

Libretto by Melanie Challenger based on “Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl” written by Anne Frank
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1. Introit - prelude (instrumental)
2. The capture foretold
3. The plan to go into hiding
4. The last night at home and arrival at the Annexe
5. Life in hiding
6. Courage
7. Fear of capture and the second break-in
8. Sinfonia (Kyrie)
9. The Dream
10. Devastation of the outside world
11. Passing of time
12. The hope of liberation and a spring awakening
13. The capture and the concentration camp
14. Anne’s meditation

LIBRETTO
by Melanie Challenger

1 Introit – prelude

2 The capture foretold

Up above you can hear the breathing,
eight pounding hearts, footsteps on the stairs,
a rattling on the bookcase.
Suddenly, a couple of bangs.
Doors slammed inside the house.

(11th April, 1944)

We are in blue sky,
surrounded by black clouds.
See it, the perfectly round spot?
but the clouds are moving in,
and the ring between danger grows smaller.
We look at the fighting below,
and the peace and beauty above,
but the dark mass of clouds looms before us,
and tries to crush us.
O ring, ring, open wide and let us out!

(8th November, 1943)

3 The plan to go into hiding

When would we go into hiding?
Where would we hide?
In the city? In the country? In a house? In a shack?
(8th July, 1942)

These questions kept running through my mind.
I started packing my important belongings.
The first thing was my diary.
Memories mean more to me than dresses.
(8th July, 1942)

Ik zal, hoop ik, aan jou alles kunnen toevertrouwen, zoals
ik het nog aan niemand gekund heb, en ik hoop dat je
een grote steun voor me zult zijn.
(12th June, 1942)

It seems like years since Sunday morning.
So much has happened,
it's as if the whole world had
suddenly turned upside down.
(8th July, 1942)

4 The last night at home and arrival at the annexe

My last night in my own bed.
A warm rain fell.
The four of us wrapped in layers of clothing,
the stripped beds, the breakfast things on the table.
We closed the door behind us.
(8th July, 1942)

Walking in the pouring rain,
walking down the street,
each of us with a satchel filled to the brim.
(9th July, 1942)

We arrived at Prinsengracht,
led through the long passage
and up the wooden staircase
to the Annexe.
The door was shut behind us,
leaving us alone.

Alone.
Then for the first time,
I found a moment to tell you about it,
to realise what had happened to me
and what was about to happen.
(10th July, 1942)

We're Jews in chains,
chained to one spot,
without any rights,
a thousand obligations.
We must be brave
and trust in God.

(11th April, 1944)

5 Life in hiding

The days here are very quiet.

(1st October, 1942)

Having to sit still all day
and not say a word,
you can imagine how
hard that is for me.
On ordinary days, we speak in a whisper.
Not being able to talk is worse.

(29th September, 1942)

The silence makes me so nervous,
but the chiming of the Westertoren clock
reassures me at night.

(11th July, 1942)

You no doubt want to hear
what I think of life in hiding?

(11th July, 1942)

The blue sky, the bare chestnut tree,
glistening with dew,
the seagulls, glinting with silver
swooping through the air.
As long as this exists,
this sunshine and this cloudless sky,
how can I be sad?

(23rd February, 1944)

Prospectus and Guide to the Secret Annexe.
A Unique Facility for the Temporary Accommodation of
Jews and Other Dispossessed Persons.

Now our Annexe has truly become a secret,
a bookcase has been built in front of the entrance.
It swings on its hinges
and opens like a door.

It is Open All Year Round,
Located in Beautiful, Quiet, Wooded Surroundings,
In the Heart of Amsterdam.

Inside it is Necessary to Speak Softly at all times,
Singing is Permissible, only Softly and After Six pm!
(17th November, 1942)

The strangest things happen when you're in hiding.
Try to picture this.
We scrub ourselves in a tin tub,
since the curtains are drawn,
we scrub ourselves in the dark,
while one looks out the window
and gazes at the endlessly amusing people.
(29th September, 1942)

The children run around in thin shirts
and wooden clogs.
They have no coats, no socks,
no caps and no one to help them.
Gnawing on a carrot to still their hunger,
they walk from their cold houses through cold streets.
(13th January, 1943)

One day this terrible war will be over,
and we'll be people again,
and not just Jews.
(11th April, 1944)

6 Courage

If you become part of the suffering,
you'd be entirely lost.
(7th March, 1944)

Der Winter ist vergangen.
Ich seh' des Maien Schein;
Ich seh' die Blümlein prangen;
Des ist mein Herz erfreut.
Da singt Frau Nachtigalle
Und manch' Waldvögelein.¹
(German trad.)

Beauty remains,
even in misfortune.
One who is happy will make others happy,
one who has courage will never die in misery.
(7th March, 1944)

Ade, mein' Allerliebste!
Ade, schön's Blümlein!
Ade, schön' Rosenblume;
Es muß geschieden sein!
Das Herz in meinem Leibe
Gehört ja allzeit dein.

(German trad.)

¹ *Annelies Marie Frank was born in the German city of Frankfurt to German parents, and lived in Germany until her family emigrated to Holland when she was four years old. Her mother was always more comfortable with the German language than with Dutch. Although Anne learned Dutch, and wrote the diary in her adopted language, she was familiar with German poems and prayers, especially those given to her by her mother. This was originally a Dutch song that became popular in Germany during the seventeenth century. Its translation reads:*

"The winter is over, I see the light of May; I see blossoms everywhere; and my heart is pleased. There sings the Nightingale and the small forest birds; Goodbye, my beloved! Goodbye, beautiful blossoms! Goodbye, beautiful rose flower; I must leave you. My love for you will burn in my heart forever." MC.

7 Fear of capture and the second break-in

In the evenings,
when it's dark,
lines of good innocent people
and crying children
walk on and on,
ordered by men who bully
and beat them.
No one is spared,
all are marched to their death.

(19th November, 1942)

Westerbork! Westerbork!²
Night after night,
green and grey vehicles
cruise the streets
and knock on every door.

(19th November, 1942)

Westerbork! Westerbork!
Sshh. I heard a sound from the bookcase,
hammering on the door.
We turned white with fear.
Had he heard something, this stranger?
Open up! Open up!
In my imagination,
the man kept growing and growing,
until he become a giant,
the cruellest fascist in the world.

(20th October, 1942)

² *The Dutch Jews were required to build and pay for a refugee camp when Justice Minister Goseling allowed 8,000 refugees into the Netherlands in 1938. This refugee camp, which was built at Westerbork, later became the transit camp where Jews were held before being taken to Auschwitz and Sobibor.*

8 *Kyrie* – Sinfonia

Kyrie eleison.

(Greek liturgical)

Help us. Rescue us from this hell.

(27th November, 1943)

We must be brave and trust in God.

(11th April, 1944)

9 The dream

Last night, just as I was falling asleep,
an old friend appeared before me.
I saw her there,
dressed in rags,
her face thin and worn.
She looked at me with such sadness.
Anne, why have you deserted me?
Help me, help me, rescue me from this hell!

(27th November, 1943)

To me, she is the suffering of all my friends,
and all the Jews.
When I pray for her,
I pray for all those in need.

(6th January, 1944)

Merciful God,
comfort her,
remain with her so she won't be alone.

(27th November, 1943)

Dear God,
watch over her and bring her back to us.

(29th December, 1943)

10 Devastation of the outside world

On Sunday, Amsterdam was bombed.

(19th July, 1943)

The planes dived and climbed.
The air was abuzz with the drone of engines.

(26th July, 1943)

The streets are in ruins, countless are wounded.
In the smouldering ruins, children search forlornly

for their parents.

(19th July, 1943)

It makes me shiver
to think of the dull, distant drone
of approaching destruction.

(19th July, 1943)

I wander from room to room,
climb up and down the stairs
and feel like a songbird,
whose wings have been ripped off
and who keeps hurling itself
against the bars of its dark cage.

(29th October, 1943)

'Let me out, where there's fresh air and laughter,'
a voice within me cries.

(29th October, 1943)

11 **Passing of time**

The years went by.
There's a saying: 'Time heals all wounds,'
that's how it was for me.

(7th January, 1944)

Until one day,
I saw my face in the mirror.
It looked so different.
My eyes were clear and deep,
my cheeks were rosy,
my mouth was softer.
I looked happy,
and yet, in my expression, there was something
so sad.

(7th January, 1944)

12 **The hope of liberation and a spring awakening**

This is D-Day,
this is the day.
Fighting will come,
but after this the victory!
Eleven thousand planes,
four thousand boats,
is this the beginning
of the long-awaited liberation?

(6th June, 1944)

I walk from one room to another,

breathe through the crack in the window frame,
feel my heart beating as if to say,
'Fulfil my longing at last...'
I think spring is inside me,
I feel spring awakening,
I feel it in my entire body and soul.

(12th February, 1944)

Ich danke dir für all das Gute und Liebe und Schöne.³
(7th March, 1944)

³ *This phrase appears in German in the diary. It translates:
'Thank you, God, for all that is good and dear and beautiful'.*

13 The capture and the concentration camp

On August the 4th 1944,
a car pulled up at Prinsengracht.
Several figures emerged,
armed, and dressed in civilian clothes.
The eight residents of the Annexe
were taken to prison,
and from there, transported to Westerbork,
and onwards to the concentration camps.
(information from contemporary reports)
The atmosphere is stifling,
outside you don't hear a single bird.
A deathly silence hangs in the air.
It clings to me as if it were going to drag me
into the deepest regions of the underworld.

(29th October, 1943)⁴

There is no speech or language
where their voice is not heard.
Their sound is gone out
through all the earth,
and their words to the end of the world.

(Psalm xix, verses 3-4)

Their blood have they shed like water,
and there was none who could bury them.

(Psalm lxxix, verse 3)

The young and the old lie on the ground;
the maids and young men are fallen.

(Lamentations ii, verse 21)

⁴ *Some aspects of life in hiding were similar to life in the concentration camps. Anne did not continue her diary after she left the Annexe, but this extract, written about the Annexe, echoes the atmosphere described by others of the Nazi concentration camps.*

14 **Anne's meditation**

I see the world being slowly
turned into wilderness.

I hear the approaching thunder,
that one day will destroy us too.

And yet, when I look at the sky,
I feel that everything
will change for the better.

(15th July, 1944)

Whenever you feel lonely or sad,
try going to the loft
on a beautiful day and looking
at the sky.

As long as you can look
fearlessly at the sky,
you'll know you're pure within.

(23rd February, 1944)