –

CHORUS: Well, who knows?
Well, who knows?

Well, who knows?
(CHORUS role-play:)

CHORUS M: I am a handsome doctor

CHORUS F: And you're clever and you're nice

CHORUS M: Now strip down to your undies

CHORUS F: You don't have to ask me twice!

CHORUS M: Mrs Febble -

CHORUS F: Call me Ginny! -

CHORUS M: I must check you thoroughly!

CHORUS: Do what you like with me!

CHORUS M: Does this tickle?

CHORUS F: Oooh!

CHORUS M: Does this tingle?

CHORUS F: (higher) Ahhh!

CHORUS M: Does this dongle dingle
And your pulses race?

CHORUS F: (Handsome doctor, I leave it to you -

CHORUS: Doo, doo, doo, doo, doo, do!

STEPHEN: 'Does this tickle? Does this tingle?
Does this make your dongle dingle and your pulses race?'

You're a disgrace!
And what's a dongle?

SCENE 2

GINNY enters energetically, as Stephen looks about to find somewhere to hide his scotch glass and bottle. (He will put it somewhere inappropriate if possible – no time to go back in cupboard). She is followed by ALAN and DIANA, laden with bags and a large dog bowl. CHARLOTTE follows, with PIPPA the dog and a mobile phone.

GINNY: Come in, everyone!

CHORUS 1: Enter Alan and Diana.

CHORUS 2: And the charming Charlotte.

DIANA: Hello, Mummy.

ALAN: Mrs. F.

DIANA: Dad.

STEPHEN: Diana.

ALAN: Mr. F.

GINNY: And Charlotte, darling,
We're so glad you could come.

DIANA: Say hello, Charlotte.

CHARLOTTE: Gran. Grandad.

DIANA: Sorry, Mum -
It's just a phase.

STEPHEN: Don't you believe it.
All kids are zombified these days.
Plugged in, tuned out,
Can't hold a conversation,
No wonder we're declining
As a nation.

GINNY: You've made good time, haven't you, Alan?

STEPHEN: No, no, please, no, don't get him started!

GINNY: Did you have an easy run?

STEPHEN: *(to Charlotte, with dog)* Not in the house!

DIANA: I'll just fill Pippa's water bowl
and let her out so she can go.

ALAN: We made good time;
it was a blinder.
Will you let me tell you
all about it?

STEPHEN:
STEPHEN/DIANA:
No, I
don't want
to hear about it!

GINNY: I would like to
hear all about it;
tell me all
about it!

CHORUS: Here we go, here we go!
Here we go, here we go!
Here we go, here we go!

ALAN: B 607

CHORUS: B 607

ALAN: A 633

CHORUS: A 633

ALAN: Then motorway

CHORUS: Then motorway

ALAN: Down to Worksop

CHORUS: Down to Worksop

STEPHEN: Make it stop!

ALAN: Dual to the A65

CHORUS: Easy drive?

ALAN: Like a bird!

CHORUS: So we've heard.

ALAN: Down to the B1040
A45
B1120

CHORUS: He really know how
to go with the traffic flow.

And here we are,
three hours twenty-seven
in the Micra!

STEPHEN: Hurrah! Hurrah!

CHORUS: The Nissan Micra, what a car!

GINNY: Well done, you!
We'll try that route next time.

ALAN: I knocked off half an hour!

STEPHEN: That's half an hour of my life I'll never see again.

The music changes. ALL begin preparations for the party.

CHORUS: 3pm.
Oodles of time to
Hoover the house,
Polish the wineglasses,
Chill the beer
Pop the corks
Warm the snacks
Put on the party clothes
Feed the cat
Walk the dog

DIANA: Charlotte!

CHARLOTTE: Coming...

CHORUS: It's gonna be fine.

CHARLOTTE: Poor Pip won't understand
Why Grandad's banned her from the house.

DIANA: Well, darling, since her little accident --

STEPHEN: It was Vesuvian!
How something that small could produce --

CHARLOTTE: It's not her fault
you frighten her.

DIANA: Mum, do you have a minute?

GINNY: Not now, darling.

CHORUS: 4pm.
Plenty of time to:
Chill the house
Warm the wineglasses
Walk the beer
Feed the corks
Put on the snacks
Pop the party clothes
Polish the cat
Hoover the dog

DIANA: Charlotte!

CHARLOTTE Yeah, yeah...

CHORUS: It's gonna be fine!

ALAN: Actually, you'd be surprised to hear
 how much a small container --

STEPHEN: Beer?

ALAN: Cheers!

DIANA: Mum, I really need a word.

GINNY: Can it wait? We're running late.

CHORUS: 5pm.
 Not enough time to
 Walk the house,
 Pop the wineglasses,
 Warm the beer
 Polish the corks
 Feed the snacks
 Hoover the party clothes
 Put on the cat
 Chill the dog

DIANA: CHARLOTTE!

CHARLOTTE (spoken) Okay, *okay!*

CHORUS: It's gonna be fine!

Final frenetic mime sequence; everyone running about, changing clothes, etc. DIANA finally get GINNY's attention and confides in her.

GINNY: So kind of you to help us out tonight.
 We'll have a proper family day
 tomorrow.

DIANA, ALAN and CHARLOTTE leave to finish changing. STEPHEN can't decide whether to wear his college blazer and tie--he is preoccupied with this during the following exchanges.

CHORUS: Half past five
 The guests will soon arrive.

GINNY: Stephen...

CHORUS: Spirits, beer and wine
 Festoon the bar

STEPHEN: What?

CHORUS: The dog's been walked and fed
 and shut up in the car

GINNY: Did you know Di and Alan may be separating?

STEPHEN: What?

CHORUS: The house is clean and neat
 Preparations are complete
 It's almost time to get the party started

ALAN enters.

GINNY: Don't say anything. *(GINNY exits)*

ALAN: Hey there, Mr. F. All set?

STEPHEN: You bet.
 How 'bout a sharpener,
 before the hoards arrive?

ALAN: G and T for me, please.

STEPHEN: Coming up.

ALAN: Cheers!

He wanders to the window.

ALAN: Lovely view.
 Shame you'll lose it
 when the road comes through.

STEPHEN: I'm sorry? What?

ALAN: The extension to the 460.
 Did you hear the interview
 on Radio 2 the other day?

STEPHEN: *(blankly)* Eh?

ALAN: Listed places that will be affected.
 You'd think this place would be protected.
 But you can't stop progress, I guess.

STEPHEN: Extension to where?

ALAN: Thorpeness.
 To serve the new container site.

The front door bangs open and DIANA puts her head round the corner. She is wearing a cocktail dress, and carrying a trowel.

DIANA: Alan!

STEPHEN: Oh, right.
No, that's been on the cards for years
We always see them off.

DIANA: Bucket! Cloth!

STEPHEN: My old mate Duff
Is on the council,

DIANA And the Fabreeze!

STEPHEN: Knows his stuff.

ALAN: Oh, Jeez...

STEPHEN: If anything were up
We would have heard
But he hasn't said a word

Alan dashes out

No one would dare to tear the heart
from this green and pleasant part of England.

CHORUS: A road through Canfield, the 4-6-0,

STEPHEN *(to CHORUS)*: It's quite ridiculous!

CHORUS: The council rejected it months ago.

STEPHEN: I know! I know!

CHORUS: If there were another bid you'd hear?

STEPHEN: That's right. Shall I ask him tonight?

CHORUS: Don't look at us.
We can't give anything away.
Wait and see what
Duff has got to say.

SCENE 3

Party guests (the CHORUS) appear from everywhere. CHARLOTTE and 2 teenage girls are serving hors d'oeuvres.

CHORUS: It's a pleasant event at the Febbles'
A 'Do' the whole village attends
To drink cocktails and nobble the nibbles,
Swap gossip and catch up with friends;
To talk about issues that matter,
To air our concerns and our views,
To indulge in some lighthearted chatter
And pass round the local news.

So have you heard the rumour?
Does anybody know
Who's grown the fattest marrow
For the agricultural show?
How to pickle walnuts
So they don't rot in the jar?
Where to send donations
For the August church bazaar?

CHARLOTTE: Mini-gherkin?

WAITRESS 1: Olive?

BOTH: Nuts?

CHORUS: Where to leave out jumble
For the boy scouts to collect?
And is the latest schedule
For the buses quite correct?
How much are the tickets
For the annual Messiah?
And when are they auditioning
New tenors for the choir?

SOLO TENOR 1: Oh Lord,

SOLO TENOR 2: Oh, Lord,

STEPHEN: Comfort me!

GINNY: Stephen, take the wine round, please.

STEPHEN: Certainly.

CHORUS: Have you heard the rumour?
Does anybody know
Who volunteered to give
the local tennis courts a mow?

STEPHEN: What intellectual giants have we here?

CHORUS: Does anyone have kittens
Or a guinea pig for sale? STEPHEN: Inane -
And how you be sure
That your meringues will never fail? STEPHEN: Facile -
Did you read a famous actor
will be opening the Fete? STEPHEN: Insane -
Is Zumba or Pilates
The best way to lose some weight?

The doorbell rings. STEPHEN ignores it

GINNY: Stephen, darling.

STEPHEN: *(ignoring her)* Red or White?

GINNY: Don't worry, I'll get it.

CHORUS: Did you know that Bridget
is a natural brunette? STEPHEN: Really?
Should we go to Italy
or is France a better bet? STEPHEN: Italy!
CHORUS M: Who's in charge of transport
For the garden centre trips STEPHEN: Search me.
CHORUS F: And do you find your knickers
Tend to sag around the hips? STEPHEN: No!

CHARLOTTE: Crisps?

2 WAITRESSES: Twiglets?

ALL 3: Beetroot cubes?

Enter DUFF, BRIDGET and DR. HUGH. To STEPHEN'S dismay, HUGH is a stallion. He is also wearing a Varsity tie – same university but a different college to STEPHEN'S.

GINNY: Bridget! Duff! Come through.
And you must be Hugh?

BEDALES: How do you do?

GINNY: *(flustered)* This is my husband.....

STEPHEN: Good evening.

GINNY: Stephen.

BEDALES: Aha – a Trinity man, I see.
It was Clare for me.
When were you up?

STEPHEN: Eighty to eighty-three.

BEDALES: So you must have known Bunty Longstaff?

STEPHEN: No.

BEDALES: Robinson?

STEPHEN: No.

BEDALES: Moncreiff?

STEPHEN: Uh-uh.

BEDALES: A Shame – Moncrieff is quite the lad.
Just sold him the last Porche I had.
Bought a yacht. Thought why not?
It's good to ring the changes, don't you think?

STEPHEN: *(wobbly)* Drink?

CHORUS: Have you heard the rumour?
Does anybody know
Who took the winning photo
Of the duckpond in the snow?

CHORUS F: When to put my seedlings out
Or to prune that apple tree?
And what do people really think
About the new GP?

CHORUS M: Have you seen the new estate
That they're planning for the town?
And if indeed they build it
Will our house prices come down?

DIANA: Hi. I'm Di.

BEDALES: Hugh. My word, don't you have lovely eyes.

CHAR/WAITRESSES: Shrimp surprise?

CHORUS: It's a pleasant event at the Febble's...

STEPHEN *(To himself)*: "A Trinity man, I see."
Bastard,
Laughing at me.

CHORUS: ..A 'Do' ..

STEPHEN: "Bought a yacht"

CHORUS: ...the whole village...

STEPHEN: What a clot.

CHORUS: ...attends.

STEPHEN: Acting like a bloody king
But women love
That kind of thing,
It's clear enough -
And now for Duff.

CHORUS: Behold, Duff Gardner

SOLO BASS 1: Friend

SOLO BASS 2: Neighbour

SOLO BASS 3: Traitor

SEMI-CHORUS: We told you that bit came later.

STEPHEN: Top-up?

DUFF: Well, I haven't...

CHORUS: On the local Council,
aiming for the Chair.

STEPHEN: So...
Is there anything you
Want to tell me - mate?

DUFF: What about?

CHORUS: The next stop on the rise to Mayor.

STEPHEN: Oh, I don't know.
The weather?
Your last holiday?
The motorway that's going to knock the village flat.

DUFF: Ah, that.

CHORUS: Of course, the new road got his vote.
He can't afford to rock the boat.

STEPHEN: It's going to obliterate our view
The fumes, the noise,
My life will be destroyed.

DUFF: I'm sorry, but it's been agreed

STEPHEN: And you didn't think to warn me
To beware?

DUFF: Oh come on now, be fair.
For months the information
Has been in circulation,
There was plenty of time
To lodge an objection,
Demand an inspection,
Apply for rejection.

STEPHEN: That isn't good enough
You know damn well
I don't get that stuff.
But now I get it
You actually agreed to let it
Go ahead.

DUFF: We looked at every side
and passed the application
There was nothing I could do; I share your frustration.

STEPHEN: The village is about to be destroyed
I've every right to be annoyed -

He is interrupted by a loud burst of laughter from the women surrounding BEDALES. DUFF and STEPHEN both turn to look across at the group. Male party guests have gravitated to another part of the room.

DUFF: Do you think Bedale's attractive?

STEPHEN: *(wrongfooted)* Eh?

DUFF: *(worried)* I can't see it, personally
But I seem to be in the minority...

CHORUS: It's a pleasant event at the Febbles'
A friendly and fun meet-and-greet
And the star of the show is Hugh Bedales
The hottie from Harley Street.

During the following song the setting becomes gradually surreal, transforming into a dreamy ball.

BEDALES: So, I tell all my patients the same.
If you want to avoid going lame
Put one hour aside every day to relax
Flat on your backs.
It pays dividends

LADIES: Dividends?

BEDALES: Oh, yes, my friends.
I lie prostrate twice a day
And naked - the finest way
To display
The body in its natural form.

LADIES: Is it getting warm?

BEDALES: It pays dividends

LADIES: Dividends?

BEDALES: Oh, yes, my friends.

Trust me, ladies,
Going naked in the home
Will change your life.

STEPHEN: I don't like the way that sleazy creep
Is looking at my wife.

LADIES: Oo, oo, Dr. Hugh
Oo, oo, Dr. Hugh

STEPHEN: Look at him, the slimy git
How does he get away with it?
When it's clear to see
He's a first-class shit.

LADIES: Oo, oo, Dr. Hugh
Oo, oo, Dr. Hugh

BEDALES: All the ladies love
A society podiatrist
From Kensington to Mayfair
I've a diamond-studded client list
Bishops, earls and duchesses
And famous movie stars
Keep me in sharp suits, fine wines
And fast, expensive cars

Dance....continues while ladies sing.

LADIES: Doc-tor Hugh
The society podiatrist,
Doc-tor Hugh
Gets our knickers in a twist

BEDALES: I pick and choose the jobs I do CHORUS (under): Oo, oo, etc.
I practice as I please

I only work from ten till two
And charge the most
Outrageous fees.
And the key to my success -
Shall I tell you?

LADIES: Yes! Yes! Yes!

BEDALES: Well...It's simply a question of pressure
A pressure that I can relieve
Once you're under my care
And your soles are laid bare..

LADIES: Our soles are laid bare...

STEPHEN: Arse-holes?

BEDALES: You'll learn what a personal touch
Can achieve

LADIES: Doc-tor Hugh.
How you make our pulses tingle.
Doc-tor Hugh,
How I wish that I were single!

BEDALES: I'm an expert in full relaxation CHORUS (under): Bah, bah, etc.
In soothing your sensitive parts
In massage and nerve stimulation

STEPHEN: Nerve stimulation?

BEDALES: And easing the throb in your ...

LADIES: Hearts!

BRIDGET: Your hands are soft and gentle,
Your eyes are warm and kind
Your voice is like molten caramel

LADIES: And you're driving me out...

STEPHEN: ...of your minds!

LADIES: Oo, Doc-tor Hugh,

BEDALES: It pays dividends.

LADIES: Oo, Doc-tor Hugh,

BEDALES: Oh, yes, my friends.

LADIES: Oo, Doc-tor Hugh,

BEDALES: It pays dividends.

LADIES: Oo, Doc-tor Hugh.

Back to reality. Everyone snaps out of it and the scene returns to the party. GINNY passes STEPHEN.

STEPHEN: So you've finally
Torn yourself away
From the marvelous
Dr. Hugh?

GINNY: Why must you always be unkind?
He's a pleasant man with a clever mind
We had an interesting conversation
And he's invited me for a consultation.

STEPHEN: He's what?

GINNY: He says I should go up to Harley Street
Where he can transform my feet.

STEPHEN: Right before my very eyes!
Do you think I'm blind?

GINNY: He's invited you as well.

STEPHEN: You were all over him,
the smarmy little bastard!
And once again I am the last to know.
Now that's a surprise!
I'm sick of being sidelined
and brushed aside,
Undermined, mortified.

GINNY: You're staring into space
with that scowl upon your face.
Please don't be so rude; come pass 'round the food.

STEPHEN: Oh no, my dear, this dog will have its day;
It's time for me to have my say.

Drum roll. STEPHEN takes the floor.

STEPHEN Ladies and gents,
Your attention please!
I have some thing you'll want to hear.
So kindly lend me an ear.

Duff Gardner
Is a two-faced git
Who didn't see fit
To make it clear
I'll lose my view
To a road extension
He somehow failed to mention

CHORUS: We agree, that's tough.

GINNY: Stephen, I think you've had enough.

STEPHEN: Nail on the head, my dear.
I've had it right up to here.
Then, I didn't have a clue
About old Bridget, who
As you all seem to know,
Has found herself a Romeo,

CHORUS: Half her age and rich,
A solid gold sonofabitch.

STEPHEN: Who Bridget pays to scratch her itch.

CHORUS Aha, aha, aha, aha.

DUFF: Bridget? Bridget - this true?

GINNY: Stephen, Stephen, how could you?
You knew Duff didn't know.

BEDALES: Is that the time? Whoops – gotta go.
Lovely party – thanks so much.
So long, keep in touch!

STEPHEN: My own wife envies her, I'm sure.
He's got her sniffing round his door.
And who could blame her if she strays?
What can I offer her these days?
No shiny Porche or stylish yacht,
A knackered banger's all she's got.

STEPHEN: My granddaughter, who would rather be at home
Has spent more time on her mobile phone
Than talking to her family.
And Di would clearly rather not confide in me.
So can anyone tell me, honestly,
What is the point of me?

Well, sod the bloody lot of you.

You people who I thought I knew.
Duff, you're a conniving snake,
Betraying me was a big mistake.
So friends and neighbours,
Raise your glasses
And stick the whole lot up your arses!

He drains his glass, and passes out flat on his face.

CHORUS: We'll get our coats.

As the music continues the guests leave and return to their places in the offstage chorus, placing their glasses on the table as they go. GINNY runs out of the room into the kitchen, in distress, followed by DIANA. CHARLOTTE retrieves her phone from the cupboard, receives a text, reads it and starts replying as she walks out and upstairs. ALAN swipes a bottle of beer and the dog lead and leaves through the front door, swigging from it. DUFF looks blankly at BRIDGIT, then turns and walks out. She raises a hand in appeal, then turns, picks up her handbag and follows dazedly after him, the last to leave. STEPHEN remains face down on the carpet. Lights down.

SCENE 4

When the lights go up again, it is clearly much later. Stephen is lying prone on the sofa, awake. The lights are dim. Most of the plates and bowls have been cleared from the tables. Some of the furniture has been put back in position, including the sofa and STEPHEN'S chair from Scene 1. But there is still a certain amount of chaos. GINNY comes in from the kitchen with a tray and starts stacking glasses. She is furious, her rage compounded as she retrieves some of Stephen's snifter glasses from Scene 2 from their inappropriate hiding places. She is too angry to look at him.

STEPHEN watches her from the sofa for a moment.

STEPHEN: (softly) Ginny.

GINNY has her back to him. Her face registers that she has heard him but she doesn't respond. STEPHEN waits a moment, then groans

STEPHEN: (louder) Ginny.

GINNY ignores him. Picks up a tray of glasses and turns for the kitchen.

STEPHEN: Ginny!

GINNY: (tiredly) So you've woken up at last?

STEPHEN: What time is it?

GINNY: It's after ten.

STEPHEN: Where is everyone?

GINNY: Alan's walking Pippa
Charlotte's gone to bed.
Di's packing.

STEPHEN: Packing? Why?

GINNY: They're leaving first thing
In the morn –

She breaks off, really upset. Gathers herself with a deep breath

GINNY: Why don't you go to bed?
You're tired.

She picks up the tray of glasses again and turns for the kitchen.

STEPHEN: I'm not, I'm wide awake
And I want to talk to you

GINNY: Tomorrow.
There's still lots of

Clearing up to do.

STEPHEN hauls himself up off the sofa

STEPHEN: For God's sake, stop!

She puts down the tray and turns to face him for the first time.

GINNY: What do you want from me?

STEPHEN: I want to talk to my wife
Is that such a crime?

He walks to the drinks cupboard.

STEPHEN: Please, sit down and
Have a drink with me.

GINNY stares at him for a moment, then sits down on the sofa, staring straight ahead.

STEPHEN: *(encouraged)* Cognac? Scotch?
What'll it be?

GINNY: *(Flatly)* I'll have a bitter lemon.

STEPHEN flinches, knowing that this is a hit directed at him.

DIANA: *(offstage)* Bitter lemon,
Bitter taste
Of lifetimes largely
Gone to waste.

Bitter lemon,
Bitter dregs
Of baskets full of
Broken eggs.

Cordials and ginger beer
Are kindly cups that cheer

But bitter lemon
Wields a blade
That can't be found
In lemonade

STEPHEN: Something
To cheer it up a bit?
A drop of gin?
Dubonnet?
What do you say?

GINNY: Bitter lemon. With ice.
STEPHEN: One berg or two?
GINNY: I don't care. It's up to you.
STEPHEN: Why not push the boat out -
Make it three?

DIANA: Bitter lemon,
Bitter scent
Of dreams destroyed
And passion spent.

Bitter lemon,
Bitter tears
Of love that's faded
Through the years

Orange juice, or sweetened lime
A glass of summertime,

But bitter lemon
Sour and tart
Sharp as a knife
Can break a heart

As they finish, a huge, gut-wrenching sob, suppressed for years, bursts forth from GINNY. She claps her hand over her mouth, puts down the glass and hurries from the room. STEPHEN watches her go, drains his glass and reaches for the bottle again.

STEPHEN: So, cheers
My dear.
Here's to us.

He is interrupted by the return of ALAN, who turns on the light.

ALAN: I'm sorry Grandad...was I interrupting something?
STEPHEN: Bitter lemon's such a pissy awful drink, don't you think?
ALAN: Ah, it's alright, I suppose...well, I guess it's bed for...
STEPHEN: Oh, come on! Have a drink! What the hell is wrong with everyone?
ALAN: Well, alright, I'll have bitter lemon.
STEPHEN: You what? Ah, very good. *(Pours him a beer)*
ALAN: Had to walk the dog for miles
Now she's zonked out in the car

Charlotte will be hopping mad.

STEPHEN keeps his back turned to ALAN and takes a meditative swig. ALAN takes off his coat.

STEPHEN: Tell me one thing, Alan,
What pulled you apart?
Did Di push you away?

ALAN: Other way round
I'd have to say.
I've met someone else.

STEPHEN: *You've* met somebody else?
You mean you've found someone else
who's attracted to you?

ALAN: Some women find I have an appeal,
I really think that this time it's for real.

STEPHEN: This time? You mean
You've had more than one affair?

ALAN: Oh, yeah,
The usual flings.
Who counts these things?
Life on the road
Is hard on a man.

STEPHEN: So you get it
Where you can!

ALAN: While I'm away
Touring the nation

Talking up
Containerisation....

ALAN: The occasional spot
of consolation...

STEPHEN: Doesn't count if it's on location!

Out of nowhere, STEPHEN takes a sudden swing at ALAN and knocks him down

STEPHEN: You're the worst scum
I've seen today!
You make me feel
like a saint,
you bastard!

ALAN: My God, you are absolutely plastered.

GINNY and DI appear in their dressing gowns, come down to see what all the noise is about.

GINNY: Stephen, stop!

DIANA: What's going on?

ALAN: The guy's gone nuts
I'm pressing charges - that was assault

GINNY: I'll bet you were
Both at fault.

STEPHEN: I thought this guy was just a berk
But he's a nasty piece of work.

GINNY: Stephen, please
Go to bed.
Wrap a cold cloth around your head.

Stephen exits.

DIANA: *(To Alan)* I don't want to hear a word of blame.
You should be ashamed.

ALAN retreats. DIANA looks round and sees GINNY. She goes to her and puts her arm round her.

DIANA: Dad was probably trying
To do me a favour
But after his earlier behaviour
He had no right
To act the saviour.

GINNY: He loves you, you know.
He just finds it hard to show it.

DIANA: He's in a really bad way.
You don't have to stay.

DIANA: For better or worse -
A misogynist trap
Once the man you have married
Starts giving you crap
A coward who has got the nerve
To walk out on a home
That he does not deserve

GINNY: I promised to love him
Through good times and bad
And when we first married
What good times we had
So glad to be a family

To be husband and wife
Building a life

GINNY: So if things
 aren't quite comfortable now
 I can't just abandon him
 I made a vow

DIANA: I'll be glad when he's gone
 We'll get by somehow
 He's broken our chains
 By breaking his vow

DIANA: So what do I do now?

GINNY: What do I do now?

GINNY hugs DIANA, and they exit. Lights fade gradually.

SCENE 5

Several hours later. Stephen lies on the sofa, hand tucked under his head. Ginny creeps in, tying a belt around her dressing gown.

GINNY: Stephen? *(no response)*
Stephen? *(after a moment, movement from the sofa)*
Stephen?
Come to bed--you must be frozen.

STEPHEN: *(somewhat recovered)* I was waiting for the dawn.

GINNY: You'll be in a terrible state in the morning.

STEPHEN: It is the morning. *(gets up)*
Well, at least I sorted Alan out.

GINNY: Is that what you'd call it?

STEPHEN: Sure. That's what family's for.

GINNY: Oh, Stephen, no
It's so much more.
You love us – I know it
So why can't you show it?
Every time they come to stay
You do your best
To drive them away.

STEPHEN: Love – I just –
I know I'm not loved by anyone
So I push them away.

GINNY: I loved you once,
when we were young,
and married life
had just begun.
You were funny, sweet and smart,
but you've worn me down
and cracked my heart.
Where's the man I used to know?
Where did he go?

STEPHEN: I know that they just pity me
They've other places
That they'd rather be
Other people that they'd rather see
And I'd prefer to be hated
Than tolerated.
I'm sorry I got drunk tonight
I've let you down again

GINNY: It isn't just the drink, I think,
you're broken inside.
Don't hide from me.
Confide in me.

STEPHEN: It began
As a young man.
First in my family
To make University.
Felt like an imposter
In that wealthy
And entitled crowd.
Drank to keep up
Drank to keep in
Took my degree
In a haze of gin.
Got a job in a company,
With a boss who'd been at Trinity.
Fell in love, got married,
Settled down.

But even with so much to lose
I couldn't quit the booze.
Pissed at lunchtime
Drunk by three
The boss got cross
And summoned me.
The sack would dishonour the old school tie
But I could kiss goodbye
To any notion
Of promotion.

Tried to end it on a bridge -
Couldn't do it to the kids.
Came back home and smiled and lied
While something deep inside me died.
I only had myself to blame
And yet -
I kept on drinking...
To forget...

And that's how it's been for years
Measuring out my shameful life in
Scotch and wine and beers.

GINNY: You didn't tell me.

STEPHEN: I didn't know how.

GINNY: All these years.

STEPHEN: I'm glad you know now.
And last night,
Duff's betrayal
And Alan and Di,
And that smarmy git
With his Cambridge tie
And it suddenly became too much for me
And I'm sorry, Ginny,
I'm sorry.

His voice breaks. GINNY squeezes his hand.

GINNY: I'll go and put the kettle on.

STEPHEN: *(Smiles--gallantly)* No, let me. *(exits to kitchen)*
(returns) Where's the tea?

They exit together as music continues.

Early morning. Music shifts, chorus joins and lights raise. Enter GINNY, bouncy, opening blinds, etc. Soon DIANA, ALAN, and CHARLOTTE come through, carrying bags.

GINNY: You're leaving?

ALAN and DIANA stop, CHARLOTTE wanders out, headphones in.

ALAN: Thought we'd get an early start.
Beat the traffic.

GINNY: It's Sunday, 6am?

ALAN: Well, you never can tell.

He can't get out of there quickly enough. He goes out of the front door.

DI: Sorry, Mum, we've got to go.

GINNY: Do you really have to?
We'd planned a Sunday lunch,
A lovely walk -

DI: Alan and I really need to talk.

CHARLOTTE appears in the doorway.

CHARLOTTE: Pippa's done it again.
The car really stinks!

GINNY: You know where to look
Under the sink.

CHARLOTTE runs off to the kitchen.

DI: *(to Charlotte)* And the Febreeze?

GINNY: Take it with you, please!

STEPHEN: *(arriving with tea)* I've got tea, get it while it's hot!

DI: *(mouth agape)* Why not?
Then we'll hit the road.

Charlotte returns with cloth, bucket, Febreeze.

STEPHEN: *(Relaxed, to Charlotte)* Where does it all come from?
That's what I want to know.

CHARLOTTE: Bye, bye, Grandad.

GINNY: Goodbye.

STEPHEN: Bye.

DI: Thanks, Mum. Got to run.

She kisses GINNY on the cheek.

GINNY: You'll come back soon?

DI: We'll try.
(to Stephen) And thanks for sticking up for me.
Alan deserved what he got.

.STEPHEN: Don't talk such rot.

DIANA kisses STEPHEN on the cheek

DI: Love you, Dad.

STEPHEN: Love you, Di.
(to Ginny) Coming to see them off?

GINNY: No, no, you go.

DI: 'Til next time, then,
Thanks for the lovely....
(lame) ...weekend.

POSTLOGUE

GINNY: You promise to love
STEPHEN: through good times and bad.
BOTH: When we were first married what good times we had.
STEPHEN: You try to be a family,
GINNY: share happiness and strife;
BOTH: building a life.

GINNY: So if things...
STEPHEN: We'll fix it and go on,...
GINNY: ...aren't quite comfortable now,
STEPHEN:we'll get by somehow...
GINNY:we can't just give up on them;
STEPHEN: ...We're in this together;
BOTH: We made a vow.

ALL w/CHORUS: The sun will shine
on Monday's brighter skies
and each new day leads to another weekend.
An empty stage, a brand-new page,
a chance to try again.
So, here's to next weekend.