

_Opera Libretto: By Gene Rotberg

TAHRIR!

(formerly titled “Oh, Egypt”)

Cast

(in order of vocal appearance)

The President

Military Guards (Quartet)

Hamadi, Captain of Guard, betrothed of Akila

Akila – Protestor, daughter of Tarik

Tarik – Akila’s father, an old soldier

Chorus of Protesters

Sextet of Protesters

- The Pious
- The Youth

- The Militant
- Poverty
- Poverty's child (perhaps a puppet)
- The Patriot
- The Cynic

The Hoodlums (Quartet)

The Privileged (Trio)

The Media

The U.S. Representative

The Saudi Representative

The Israeli Representative

The Prisoner

(During overture, as curtain rises, a video (or behind a scrim) Hamadi and Akila are seen sitting, feeding each other dates and grapes in a vast desert. Hamadi is dressed in a military uniform, Akila in a long white dress. Reluctantly, they leave each other, in opposite directions, Hamadi toward a Presidential Palace in upper right background, Akila toward upper left toward her house and Tahrir Square in far distance.)

ACT I. Scene I – The President and Military Guards at Presidential Palace

PRESIDENT (looking at large screen or 100-inch TV set showing Tahrir Square, filled with protesters):

There is a rumbling, a murmur
In the streets, a kind of hum,
Not yet one of anger or despair,
They call it freedom. It's in the air.
It is nothing, I am sure,
Soon it's time for prayers,
Then they'll leave for home
And forget their cares.

MILITARY GUARD QUARTET (one voice):

You need not fear,
Our troops are near.
They are there
In the square.

(Aside):

But we have a stake in this too,
We will protect what is our due.

PRESIDENT:

That mob is unarmed, passive,
It does not matter if their protest's massive,
Soon it's time for prayers.
Then they'll leave for home
And forget their cares.

MILITARY GUARD QUARTET *(To President): one voice*

You have our word
Our vocation,
To our nation is
Without reservation, hesitation,
Procrastination, provocation,
Emotion, derision or indecision,
Perfection or correction,
Reflection or misdirection,
We will carry out your orders –
With precision!

PRESIDENT:

We have seen this before,

Pestilence and war and more.

Let them be.

They are no threat to you or me.

MILITARY GUARD QUARTET (*aside to audience*):

For years he had the power

To decide those who rise and those who fall.

Those who will die chained to prison wall.

No longer is he loved by all.

Woe betide

That fateful day when

Without fuss

We will decide – him or us.

HAMADI, CAPTAIN OF GUARD AT PALACE.

(He directs his aria to Akila spotlighted in distance at the window of her house overlooking Tahrir Square.):

I fear for my betrothed
Lest she leave her home and dare
To protest in the square.
No telling what today will bring,
Perhaps it's just a sometime thing,
My Akila fair,
I see her everywhere:
In the stream made deeper by her tears,
In the sun made brighter by her glow,
In the desert made cooler by her shade.

Fade/Curtain

ACT I. Scene II

(Opens to Akila and her father in well-furnished room overlooking Tahrir Square. Akila seated by window.)

AKILA:

Come, my father dear, march with me
And you will see a new beginning.
Our new day is shining through
Come, it is for you.

TARIK, AKILA'S FATHER (*old soldier*):

(*With bitterness as he looks out of window down on square.*)

Stay a while,

Live a while, smile a while,

Stay a while. Live a while. Smile a while.

Those boys and girls will not last,

They're easily cowed, this crowd

Of the great unwashed.

Remember, I am a soldier

Who out of poverty rose to advance

And it was not by chance

That he you so revile

Made our lives worthwhile.

AKILA:

Father dear,

He stripped us of dignity,

He stifled all

And, imprisoned those

Who dared reject his every call.

TARIK:

(Not paying attention to daughter, he crosses room, opens closet, takes out his military coat.

Reverie)

Ah, my coat, once adorned

With medals, has seen its day.

It is, like me, too frayed

To protect our country's honor for I am old,

No longer bold, to protect our country's honor.

(Then, to Akila)

Remember, my daughter, he who made our lives worthwhile

Let us rise above the rank and file.

Surely, he does not deserve exile.

For I fear years without peace are in store, privation and war.

It's happened before.

AKILA:

My Father,

You must know,

My heart beats for those who

Seek their due after years

Of toil to no avail.

TARIK:

You would not have gone to school were it not for him

You would be working in the fields till

The light grows dim without him.

No linen clothes would adorn your grace without him

No Mafouz or Rumi

Without him.

You would wear a black burka instead.

Covering your face within.

No Hamadi would bless our home

Were it not for him,

You must know if you go

You leave me too. . . alone.

*Spotlight on **Military Guard Quartet** (in background at palace):*

We protected our land from its enemies

From within and without

We did not turn to rout,

Our comrades gave their lives

And brought us dignity,

While those who now protest

Were drinking tea,

Bragging only about the wonders of our antiquity.

That is all they did

As we ask Allah to care for our dead comrades in their final rest. -

Our best.

No, we will take our due;

We will hold what is our due.

QUINTET (Akila and Military Quartet)

MILITARY GUARD QUARTET:

We protected our land from its enemies

From within and without

We did not turn to rout,

Our comrades gave their lives

And brought us dignity

While those who now protest

Were drinking tea,

Bragging only about the wonders of our antiquity.

That is all they did

As we ask Allah to care for our dead comrades in their final rest.

Our best.

No, we will take our due;

We will hold what is our due.

AKILA:

My heart beats for those who,

Seek their due after years

Of toil to no avail,

Always failing

To achieve their due.

Curtain – Pause. (about two minutes.) Music reflects

Huge, boisterous crowd filling square protesting, milling about behind a scrim.

**Scene III – Scrim opens to Huge Tahrir Square packed with Protesters (Chorus). Military
lounging on sides.**

(Chorus of Protesters humming, singing and dancing Saraband or Cabaletta (as a counterpoint to cacophony of crowd. Slow, sinuous, then faster Middle East dance. Military is lethargic, non-confrontational.)

CHORUS OF PROTESTERS:

We will stay all day and night,

It is our right.

We will stay everyday.

We will sing; we will dance

It is our only chance

For Freedom here, freedom so near.

(A Sextet, one at a time, appears from crowd of protesters – 6-part Harmony, each with a distinctive melody/rhythm.) Throughout opera, the “Cynic,” while part of the sextet is set

apart, singing to audience as an observer or commentator. Each member of the sextet represents a different constituency in the square.

THE PIOUS (*hymn-like*):

Only for Allah we wait.

For him we wait.

(Repeat in Arabic)

THE YOUTH (*jazzy*):

Tweet, tweet,

Let us meet

We love our chits and chats

For we are the technocrats.

Commiserate and supplicate;

Aggregate and innovate,

Never hesitate or procrastinate.

For we are the technocrats

And, of course, the democrats.

THE MILITANT (*conspiratorial and threatening*):

No one's watching now,

Here's our chance for

Mayhem.

That's the way

To fight the heathen.

POVERTY (*lamentation/dirge*) *holding on to child (puppet?):*

There is no food to feed my child,

Who begs with ragged clothes,

Do you know what it's like

When your child must

Beg in the streets

From strangers she meets?

Do you know what it's like to see

How others live and play?

THE PATRIOT (*patriotic/optimistic, soaring*):

A new day is coming.

A new beginning.

Free from woes

And tyranny's blows.

Soon the day will come

When we are paid for work that's done

And work no longer is given
Only to those driven
Who fawn at our leader's every whim
And on that day, our freedom will begin.

THE CYNIC:

Things do not change so fast,
The future is rooted in the past.

SEXTET (repeating above solos) AND CHORUS OF PROTESTERS

THE PIOUS (hymn-like):

Only for Allah we wait.
For him we wait.

THE MILITANT (conspiratorial and threatening):

No one's watching now,
Here's our chance for
Mayhem.
That's the way
To fight the heathen.

THE YOUTH (jazzy):

Tweet, tweet,
Let us meet

We love our chits and chats

For we are computer hacks.

Commiserate and supplicate;

Aggregate and innovate,

Never hesitate or procrastinate.

For we are the young computer hacks

And, of course, the democrats.

POVERTY (lamentation/dirge) holding on to child:

There is no food to feed my child,

Who begs with ragged clothes,

Do you know what it's like

When your child must

Beg in the streets

From strangers she meets

Do you know what it's like to see

How others live and play.

THE CYNIC:

Things do not change so fast,

The future is rooted in the past.

CHORUS OF PROTESTERS:

(Saraband or Cabaletta)

We will stay all day and night,

It is our right.

The PATRIOT (patriotic/optimistic/

soaring):

A new day is coming.

A new beginning.

Free at last.

Free from woes.

And tyranny's blows.

Soon the day will come

When we are paid for work that's done

And work no longer is given

Only to those driven

Who to fawn at our leader's every

whim.

And on that day, our freedom will

begin.

We will stay today and everyday.

We will sing; we will dance,

It is our only chance for

For freedom here, freedom so near,

Fade

Scene IV (Stage is split with Palace in background and President speaking from lectern to protesters In foreground, Tahrir Square is filled with protesters watching President on large outdoor screen.)

PRESIDENT (paternalistic, poignant, slow):

My children,

I am your father

Who took you from medieval times.

I am your savior; no violence

Ruled the streets

Except to keep

Unruly ones at bay.

Or would you prefer to pray night and day?

I gave you certainty – stability

No longer would you fear the unknown

No longer would you be alone.
You knew where I stood
Always, for our country's good.
For as you know, I too led a revolt
Aiming to change things
For the better.
And if I have stayed too long,
Perhaps I did not know where to go,
What to do.
For power is held on to
Not only for the adoration
From a nation
Not only for the trappings
And the bowing and the scraping,
Not only for the ease by which
Every thought turns to action.
No, that is not it at all.
It is the fear of what follows
After the mantle is hollow
With you no more.
To whom must you smile
What are the rules?
Must you suffer fools?
Are you looked upon with

Pity or just curiosity?

So many decades have gone by

How does one start life anew?

My children, go home, sleep well,

My children, sleep well.

CHORUS/PROTESTERS:

Leave, you must go.

PRESIDENT:

I am old, I want but a few months more

A few months before I go,

Then, I will leave you to your fate,

(Then, with defiance)

But you must know,

I will lead and protect you

Until that date.

CHORUS/PROTESTERS:

We are not your children you can rule,

You ask for time –

A few months more

No! It will be years of tears,
There is no more time.

DUET (President and Poverty) AND CHORUS

PRESIDENT:

I am old, I want but a few months more

A few months before I go,

Then, I will leave you to your fate,

(With defiance)

But you must know,

I will lead and protect you

Until that date.

CHORUS:

We are not your children you can
rule

You ask for time –

A few months more

No! It will be years of tears.

There is no more time.

POVERTY (with child):

You ask for time

While I beg food for my child,

I beg for clothes to keep her warm,

I beg for gas to heat our place

I beg for work

My child shivers

In my arms.

She is out of time,

So too are you.

QUINTET (Poverty and Military Quartet)

POVERTY (with child):

You ask for time

While I beg food for my child,

I beg for clothes to keep her warm,

I beg for gas to heat our place

I beg for work

My child shivers.

In my arms.

She is out of time,

So too are you.

MILITARY QUARTET:

To President:

We are true to you.

We are solid and true.

(Aside) But sooner or later,

It's about us, not you.

- INTERMISSION -

ACT II, Scene I

(Curtain opens to protesters in Tahrir Square)

(The next lines are sung conspiratorically, quickly, whispering.)

CHORUS/PROTESTERS (rhythmic/swaying):

We don't believe

He will ever leave.

But we will wait him out

And stay each night

Till the end in sight

Militant (Argumentative):

Let's charge the Palace. Take our chance.

Youth:

The tanks are still. They do no ill.

Patriot:

The cameras are on us. Don't make a fuss.

Offer no reason

To accuse us treason.

Quiet is the word.

Not a harsh word to be heard.

The tanks are still.

They do no ill.

The Pious:

Allah is great.

Pray, pray, pray.

The Youth:

Let's all meet, no retreat.

The Militant:

Now's our chance to advance.

Poverty:

Beg. Weep. That's my life.

The Patriot:

We shall overcome . . .

The Cynic: (to audience)

What did you expect? For tyranny to end – so easily?

SEXTET WITH CHORUS

THE PIOUS:

Allah is great.

THE YOUTH:

Let's all meet, no retreat.

THE MILITANT:

Now's our chance to advance.

Pray, pray, pray.

POVERTY:

Beg. Weep. That's my life.

THE PATRIOT:

We shall overcome...

THE CYNIC:

What did you expect?

For tyranny to end – so easily?

CHORUS/PROTESTERS (rhythmic/swaying):

We don't believe

He will ever leave.

We will stay each night until

The end in sight.

Fade

(Spotlight on Akila and Tarik in house on square)

AKILA (looking out window):

Father, I leave you now,

It's peaceful there.

Quiet singing in the square.

I am safe when he is there.

My betrothed in the square.

(Akila runs from house to square into arms of Hamadi.)

AKILA: (To Hamadi with sympathy, and also anger)

How can you,

Protect, shelter, warn, support him

Agree to his every whim

Making the world

Safe for him.

HAMADI:

What will you have me do,

I am torn, by my duty

To protect him

My tongue and acts

Support him with my oath

While my heart is yours alone.

You, who I cannot live without.

CHORUS OF PROTESTERS (*Saraband or cavatina*):

We raise our hands to dance,

We raise our voice to sing, not shout.

The world watches

To see what we are about.

We raise our hands to dance.

Not in defiance

But just to dance.

HAMADI: (To Akila, Love Song.)

I must leave you now, my love

As you sing and dance,

For all is peaceful in the square.

And later, when this is over,

To the desert we will go

And feast on dates and grapes

In the glow of the sun.

And later, when this is over, to the desert we will go

And drink tea

Under the stars.

And later, when this is over,

To the desert we will go

And lightly sleep the night away

Until the break of day

(Repeat in Arabic from

“And later when this is over”)

DUET (Akila and Hamadi)

AKILA:

And later, when this is over,

To the desert we will go

And feast on dates and grapes

In the glow of the sun.

And later, when this is over, to the desert we will go

And drink tea

Under the stars

And later, when this is over,

To the desert we will go

And lightly sleep the night away

Until the break of day.

HAMADI:

And later, when this is over,

To the desert we will go

And feast on dates and grapes

In the glow of the sun.

And later, when this is over, to the desert we will go

And drink tea

Under the stars

And later, when this is over,

To the desert we will go

And lightly sleep the night away

Until the break of day.

(They part; Hamadi leaves with military. Same Sinuous slow dance as from beginning of Act.

Then, abruptly, violent Cacophonous music. A dozen hoodlums stream in, carrying bats, clubs, swords; From the roofs of buildings around the square, fire bombs are thrown. Wild mêlée.

Protesters pummeled. Sirens, ambulances. Mayhem. Many injured. Music and violence should take about two minutes.)

CYNIC (Sings over music):

Peace does not happen so fast,

Today is rooted in the past.

First freedom, then anarchy,

Then the Man on the Pale White Horse comes –

To bring us. . . “stability.”

(Protesters form a wall of interlocking arms mimicking the previous sinuous dancing. It does no good as hoodlums break through.)

HOODLUM QUARTET (one voice):

We do our job. We rape and rob.

We'll break your spirit,

We know our job, we rape and rob.

We do it well

(Reprise)

We do our job. We rape and rob.

We'll break your spirit,

We know our job, we rape and rob.

We do it well

(Well dressed men and women nonchalantly walk by; unmolested, despite melee and violence.

They are part of the establishment, clearly not protesters and are not the object of the “hoodlums’ “ attacks.)

THE PRIVILEGED (*TRIO with one voice to audience*):

What's the fuss; surely it's not about us.

It's got out of hand. Not good for our land.

Our children are schooled with the best

in France and Britain, in the West

We send them to private places

Away from these haggard faces. (pointing to Poverty)

What do we care if a few

Are chained to a prison wall?

It serves them right

For threatening us.

So, let things be,

Our leader has been very good for you and me.

CYNIC:

Your children, doctors and lawyers they may be

But, if they return, even with your power

They'll still

Drive a taxi, hour by hour.

(Hoodlums bow and let the Privileged go by.)

POVERTY (lament to small child):

Here by the river I sit and weep

For my child,

And make it deeper by a tear.

And if and when she survives

She will be scarred with hatred

Which will mar her so

She will be all too willing to put in motion

The devil's retribution.

(Poverty is pushed aside as attack continues. News cameras record everything. Music pulsating. Bedlam. Akila tries to protect child in melee. Hoodlum slashes at protesters with sword and wounds Akila who falls. Violent music, then – total silence.)

AKILA:

Oh land of my birth, mother of the earth,

Land of mirth,

Land of my death.

Why did you take away my breath.

I only threw petals in the street.

(she rises, staggering)

Oh, to see the Nile, shimmering in the sunset

For a while, once more. . .

My eyes cloud over.

Where is the Nile?

(Father and Hamadi come rushing in to comfort Akila)

(DIRGE)

Who will remember me?

I have no immortality;

I leave nothing at all.

No songs, no poems, no children,

No place in history.

I will hardly be a memory,

Forgotten in a few days

Except for those who knew me well.

And for them, perhaps, for a few years

Until they too are no more.

I leave nothing to remember me.

I leave nothing to change the lives

Of those I've left behind.

Perhaps a plaque to honor this day

Seen on a wall by tourists

Years from now, they will read with

Unseeing eyes about this square. Not a tear will fall

Beneath that wall.

Akila does not exist for them,

Or for anyone. I will never again eat dates and grapes in the sun.

My breath, one of many,

Will be unobserved, unremembered,

Not even with a sigh.

(She dies as Child of Poverty stares at audience wandering around in daze.)

HAMADI (softly):

My country took her life.

She did no harm

Just petals in the street.

TARIK:

Let me warm you, touch you, see you

One more time

Let me feel you, hold you,

One more time.

My only child, Akila. . .is. . .no. . .more.

(DIRGE)

(Tarik takes off his military coat and covers Akila; Akila is lifted to Dirge. Child wanders around lost. All leave in a daze, except those dead or wounded in square. Wailing by women with tongue ululation, rising, crescendo-like, cutting through silence. No movement on stage. Square is scene of devastation.) Then, sextet reappears, one by one, slowly. Wounded.

THE PIOUS:

Allah is great.

We deserve the punishment we get.

For we sing, we dance, we drink.

Some tell us

That Allah is not the way;

But in truth only Allah will bring us peace,

Prayer alone protects us from police.

(Repeat in Arabic)

MILITANT: (surreptitiously)

No one is watching now,

We blend right in;

We'll wrap ourselves in plastique. That is our mystique.

We will keep

Our weapons secret

Until that day.

Not far away, we'll use them . . . here?

Maybe elsewhere? A crowded station?

Another nation?

A football game?

Ah, that would bring us fame.

POVERTY:

To you (point to audience), I am invisible;

Your eyes always avoid the miserable.

PATRIOT:

It's all matter of wills you know

He wants to stay; we want him to go.

And as for his humiliation,

It's little price to pay,

For the harm to our nation.

Tens of thousands in prison, cold, alone, afraid.

That's what he did to have his way.

As for his humiliation,

Look what he did to our nation.

QUARTET (Pious, Militant, Poverty, Patriot)

THE PIOUS:

Only Allah will bring us peace,

Prayer alone protects us from police.

POVERTY:

To you (audience), I am invisible;

Your eyes always avoid the miserable.

THE MILITANT:

We'll wrap ourselves in plastique. That is
our mystique.

No one is watching now. We will keep

Our weapons in secret

Until that day.

PATRIOT:

Tens of thousands in prison, cold, alone, afraid.

That's what he did to have his way.

THE MEDIA (Trio) (one voice; Enter stage jauntily):

We're here to report the news,

To record all views

From the protesters in the street,

To the military we meet,

We put it on the air

Fair and square.

They say we are the cause of riots,

That if not for us

There would be no fuss,

That we alone have emboldened but a few
To demand democracy.
But thugs are running amok,
And that's what you will see
On tonight's TV.

(Military marches back to Square.)

MILITARY GUARD QUARTET (March):

(To protesters)

You told us not to intervene;

You begged us to be still.

You praised us to the skies,

You gave us flowers

To stand on the sides.

We let you dance

And do your thing.

Remember we were your heroes,

When we battled the Israelis.

(Pointing to Protesters)

And if some bullies rough you up a bit

Well. . . . so. . . . so

We're noncombatants, you know.

CYNIC:

We will see

What will be.

- Pause -

ACT II, Scene II

Presidential Palace

PRESIDENT (*PLAINTIVE, SLOW, MANIPULATIVE*):

Oh my native land

Why have you forsaken me

In this hour, what do you require?

For many years

I kept you safe

From enemies of the state.

I could do no less than clear the air

Of those who sought to tear you

Limb from limb.

I have protected you

From the evils that beset you.

Why do you forsake me?

Why do you humiliate me so?

My friends turn away,

My enemies wish me stripped naked of decency.

Where is your clemency?

A few months more, that's all

On this sacred soil I wish to die,

Where is thy clemency.

A few months more –

More or less, That's all. Soon I die.

On sacred soil

I wish to die with decency .

Reprise – In Arabic)

(Aide ushers in a Representative of U.S.)

PRESIDENT:

Oh, it's you, coming to tell me what to do?

U.S. (dressed in red, white, blue costume):

Hello, my friend. This is the end.

You should have gone when you had a chance

To hold your head up high,

But now it's too late to say good-bye
With dignity. That's all I have to say
You must go away.

PRESIDENT (Sarcastic):

What, no lessons on democracy?
Is what you want theocracy?
So many dictators
Across the earth, you seem to value all their worth.
Why me?

U.S.

You must leave my friend. It's time to go.

PRESIDENT:

And what will you do
When revolt is brewing
And the oil stops flowing,
And shortages and prices are soaring,
And no longer on a whim
Can you "Fill it to the brim."
What will you do then?

And after all the votes are counted, with hoopla and hurrah,
Exactly how will you greet, the winner – Hezbollah.

(A second visitor (Saudi) is ushered in.)

Saudi:

Alakem, my friend

Wait a while, wait a while,

They will soon tire of dancing in the street.

They will tire of tweet, tweet.

DUET (U.S. and Saudi)

Saudi:

Wait them out.

We will support you

They will soon tire of

Dancing in the street.

They will tire of tweet, tweet.

U.S.:

It's time for you to go, you know,

Before things begin to blow;

It's time for you to go my friend,

This is the end.

(A third visitor is ushered in - Israeli)

PRESIDENT:

Shalom, my friend.

What have you to say? (with sarcasm)

“Why is this night different from all other nights?”

ISRAELI:

You gave us breathing space.

And that wasn't easy.

We cannot tell you what to do,

For we are fearful of vacuums too as

The unknown brings terror

In the night.

No time is right

For trial and error.

TRIO (U.S., Saudi, Israeli)

U.S.:

It's time to go my friend,

This is the end. It's time to go.

This is the end my friend,

Sing yourself this little ditty,

Or in the history books you'll get no pity.

“I let my people go; I let my people go.”

Saudi:

Wait a while, wait a while.

They will soon tire of dancing in the street. And that wasn't easy.

They will tire of tweet, tweet., etc.

Israeli:

You gave us breathing space.

And that wasn't easy.

But, we cannot tell you what to do,

For we are fearful of vacuums too as

The unknown brings terror

In the night.

No time is right

For trial and error.

(They leave. As they leave, enter Military Quartet – March – slow, funereal, but determined)

MILITARY QUARTET *(to President):*

It's not about you; it's about us.

We want our due. Please no fuss.

Make it easy on yourself.

Besides, our children won't leave, they are at the gates

And you must know

We cannot sweep our children into the street.

The world is watching, seeing every move.

We cannot sweep our children into the street,

Their blood we will not shed,

There's no sense asking for our head,

We will not sweep our children into the street,

It's time to go my friend.

(President reluctantly goes to desk, writes, hands letter of resignation to an aide. First, self pitying, then in defiance.)

PRESIDENT:

(In quiet retrospection)

Ah, there is no stair below
I step into empty air,
Nothing to catch me as I fall
No one to hear me call
No one to salute me,
Care for me,
Remember me
As I fall.

(Then, in defiance)

A plague on your houses
You will regret my leaving.
I should have snapped the bud before
And left them grieving.
Paint them all as Brotherhood.
Imprison them all.
My only regret?
In darkness and chains
More were not kept.

(President leaves – defiant)

Fade

ACT II, Scene III

Square (*Loud Speaker announces: "THE SUPREME MILITARY COMMAND WISHES TO ANNOUNCE THE RESIGNATION". . . Chorus and music drowns out rest of announcement*)

(*Crowd jubilant; flags, Dance*)

CHORUS OF PROTESTERS:

We are free now from tyranny's past,

Like desert sands

We move unhindered by our past.

We can breathe,

Our hearts are full

With tears of joy, we will remember

This day forever.

THE PIOUS (solos below by each member of sextet):

Praise to Allah, praise to Allah

He delivered, and we will rule

The school where children play and pray.

We will rule the school and teach the way,

And we will tend the sick

And the people will love us for our service.

There's no reason to be nervous -

A new day is dawning.

Veil your face, woman!

A new day is dawning,

Veil your face, woman!

THE YOUTH:

The batteries are dead, let's go to bed

It's our revolt you know;

We made it so.

Now we're in. Just ask CNN,

Who is our leader?

Does it matter?

MILITANT:

They (*to youth*) always felt superior,

But, we'll take the Ministry of the Interior.

(Repeat)

POVERTY:

Where is my bread?

Does this mean I have a bed

After all is said?

This democracy? Will it feed the poor?

Do the wounds disappear?

Are they no more?

THE PATRIOT (*sings one or two lines from each with sarcasm*):

God save the Queen

Oh say can you see

Waltzing Matilda

Va Pensiero

The Internationale

Emperor Quartet (Haydn)

Marseilles

Triumphal March (Aida)

(Aside to audience)

Does it really matter

They all sound good to me

THE CYNIC (*with sarcasm*):

We will wait and see,

The cost of electricity.

No gas, no oil here,

But have no fear,
 The generals are here,
 Let's wait and see.
 We have our history:
 Aristocracy, anarchy, then. . .
 Enforced "stability" — of course.
 Democracy? Let's wait and see.

SEXTET AND CHORUS

PIOUS:

Praise to Allah, praise to Allah
 He delivered, and we will rule
 The school where children play and pray.
 We will rule the school and teach them the way,

THE YOUTH:

It's our revolt you know;
 We made it so.
 We're in. Just ask CNN,
 Who is our leader?
 Does It matter?

MILITANT:

They (to youth) always felt superior,
 But, we'll take the Ministry of the
 Interior.

POVERTY:

Where is my bread?
 Does this mean I have a bed
 After all is said?

THE PATRIOT:

Waltzing Matilda
 Va Pensiero
 The Internationale

THE CYNIC:

Let's wait and see.
 We have our history:
 Aristocracy, anarchy, then...
 Enforced "stability" of course.
 Democracy? Let's wait and see.

CHORUS:

We are free now, we can breathe,
 Our hearts are full with liberty,
 With tears of joy, we will
 Remember this day forever.

CHORUS/PROTESTERS:

(Song of Jubilation)

We shed our blood,
 And cried and sighed and died for honor,

We will feed our poor.

We will end our feuds and mend our fences,

We will shelter our children,

We will sing with honor,

The day is ours.

The flowers, ours.

(Then, silence)

(Slowly, Tarik, President, Hamadi and a prisoner behind bars appear at opposite corners of stage.)

(Each does Solo first (same words/different melody/rhythm), then reprise as a Quartet)

TARIK (mournful):

I have lost the light of my life,

The light in my eye, the light of my life,

I have lost the light of my life

I have lost the light in my eye.

Where I go, all will know

I have lost the light of my life

PRESIDENT (arrogant):

I have lost the light of my life,

The light in my eye, the light of my life,

I have lost the light of my life

I have lost the light in my eye,

Where I go, all will know

I have lost the light of my life

HAMADI (love song):

I have lost the light of my life,

The light in my eye, the light of my life,

I have lost the light of my life

I have lost the light in my eye,

Where I go, all will know

I have lost the light of my life

PRISONER (anger):

I have lost the light of my life,

The light in my eye, the light of my life,

I have lost the light of my life

I have lost the light in my eye.

Where I go, all will know

I have lost the light of my life

(Reprise Quartet in Arabic)

CHORUS/PROTESTERS:

Half of Chorus hums a sad, poignant, sinuous Middle Eastern melody, leaves slowly to left.

The other half of Chorus leaves, right side, singing and dancing to joyous Middle Eastern melody.

The cynic observes. Shrugs. He cannot decide which way to go. Child wanders – lost, staring at audience.

In background women wail, possibly amplified, overcoming music with tongue - ululating slowly trailing off until stage empties.

- Curtain –

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Registration Number
Pau 3-547-042
Effective: March 10, 2011