

The Edge of a Dream

(Libretto)

SYNOPSIS:

High school student Maria struggles with feelings of anxiety and peer pressure while trying to decide how to fill out a future career survey for her class. She finds the courage to pursue her dreams when her father tells her about Ada Lovelace, a young woman in Victorian England, and how her vision for the future shaped mathematician Charles Babbage's quest to build the first computer. Inspired by Ada's independence, courage, and the depth of her vision for the machine's future possibilities, Maria is empowered and excited about choosing her own path and making a difference in the world.

CAST:

Maria: A school student (*spoken only*)
Maria's Father: Baritone
Ada Lovelace: Soprano
Charles Babbage: Baritone (*this may be the same singer as Maria's Father*)
Chorus

ORCHESTRATION:

violin
cello
piano (*or synthesizer*)

Scene 1:

[Setting: At Maria's home. Her father is on the phone talking to the school career counsellor, Maria sits quietly at a table sketching flying machines]

1a. (Instrumental introduction)

1b. Segue into (Underscore)

FATHER:

Have you talked to the career counselor at school? She called and asked if you could turn in your job survey? Have you thought about what you want to be? A doctor? A lawyer? A cartoonist like me? (laughs)

MARIA:

I can't decide, papa! There are so many things I'd like to choose, but I'm scared I won't be good enough. What if the other students laugh at me?

1c. This is a Room of our Design

CHORUS:

THIS IS A ROOM OF OUR DESIGN.
THIS IS A ROOM OF OUR DESIGN.
A GILDED CHAIN, A FAMILIAR NAME.
A LIFE BOUND TO OTHERS' DREAMS IS FINE.

THIS IS A ROOM OF OUR DESIGN.
THIS IS A ROOM OF OUR DESIGN.
A GILDED CHAIN, A FAMILIAR NAME.
A LIFE BOUND TO OTHERS' DREAMS IS FINE.

CHORUS continued

NO NEED TO FLY, NO NEED TO DREAM.

NO NEED TO FLY, NO NEED TO DREAM.

NO NEED TO FLY, NO NEED TO DREAM.

THIS IS A ROOM OF OUR DESIGN.

NO NEED TO FLY,

THIS IS A ROOM OF OUR DESIGN.

NO NEED TO DREAM.

THIS IS A ROOM OF OUR DESIGN.

NO NEED TO FLY,

THIS IS A ROOM OF OUR DESIGN.

NO NEED TO DREAM

STAY SAFE, STAY QUIET, STAY SMALL.

THIS IS A ROOM OF OUR DESIGN.

NO NEED TO FLY,

THIS IS A ROOM OF OUR DESIGN.

NO NEED TO DREAM.

THIS IS A ROOM OF OUR DESIGN.

NO NEED TO FLY,

THIS IS A ROOM OF OUR DESIGN.

NO NEED TO DREAM.

STAY SAFE, STAY QUIET, STAY SMALL.

[Menacing, whispering freely: “Stay safe, stay quiet, stay small”]

THE WORLD IS A DANGEROUS PLACE

THE WORLD IS A DANGEROUS PLACE

THE WORLD IS A DANGEROUS PLACE

THE WORLD IS A DANGEROUS PLACE

THE WORLD IS A DANGEROUS PLACE

THE WORLD IS A DANGEROUS PLACE

1d. Underscore, transition to scene 2

FATHER:

Oh honey. The world is full of voices that will tell you you’re not good enough – don’t let them get to you. Listen, have you ever heard of Ada Lovelace? She was a girl a lot like you. Back in the 1800’s, no one expected a woman to have much to contribute to science, let alone a teenage girl. But she wasn’t afraid to dream and to ask big questions.

Scene 2a. Instrumental intro, outside Babbage’s Party

[Setting: The year 1832, outside Charles Babbage’s salon where he is lecturing on his analytical engine (a primitive computer). A crowd is milling around, chatting sociably in small groups to each other as ADA enters.]

2b. Ada's Aria If I speak, Will You Hear Me.

ADA:

HERE THE MEN OF SCIENCE GATHER,
VOICES LIKE A STORM.
SO MANY OPINIONS AND SPECULATIONS,
SO MANY CONJECTURES AND PONTIFICATIONS,
WHAT COULD I POSSIBLY OFFER?
HERE A CONSTELLATION OF MINDS IS FORMING,
EACH MORE BRILLIANT THAN THE LAST.
MEN OF SCIENCE, IS THERE ROOM ENOUGH FOR ME?
IF I SPEAK WILL YOU HEAR ME?
IF I SPEAK WILL YOU HEAR ME?

WHAT IF I WANT TO SEARCH THE HEARTS OF STARS?
TO LOOK BEYOND THE GALAXY'S SWIRL?
TO BUILD AN AUTOMATON
WHO IMAGINES A WORLD
WHERE EVEN A GIRL CAN BE
WHO SHE DREAMS TO BE?

MEN OF SCIENCE, IS THERE ROOM ENOUGH FOR ME?
IF I SPEAK, WILL YOU HEAR ME?
IF I SPEAK, WILL YOU HEAR ME?

OR WILL YOU SAY, AS YOU ALWAYS SAY,
THERE'S NO NEED TO FLY, NO NEED TO DREAM
NO NEED TO FLY, NO NEED TO DREAM.
MY SILENCE IS ENOUGH FOR YOU,
BUT WILL IT EVER BE ENOUGH FOR ME?

SEE HOW THE MEN OF SCIENCE CIRCLE THIS WONDERFUL MACHINE.
THIS BEAUTIFUL FRAGMENT OF BABBAGE'S DREAM.
HOW THEY STRUGGLE TO COMPREHEND
CAN'T THEY SEE THIS IS NOT AN END,
BUT A BEGINNING?

WHEN I SPEAK...WHEN I SPEAK...
WHEN I SPEAK, WILL YOU HEAR ME?
WHEN I SPEAK, WILL YOU HEAR ME?
WHEN I SPEAK, WILL YOU HEAR ME?
HERE'S WHERE I ENTER IN.

Scene 3. At the Lecture/ The Analytical Engine

[Setting: Inside, at the lecture. BABBAGE is presenting his analytical engine (a primitive computer) to the audience as ADA walks in.]

BABBAGE:

The analytical engine is a general purpose calculating machine. No need for a separate machine for every problem. Instead of thousands fixed on their singular tasks, we could

have one, a machine that works with numbers encoded on cards, that can solve any problem we define.

Are there any questions?

Music Begins

ADA:

YES, MISTER BABBAGE...

CHORUS:

MISTER BABBAGE, HOW DOES IT WORK?

BABBAGE:

WEREN'T YOU LISTENING?

ADA:

YES, MISTER BABBAGE...

CHORUS:

MISTER BABBAGE, IS IT FOR SALE?

BABBAGE:

NO! WHERE ARE THE SCIENTIFIC QUESTIONS?

ADA:

CAN IT HANDLE TRANSCRIPTION ERRORS?

CHORUS:

CAN IT FIND ME A WIFE?

BABBAGE:

NO! WHERE ARE THE MEN OF SCIENCE?

ADA:

CAN IT HANDLE TRANSCRIPTION ERRORS?

CHORUS:

CAN IT PICK WINNING HORSES?

BABBAGE:

NO! THAT'S NOT HOW IT WORKS!

ADA:

CAN IT SOLVE MULTIVARIABLE EQUATIONS?

CHORUS:

CAN IT FIT IN MY POCKET?

BABBAGE:

WHY? WHY WOULD YOU ASK ME THAT?

CHORUS:

**HOW DOES IT WORK?
CAN IT PICK WINNING HORSES?
CAN IT FIND ME A WIFE?
CAN IT FIT IN MY POCKET
MAKE IT FIT IN MY POCKET!
CAN IT MAKE ME A DRINK?**

ADA & BABBAGE:

**THEY DON'T UNDERSTAND
THE FUTURE LIES INSIDE
THIS MACHINE
THEY DON'T UNDERSTAND
THE FUTURE LIES INSIDE
THIS MACHINE**

ADA:

SIR, MISTER BABBAGE...

CHORUS:

MISTER BABBAGE, HOW DOES IT WORK?

BABBAGE:

WE'VE BEEN THROUGH THIS ALREADY!

ADA:

SIR, MISTER BABBAGE...

CHORUS:

MISTER BABBAGE, IS IT FOR SALE?

BABBAGE:

THIS FEELS LIKE DÉJÀ VU!

ADA:

CAN IT HANDLE TRANSCRIPTION ERRORS?

CHORUS:

CAN IT FIND ME A WIFE?

BABBAGE:

NO! WHERE ARE THE MEN OF SCIENCE?

ADA:

CAN IT HANDLE TRANSCRIPTION ERRORS?

CHORUS:

CAN IT PICK WINNING HORSES?

BABBAGE:

NO! WE'VE DONE THIS ALREADY!

ADA:

CAN IT SOLVE MULTIVARIABLE EQUATIONS?

CHORUS:

CAN IT FIT IN MY POCKET?

BABBAGE:

WHY? WHY WOULD YOU ASK ME THAT?

ADA & BABBAGE

THIS THINKING MACHINE
CAN CALCULATE
MUCH MORE THAN NUMBER,
EACH BEAUTIFUL LINE
A LANGUAGE OF ORDER,
TO FORGE A PATH BEYOND.

THEY DON'T UNDERSTAND
THE FUTURE LIES
INSIDE THIS MACHINE!
THEY DON'T UNDERSTAND
THE FUTURE LIES
INSIDE THIS MACHINE!

CHORUS:

HOW DOES IT WORK?
WHY ALL THE NUMBERS?
HOW DOES IT WORK?
WHY ALL THE NUMBERS?
HOW DOES IT WORK?
WHY ALL THE NUMBERS?
HOW DOES IT WORK?

WE DON'T UNDERSTAND
WE DON'T UNDERSTAND
WE DON'T UNDERSTAND
WE DON'T UNDERSTAND
IT'S ONLY NUMBERS
IT'S ONLY NUMBERS
IT'S ONLY NUMBERS
IT'S ONLY NUMBERS
WHAT'S THE FUSS?
WHAT'S THE FUSS?
WHAT'S THE FUSS?
WHAT'S THE FUSS?

(finally breaking through with a questions)

ADA:

But what would it mean if the cards didn't just represent numbers?

(surprised at such a perceptive question from such an unexpected place.)

BABBAGE:

What was that? Let's hear what the girl has to say.

4a. Underscore

[Setting: Still at the salon, Ada and Babbage move away from the crowd, lost in discussion.]

ADA:

Mr. Babbage, is your machine confined solely to the work of mathematical calculation and scientific exploration? Or is there other work that it may do?

BABBAGE:

All things, my dear Ada, can be broken down to the tasks of addition, subtraction, division, multiplication. It is a machine attuned to number, capable of revealing the world of science, one calculation at a time.

4b. *Edge of a Dream* (duet for Ada and Babbage)

BABBAGE

The machine is thence capable
of performing every calculation;
Addition, subtraction, division,
multiplication.

We can see its use is confined to cases
where numbers are required.

Who can foresee
the consequences of such an
invention?

ADA

Why does it feel he beholds a simple hill
where I see a mountain
surrounded by fields?

Here at the edge of a dream
there are no fences, no boundary lines.
This machine is more
than a simple function
I can imagine the reach of its shadow.

Why can't they see?
This engine weaves patterns like a loom
weaves flowers and leaves.

ADA

WHAT IS THIS MACHINE, BUT A FINELY TUNED ORCHESTRA
CAPABLE OF PLAYING ANY SYMPHONY?
SOMEDAY IT MIGHT GO BEYOND NUMBER,
CREATING ART AND MUSICAL WONDER
TRANSPORTING US THROUGH TIME AND SPACE.

HERE AT THE EDGE OF THIS DREAM
I SEE THERE ARE NO FETTERS,
THIS MACHINE CAN BE ANYTHING
IT CAN DREAM MY DREAM

LET ME WRITE ALL THAT I CAN IMAGINE
LET MY NOTES SPILL OVER LIKE A SEA,
MY MIND LIES REVEALED
HERE, AT THE EDGE OF MY DREAM.

Scene 5a. Retransition, underscore

[Setting: Back at Maria's home in present time, her father finishes his story about Ada Lovelace.]

FATHER:

Later, Ada would write extensive notes about the machine that helped lay the foundation for modern computer science. She was the very first computer programmer. You could say we live in the world she imagined. There's something amazing waiting for you too, Maria. Just follow your heart and your mind.

MARIA:

She really was a girl who could see what others could not see. I want to be like that. Someone who isn't afraid to chase their dreams.

5b. *The Future Begins* (tutti finale)

Father and Ada:

JUST FOLLOW YOUR HEART,
JUST FOLLOW YOUR HEART,

JUST FOLLOW YOUR MIND.
JUST FOLLOW YOUR MIND.

CHORUS:

THERE'S NO NEED TO FEAR,
NO NEED TO DOUBT.
NO NEED TO FEAR,
NO NEED TO DOUBT.

ADA:

I'LL SPEAK

FATHER:

JUST SPEAK

Chorus:

**I'LL SPEAK.
I WON'T HIDE THIS DREAM OF MINE
THERE'S NO ONE STOPPING ME, BUT ME.
I'LL TRUST MY HEART, I'LL TRUST MY MIND
I'LL MAKE MY PLACE IN HISTORY**

ALL:

JUST SPEAK

CHORUS:

**THERE'S NO NEED TO FEAR,
NO NEED TO DOUBT.
NO NEED TO FEAR,
NO NEED TO DOUBT.**

ADA & FATHER

**JUST FOLLOW YOUR HEART
JUST FOLLOW YOUR MIND
JUST FOLLOW YOUR HEART
JUST FOLLOW YOUR MIND**

ALL:

JUST SPEAK, I'LL SPEAK

CHORUS:

**HERE'S WHERE I ENTER IN,
HERE, I OPEN MY MOUTH,
HERE'S WHERE MY FUTURE BEGINS
LET ME SPEAK UP! LET ME SPEAK OUT!
HERE AT THE EDGE OF MY DREAM,
THERE'S NO ROOM FOR DOUBT,
HERE'S WHERE MY FUTURE BEGINS
LET ME SPEAK UP! LET ME SPEAK OUT!**

ADA

**I WILL SEARCH THE HEARTS OF STARS,
I'LL LOOK BEYOND THE GALAXY'S SWIRL
I'LL PUSH MYSELF AGAINST THE ODDS
AND FIND MY PLACE WITHIN THIS WORLD**

ALL:

JUST SPEAK

CHORUS

**THERE'S NO NEED TO FEAR,
NO NEED TO DOUBT.
THERE'S NO NEED TO FEAR,
NO NEED TO DOUBT.**

ADA & FATHER

**JUST FOLLOW YOUR HEART
JUST FOLLOW YOUR MIND
JUST FOLLOW YOUR HEART
JUST FOLLOW YOUR MIND**

ALL:

I'LL SPEAK

CHORUS:

**HERE'S WHERE I ENTER IN,
HERE, I OPEN MY MOUTH,
HERE'S WHERE MY FUTURE BEGINS
LET ME SPEAK UP! LET ME SPEAK OUT!**

**HERE AT THE EDGE OF MY DREAM,
THERE'S NO ROOM FOR DOUBT,
HERE'S WHERE MY FUTURE BEGINS
LET ME SPEAK UP! LET ME SPEAK OUT!**

**I WILL SEARCH THE HEARTS OF STARS,
I'LL LOOK BEYOND THE GALAXY'S SWIRL
I'LL PUSH MYSELF AGAINST THE ODDS
AND FIND MY PLACE WITHIN THIS WORLD.**

ALL:

**I'LL SPEAK MY DREAM.
I'LL SPEAK MY DREAM.**

THE END.