

MAY DAY IN TOWN

Libretto by Royall Tyler, 1787

Music and Script by Gart T. Westerhout, 1987

Performed at the Royall Tyler Theater, University of Vermont,
Burlington, VT, April 1987

Songlist

1. May Day in Town – Chorus (redo sheet music)
2. Be Deaf to her Tongue – Mr Surdas (OK)
3. Pompey's Complaint – Pompey (OK)
4. Duet – Strains of Soft Murmurs – Hetty and Plaintain (OK)
5. Fly to his Arms/Love, Mighty Love – Betty, Letty, Hetty (rewrite)
6. Lark's Early Carrols (May Morning) – Chorus (OK)
7. All Life is a Move – Surdas (OK)
8. I Thank her for her Care - Pompey, Betty, Letty (incomplete?)
9. Tender Feeling Heart – Capt Bowling (OK)
10. Finale – Never More Removing (rewrite part)

SONG 1 – May Day in Town

NO MORE SING THE BEAUTIES OF RURAL MAY DAY !
IF POETS WITH LAURELS THEIR TEMPLES WOULD CROWN,
LET THEM CULL FROM THEIR STORES THE MOST RAPTUROUS LAY,
TO CHANT FORTH THE PRAISES OF MAY DAY IN TOWN.

THEN SING NOT OF FRAGRANCE THAT FLOATS IN THE AIR
OF SWEETS THAT TO MEADOWS AND GARDENS BELONG
SHALL THESE WITH OUR STREETS OR OUR MARKETS COMPARE
OUR CITY HAS FRAGRANCE MORE PUNGENT AND STRONG.

Hetty

AND WHAT THOUGH OUR PINKS AND OUR LILIES ARE FEW
NOR CHAPLETS OF ROSES OUR TRESSES ADORN
WE HAVE MOLINEAUX'S PASTE WITH OLYMPIAN DEW
AND ROUGE THAT OUTBLUSHES THE BLUSH OF THE MORN.

Chorus

TO THE SOUNDS OF MAY MORNING MORE CHEERFUL WE MOVE
TO CLAMOURS OF CARMEN AND CLATT'RING OF CARTS.
TO THE SOUNDS OF MAY MORNING MORE CHEERFUL WE MOVE
TO CLAMOURS OF CARMEN AND CLATT'RING OF CARTS

HOW SILENT YON COTTAGE! HOW CHARMING THIS NOISE
CONTRAST THE SWEET BEAU WITH THE LUBBERLY CLOWN;
AWAY WITH YOUR RURAL AMUSEMENTS AND TOYS
CHANT FORTH THE PRAISES OF MAY DAY IN TOWN
NO MORE SING THE PRAISES OF RURAL MAY DAY!

Letty , Betty , and Pompey
THE BIRDS WITH THEIR WARBLINGS ENLIVEN THE GROVE
THE SWAIN LISTENS PENSIVE OR RAPTURED HE STARTS
IF POETS WITH LAURELS THEIR TEMPLES WOULD CROWN
LET THEM CULL FROM THEIR STORES THE MOST RAPTUROUS LAY
TO CHANT FORTH THE BEAUTIES OF MAY DAY IN TOWN.

LET THEM CULL FROM THEIR STORES THE MOST RAPTUROUS LAY
TO CHANT FORTH THE BEAUTIES OF MAY DAY !

Hetty (to audience): You're not going to believe what has happened.
Today is the first day of May, the day leases are expiring all over town.
Well, we didn't know it until this morning, but our lease has expired as
well, because father forgot to renew it. And boy, is Mother mad! So
we're all woken up at the break of day by a pounding on the door: "Out,
out!" yells the landlord. Mother tries arguing with him, but it's no use -
the new renters are moving in at nine o'clock. So it's helter skelter, pack
our belongings as fast as we can, and head for our new place" (Smiles,
then grimaces.) What new place? (Pause) Ah, but I don't care where we
go, as long as it is not too far - for I'm getting married soon - to Mr
Plaintain. Look, there he is, helping us move (blows kiss) - what a
sweetheart! He's handsome, he's clever, and he's rich! Enter SURDAS,
chased by MRS SURDAS)

MRS SURDAS (ad lib): You scoundrel, forgetting to pay the rent, etc.
(Exit SURDAS and MRS SURDAS)

HETTY: Oh, poor Father - Mother will never forgive him for forgetting to
pay the rent!

(Enter SURDAS)

SONG 2: Be Deaf to her Tongue

YE KIND MARRIED SOULS, COME LEARN OF POOR SURDAS
A LESSON WHICH BLESSES ALL CONJUGAL LIFE
WHEN FRETTING, PERPLEXING
WHEN SCOLDING AND VEXING
BE BLIND TO THE FOIBLES OF YOUR NAGGING WIFE.

WHEN OUR DUCKEES WITH SCOLDING AND CLAMOURS DISTURB US
FEEL ALL THE PLAGUES OF A CLAMOUROUS WIFE
WHEN FRETTING, PERPLEXING
WHEN SCOLDING AND VEXING
BE BLIND TO HER FOIBLES AND RUN FOR YOUR LIFE.

YE KIND MARRIED SOULS, COME LEARN OF POOR SURDAS
A LESSON WHICH BLESSES ALL CONJUGAL LIFE
WHEN OUR DUCKEES WITH SCOLDING AND CLAMOURS DISTURB US
WE FEEL ALL THE PLAGUES OF A CLAMOUROUS WIFE

AND WE CANNOT CONTRIVE TO MAKE OUR WIVES DUMB
NO, WE CANNOT CONTRIVE TO MAKE OUR WIVES DUMB;
WHEN FRETTING, PERPLEXING WHEN SCOLDING AND VEXING
BE BLIND TO HER FOIBLES AND DEAF TO HER TONGUE!

(Enter MRS SURDAS and POMPEY. Exit SURDAS and MRS SURDAS
as she drags him off.)

POMPEY: Poor, poor man. There's hardly a moment when she isn't
yelling at him - or at me!

SONG 3: Pompey's Complaint

WHEN A POOR MAN IS CURSED WITH A WIFE
WHO SCOLDS AND WHO SCOLDS AND WHO SCOLDS ALL HER LIFE
WHEN HER TONGUE IT GOES STILL LIKE THE CLACK OF A MILL
LIKE A LITTLE CURSED THING THAT GOES TING-A-LING-LING
WHEN THIS THING GOES WRONG AND THE OTHER NO RIGHT
AND SHE SCOLDS HIM ALL DAY AND SHE SCOLDS HIM ALL NIGHT
AND A POOR MAN HE FINDS NO RELIEF
THEN THE BEST OF ALL BLESSINGS
POOR MASTER'S POSSESSING
IS TO BE DEAF, IS TO BE DEAF.

BUT WHEN OLD MISSUS RAVES, SCOLDS, AND TOMPS
SHE LECTURES OLD MASTER AND FLIES AT POOR POMP
WHEN 'TIS BETTY, YOU SLUT! AND POMPEY, YOU DOG!
GO DO THIS, NO, NO, NO, YOU DON'T MIND A WORD
WAS EVER POOR WOMAN (SO EASILY PLEASED)
BY HUSBAND, BY SERVANTS, BY NEIGHBORS SO TEASED;
AND DOES SHE KEEP DINGING HER TARNAL TONGUE:
HOW HAPPY AND QUIET
AT BED BOARD AND DIET
IF MISSUS WERE DUMB, IF MISSUS WERE DUMB!
(Exit POMPEY, Enter BETTY and LETTY)

BETTY: Did you hear what happened?

LETTY: No, tell me, tell me!

BETTY: Well, you know that Hetty was supposed to marry Mr Plaintain, and the fortune he recently made had Mrs Surdas very happy? Well, just now Mr Plaintain got a message that he has lost all of his money in a wild speculation scheme, and now he's a pauper!

LETTY: And the engagement? (Both look at each other, nod, make throat-slitting gesture)

BETTY: Mr Plaintain is really distraught...(Exit BETTY and LETTY, enter PLAINTAIN and HETTY)

HETTY: But Sir, I don't care if you've lost your fortune. I will still marry you - if you will still marry me.

PLAINTAIN: But I just spoke with your father, and he said that once your mother hears of this, you and I are finished.

HETTY: Oh!

Song 4 – Duet – Ye Strains of Soft Murmurs be hushed

Plaintain.

YE STRAINS OF SOFT MURMURS BE HUSHED
AH ! WHY SHOULD THE WRETCHED COMPLAIN?
WHEN HOPE BY MISFORTUNE IS CRUSHED?
THEN FRIENDSHIP AND LOVE PLEAD IN VAIN.

Hetty.

MY PARENTS THY WISHES CARESSED
WHAT JOY DANCED AROUND US THE WHILE!
IT WAS RICHES THAT SOFTEN'D THE BREAST
AND BRIGHTEND THE FACE WITH A SMILE.

Plaintain:

SHALL INTEREST ALONE BEAR THE SWAY?
SINCE POVERTY GAVE ME THE SHOCK
IN PITY NO HEART MELTS AWAY
ALL SENSELESS AND HARD AS THE ROCK.

Hetty:

NO CHANGE SHALL MY PASSION DESTROY
MY FONDNESS IS FIXED BUT ON YOU;

THE LOVE THAT IN WEALTH WAS THY JOY
SHALL BLESS THEE IN POVERTY TOO.
Both.NO CHANGE SHALL OUR PASSION DESTROY
OUR FONDNESS IS LASTING AND TRUE
THE LOVE THAT IN WEALTH WAS OUR JOY
SHALL BLESS US IN POVERTY TOO. (Repeat this verse)

(Exit PLAINTAIN and HETTY, enter MRS SURDAS)

MRS SURDAS: It's almost noon, and that fool husband of mine still hasn't found us a place to live. Aargh! We're street people! And if that weren't enough, the riches we had coming from Hettie's marriage seem to have disappeared. So there will be no new clothes, no jewels, and (angrily) no marriage! (Enter HETTY; a brief pantomime with music under follows, in which MRS SURDAS makes it clear that the wedding is off. MRS SURDAS exits. HETTY is dejected. Enter BETTY and LETTY, who confer quickly with HETTY in pantomime and then sing)

SONG 5: FLY TO HIS ARMS

Betty.

WHEN FIRST HE BEGAN BOTH TO PROMISE AND SIGH
YOU MIGHT HANG DOWN YOUR HEAD, LOOK GRAVE AND BE SHY;
"PRAY DON'T SIR, NO, NO - HOW CAN YOU TALK SO?"
BUT NOW MY DEAR MISTRESS YOU'RE SURE OF YOUR MAN.
AWAY WITH YOUR DOUBTING, YOUR SIGHING AND POUTING
AND FLY TO HIS ARMS AS FAST AS YOU CAN.

Letty.

HAD I BUT A SWEETHEART SO LOVING AND TRUE
MY MOTHER SHOULD SEE WHAT A DAMSEL COULD DO;
SHOULD SHE COAX OR RAVE, LOOK PLEASANT OR GRAVE
BAR WINDOWS OR DOORS IN PARLOUR OR HALL
IN GARRET OR CELLAR, AND STILL I WOULD TELL HER
"A GIRL FOR A LOVER CAN BREAK THROUGH THEM ALL."

Both

WHEN TEMPESTS ARE PAST, WHEN DANGERS ARE O'ER
HOW SWEET TO REVIEW THEM WHILE SAFE ON THE SHORE
EACH TRIAL OF LOVE A BLESSING WILL PROVE
WHEN SWEETHEARTS RECEIVE US WITH CIRCLING ARMS;
THERE NESTLING AND SIGHING, PANTING AND DYING
NO CLAMOUR DISTURBS US, NO DANGER ALARMS.
(HETTY is convinced to fly to his arms,)

SONG 5.5 : "LOVE, MIGHTY LOVE"

Hetty.

WHEN A BLUSHING YOUNG VIRGIN IS STILL IN HER TEENS
HOW ARTLESS, HOW CAUTIOUS, HOW TIMID SHE SEEMS;
WITH A HEART LIKE AN ASPIN SHE ROVES O'ER THE HOUSE
SHE STARTS AT A SHADOW AND SCREAMS AT A MOUSE.
YET WHEN LOVE, MIGHTY LOVE HAS EMBOLDEN 'D HER HEART
AT DANGERS MOST REAL NOW, SCORNING TO START
BUT BY DAMON INVITED SHE FEARS NO ALARMS
THUS DAUNTLESS THROUGH DANGERS SHE FLIES TO HIS ARMS.

(Enter SURDAS and CARMAN with cart, hectic and bedraggled, looking around in fear of MRS SURDAS)

SURDAS: Oh, I can't believe it - nearly four o'clock and I still can't find a place for us to live. She'll wring my neck! Oh, this-hectic city living - I wish I were back in the countryside. [note to self: next song is about a morning, but he says it is 4 pm, need to fix this! ☺gtw)

SONG 6: "MAY MORNING IN TOWN"

Letty.

THE LARKS EARLY CARROLS AND LINNETS' SOFT LAY
USHERS IN THE FIRST MORN OF SWEET MAY, SWEET MAY
WHILE EACH NYMPH JOINS THE STRAIN WITH HARMONIOUS VOICE

Betty and Pompey.

LA LA LA LA LA LA LA LA, LA LA LA LA

Letty.

THEY SING RURAL PLEASURES OR DANCE DOWN THE GLADE
WHERE NATURE'S RICH BOUNTIES PROFUSELY ARE SPREAD
THE SWAINS, TOO, ARE GAY AND TASTING OF PLEASURE
IN INNOCENT MEASURE, REJOICE.

Betty.

BUT IN TOWN ON MAY MORNING ON EVERY STREET
SUCH NUMBERS OF MIGRATING BEDSTEADS WE MEET
ONE MAY SWEAR THEY CAN 'T ALL BE FOR FAMILY USE
BUT THAT THE GOOD CITIZENS THINK IT A SIN
TO LET STRANGERS PASS BY WITHOUT TAKING THEM IN
SO OFFER A BED WITH ITEMS OF PRETTIES
WHICH CAPITAL CITIES PRODUCE.

Pompey.

HOUSEHOLD FURNITURE, CROCKERY (CROCKERY)

PICTURES AND PLATE
MAKE THE AXLETREES GROAN

Pompey , Betty, and Letty.
WITH THE HEAVY WEIGHT!

Pompey.
WHILE THE CARTS AND THE CARMEN RUN EACH OTHER DOWN
SERVANTS FIGHT AND HOUSEWIVES SCOLD IN ACCENTS SO KEEN
BYSTANDERS GRIN AT THE LUDICROUS SCENE

Pompey , Betty, and Letty . (round)
SERVANTS FIGHT AND HOUSEWIVES SCOLD IN ACCENTS SO KEEN
BYSTANDERS GRIN AT THE LUDICROUS SCENE

Bowling.
SERVANTS FIGHTING, HOUSEWIVES SCOLDING
WHAT A SIGHT I AM BEHOLDING

Plaintain.
BYSTANDERS GRINNING AT THE SCENE NOW
CAN YOU BELIEVE IT AIN 'T IT KEEN NOW

Surdas.THESE STREETS NOW, I WILL COMB
FOR I MUST FIND A NEW HOME

(ALL verses together 2X)

Letty.
WHILE CERES AND FLORA THE COUNTRY 'S ADORNING

All.
THIS !

Letty.
THIS.

All.
IS MAY MORNING IN TOWN.

[In the 1787 libretto there is a song sung here. In my 1987 notes, I wrote "SURDAS ties to sing the song on the run, knocking on imaginary doors and getting turned down, with his WIFE on his heels. Big X across it, was cut from final production, with Pompey singing "I thank her for her care" directly after "May Morning." Here are the 1797 lyrics as is.]

SONG 7 – ALL LIFE IS A MOVE

Attend my good Friends and I'll venture to prove,
From beginning to End, all Life is a move;
Still we go moving, moving on:
From Infancy onward, in Motion all, all,
'Till Death wraps us up in his black Velvet Pall,
And tells us your Movements are done.

II.

See yon sportive Infant how restless and wild;
The motions of Youth follow those of the Child:
This very plain Truth old Seneca knew;
The Youth pushes on, Sir, as fast as he can,
'Till he reaches the State of the kind married Man,
And the married have Movements too.

III

No Quiet has Colin, - the Dart in his Breast,
Compels him to wander, deprives him of Rest
'Till Phillis his Passion approve:
To yon shady Meadow he flies to his Fair
Her hand softly presses – stands motionless there
Nor does Phillis then wish to remove.

IV

The Debtor moves off, Sir, to settle his Score,
The Lawyer by Motions increases his Store,
The Doctor removes all your Pains:
By Motion sweet Mira her Bosom displays,
E'en the Earth moves to meet bright Phoebus's Rays;
'Tis Motion all Nature sustains.

Enter POMPEY.

POMPEY (to audience): No house for Surdas, no marriage for Hetty
and Mr Plaintain, and no rest for poor Pompeyl

SONG 8: "I THANK HER FOR HER CARE "

Pompey. COME OF HIGH AND LOW DEGREE,
COME POOR SERVANTS, LEARN OF ME
(Enter BETTY and LETTY)
WHEN MASTER CROSS AND MISSE GLUM
AND MISSE RING HER LARUM TONGUE
SEE HOW POMPEY DRIVE OF CARE

WITH A HA HA HA HA HA

Pompey, Betty, and Letty.
HA HA HA HA HA

Pompey .HA HA (HA HA) HA HA (HA HA)

Pompey, Betty, and Letty.
HA HA HA HA HA HA!

Pompey.
MASTER BEATS ME BLACK AND BLUE
MISSE SPLITS MY HEAD IN TWO
WITH HER TONGUE AND TILL SHE WOULD
SAY , “POMP , IT’S ALL FOR YOUR GOOD;”
THUS I THANK HER FOR HER CARE
HA HA (HA HA) HA HA (HA HA) HA HA (HA HA) HA HA (HA HA) HA
HA (HA HA) HA HA (HA HA)

Pompey, Betty, and Letty,
HA HA HAHA HA HA!
(short dance, then POMPEY, BETTY, and LETTY repeat whole song
together, with this change:)
WITH HER TONGUE AND TILL SHE WOULD
SAY, “GIRLS, IT’S ALL FOR YOUR GOOD” etc

(ENTER ALL EXCEPT PLAINTAIN AND BOWLING)

ALL: Nightfall (nightfall, nightfall, nightfall....) It's nightfall is New York.
No place to stay; it seems we've tried every house in the City. Here we
are at the very last house on the very last street. (SURDAS knocks,
BOWLING opens the door, ALL fall to their knees and freeze as
SURDAS and BOWLING converse in pantomime.)

MRS SURDAS (steps away): Wonder of wonders, miracle of miracles!
The Captain will take us in!

SONG 9 – CAPTAIN BOWLING – A TENDER FEELING HEART

(1987 note: sing only first two stanzas)

Tho' nurs'd in Storms, in Hardships bred,
The knotty Oak's the Sailor's Bed;

Tho' from the Sweets of Life debar'd,
His Hands are rough, his Features hard,
Yet this rough-hewn unpleasing Part,
Oft hides a tender feeling Heart.

What tho' his Language harshly flows,
Like Billows dashing round the Bows;
What tho' his Pleasures boisterous all,
His Music is the Boatswain's Call,
Yet when soft Strains of Pity roll,
They move his tender feeling Soul.

With Toil he gains, with Frankness grants
Forgets his own in others Wants
And feels a Pleasure to bestow,
Which frigid Landsmen never know:
Tho' rude his Form, this rugged Part,
Conceals a manly, generous Heart.

From Land to Land as Sailors Roam,
They find in every Land a Home;
Thw wretched there of every kind,
In them a sure Protection find;
The Poor lament when they depart
And bless in Tears the generous Heart.

Chorus: Though rude his Form, this rugged Part
Oft hides a tender feeling Heart.

(Exit ALL except HETTY)

HETTY: But what of me and my broken heart? (Enter PLAINIAIN) Sir,
we must run away together and seek a life of our own, even if in
poverty!

PLAINTAIN: Hetty!

HETTY: Sir!

PLAINTAIN: Stop calling me Sir, call me – Benjamin! (Clears throat)
Hetty!

HETTY: Benjamin!

PLAINTAIN: Oh, Hetty!

HETTY: Oh, Benjamin!

PLAINTAIN: Let's go!

HETTY: Do let's go! (THEY don't move)

(Enter BETTY, LETTY, and POMPEY; PLAINTAIN and HETTY, startled, begin to run away)

POMPEY: Hallo, Miss Hetty!

HETTY: We must flee!

PLAINTAIN: Alone and together - in poverty!

LETTY: Well, go if you will, but if you stick around -

POMPEY, BETTY, and LETTY: You'll soon be a rich, married couple!

HETTY: But how could this be?

(The following exchange goes rapidly)

BETTY: It turns out that Captain Bowling, who so kindly let us rent rooms in his home -

LETTY: And thus saved your father's life -

POMPEY: And your mother from a murder charge -

BETTY: It turns out that, by an amazing coincidence, the captain is Mr. Plaintain's second cousin twice removed -

LETTY: And has been searching high and low for you -

BETTY: In order to give you half of the inheritance bequeathed both of you by an ancient great-uncle!

LETTY: He could have kept the money and said nothing -

BETTY: But he has such a kind and generous and honest heart he will share with you the fortune that rightfully belongs to both of you.

PLAINTAIN: Am I rich again? (MAIDS nod delightedly)

POMPEY: And when your mother heard of this, she insisted that you two get married -

(Enter MRS SURDAS and ALL) MRS SURDAS: Right now!

SONG 10: FINALE – Never More Removing

HETTY

Does Pleasure thus succeed to pain?
Have Parents grown soft-hearted?
Does Love and Fortune smile again?
And shall we ne'er be parted?

PLAINTAIN

Thus we unite, and ne'er shall part,
But Wealth and joy possessing
For love rewards the constant heart
With his most costly blessing

BOTH and CHORUS

While city folks are moving,
while city folks are moving
Love makes his home within our hearts (H and P only)
Never more removing.

CAPT BOWLING

Come list ye Landmen all to me,
Who've cross'd the angry Ocean,
Who've plough'd the yawning stormy Sea,
And felt its horrid Motion.
When Dangers threat, and human Life
Hangs by a Thread so slender,
In that dread Hour your surest Hope
Is that your Hearts were tender.
Whilst city folk are moving,
whilst city folk are moving
I'll change my Ship and cross the Seas;
A sailor's joy is moving.

POMPEY

And shall poor Pompey peak one Word?
Will Massa lend an Ear, Sir?

When Baccra hire him a new House,
He no move a whole year, Sir:
But Misse Tongue go to and fro,
It fly from North to South, Sir;
Den don't old Misse alwayhave
A May Day in her mouth, Sir
Baccra May Day moving
Baccra May Day moving
But Massa Cane and Misse Tongue,
Da always do keep moving.

MRS SURDUS

Come_ hold your Tongue you Rogue, was e'er
Poor Woman so unlucky,
As_ to be plagu'd with saucy Fools;
(*Mr Surdus:*) Did you speak to me my Ducky?
Kind Friends, tho' Surdus now appears,
So deaf to Ducke's Noises,
Yet Wignell has a pair of Ears
Both ope to your Applauses.

CHORUS

Whilst you good Folks are moving,
Whilst you good Folks are moving
A grateful Heart dwells in my Breast,
Never more removing.

FINIS.