

SO THERE THEY SIT
(aria for Mezzo)

from

THE GOLDEN GATE
opera in two acts

music by
CONRAD CUMMINGS

libretto from the novel-in-verse by
VIKRAM SETH
adapted by the composer



Composer's Note

Vikram Seth's best-selling novel-in-verse about love and loss in San Francisco in the 1980's, "The Golden Gate," touches on all the nostalgia I feel for my home town and reminds me acutely of the adventures of my younger life. Boys with girls, boys with boys, it's all there, along with the exhilaration and the heartbreak. Seth's verse makes these experiences sing; I've tried to capture in music their unique mixture of pathos and humor.

Feel Free to Contact Me

Singers and pianists should feel free to contact me at conrad@conradcummings.com with any questions, reactions, or thoughts. I am always open to suggestions about customizing the vocal line to best suit your voice.

Synopsis

Five twenty-somethings experience love, life, and loss in the magical and innocent San Francisco of the early 1980's. JOHN BROWN (baritone), handsome and successful, will discover too late the price of his emotional detachment. He meets LIZ DORATI (soprano) through a personals ad placed by his former college girlfriend JANET HAYAKAWA (mezzo), a sculptor and punk rock drummer. Meanwhile, John's best friend from college PHILIP WEISS (bass), reeling from a divorce which has left him the single parent of six-year-old PAUL WEISS (spoken role), begins a passionate relationship with ED DORATI (tenor), Liz's younger brother. Couples come apart; new couples form, families are created, friendships are severed. A tragic death leads John, always the outsider, to the promise of a deeper connection and a warmer life.

Where the Aria Comes in the Opera

John is devastated by his breakup with Liz and feels betrayed by her marriage to his best friend Phil. He buries himself in work and singles bars. His former girlfriend Jan finds him in a bar and takes him to the Cafe Trieste. Over coffee she struggles with her conflicted feelings about him.

JAN:

So there they sit – and John is smiling,
And Jan is not – and John says, “Jan?”
And Jan thinks, “He’s forever riling
Me – why don’t I dislike this man?
Politically he’s close to Nero.
For tolerance he scores a zero
Despite his catacombs of books.
Am I just turned on by his looks? . . .
At one time I was mad about him.
Still, we broke up, and time’s slipped by
And I’m still here. In those days I
Could hardly think of life without him.
Poor Jan,” she thinks, “I wish I could
Have been there. I’d have done me good.”

— from Vikram Seth’s novel-in-verse “The Golden Gate,” Chapter 11, Verse 42

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(aria for Mezzo)

version 6/28/15

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$\text{♩} = 104$

Jan (Mezzo-soprano)

Piano

f

4 *broaden slightly* *a tempo but a shade faster* $\text{♩} = 108$ *p*

So there they sit

Pno.

mf *p*

7 *mp* *mp* *mf*

and John is smil ing, ——— And Jan is not --

Pno.

mp *mf*

11 *f mp f f mad, emphatic*

Jan and John says, "Jan?" And

Pno. *f mp f ff*

15

Jan Jan thinks, "He's for-ev-er ril-ing Me.

Pno.

19 *mf*

Jan Why don't I dis - like this man? Po - lit-ic' ly he's close to Ne ro...

Pno. *mf*

23 *cresc.*

Jan For tol - er-ance he scores a ze - ro De-spite his cat - a-combs of

Pno. *cresc.*

26 *f* *cresc.* *ff*

Jan books. Am I just turned on by his looks?...

Pno. *f* *cresc.* *ff*

31 *f*

Jan At one time

Pno. *ffz* *f*

35

Jan I was mad a - bout him.

Pno.

38

Jan Still, we broke up, and time slipped by

Pno.

41 *mf*

Jan

And I'm still here. In those days I Could hard-ly think of

Pno.

mf

45 *ff*

Jan

life with-out him. Poor Jan," she thinks,

*long, shocked silence,
she realizes how sad she is
underneath her anger and
bluster*

*absolutely
abrupt stop*

Pno.

f mf ff p

(Jan thinks back on her younger self, wishing she knew then what she knows now.)

49 ♩ = approx. 48 *sadly and tenderly*

Jan

"Poor Jan, _____ I wish I could Have been there.

Pno.

53 *a little slower*

Jan

I'd have done me good."

Pno.

56

Jan

rit. (lots of time)

dim. pp

Pno.