

5/19/22

SEPTIMUS AND CLARISSA

EXCERPT

by Ellen McLaughlin

From the novel *Mrs. Dalloway* by Virginia Woolf

Written in collaboration with Ripe Time,

Rachel Dickstein, artistic director

Ripe Time

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Brooklyn, NY 11238

Production notes:

This version of the text of *Septimus and Clarissa* is a product of a series of workshops in New York, the first in the fall of 2009 at Ripe Time in Brooklyn, the second in the summer of 2010, at Classic Stage Co. in NYC, co-produced by Red Bull Theater and Ripe Time, followed by a few week-long workshops conducted at The South Oxford Space and culminating in the full production at Baruch Performing Arts Center September 7th-Oct. 7th, 2011.

Rachel Dickstein, the director of the piece and artistic director of Ripe Time, and Gina Leishman, the composer, were primary collaborators from the beginning and did much to determine the nature of the approach. The designers, Susan Rogers, (set) Oana Botez, (costumes) Jane Shaw, (sound) and Chris Akerlind, and Keith Parham (lights) made essential contributions to our thinking about the piece, as did all the actors who worked with us over the years.

This version of the text attempts to give a sense of the qualities of the particular production these collaborators made together, with some indications of the staging and the set design. It's far less possible to give any real notion of the way the music worked except to say that the piece was very nearly through-composed, providing a musical counterpoint to the spoken text that occasionally, particularly during dance sequences, took precedence.

Overall concept:

We attempted to create a theatrical equivalent for Woolf's radical experiment in literature. The novel is fascinated by consciousness, allowing the reader to slide in and out of the minds of its characters with a bracing freedom. We are privy to the minds and hearts of a wide array of people,

often strangers to each other, with nothing in common except that they are all living out one particular June day in the London of 1923. Characters ride the currents of their moment-to-moment reality or are rocked helplessly back into the past by memory, desire and regret. The theater, with its flexibility and its inherently metaphorical nature seemed ideal for capturing the fluid quality of consciousness and the abstract power of revelation. Movement, sound and music were given equal weight with the text and the design elements as we sought a new theatrical language to bring the wealth and complexity of the novel off the page and into the immediacy of performance.

Acting style:

Most of the play is performed by actors speaking in the third person and in the past tense, even when they are referring to themselves as they play their characters. For instance, the actor playing Clarissa Dalloway begins the play by saying, as Clarissa, “Mrs. Dalloway said that she would buy the flowers herself.” The challenge for the actors is to perform the text with the same immediacy as they would if it was written in the first person and in the present tense, and to resist letting the tone become too narrative and passive while retaining the advantages that the objective perspective and heightened language give us.

A further challenge for the actors is that many of the characters are voiced by more than one actor. One actor is designated as the central figure portraying the character, but other actors supplement the voice, looking on, supporting and questioning, adding dimension. This allows us to achieve a choral dynamic which creates more texture for passages that would otherwise be simple monologues. But it also gives us a theatrical means of exploring the fracturing of consciousness that Woolf is doing in the novel.

For instance, Mrs. Dalloway is voiced primarily by the actor designated as Clarissa, but is often also voiced by the actor designated as Ensemble 1. Supplementary character lines like this are called “aspects” in the script. They might equally be called “shadows” or “others”. Each one an empathetic witness, a part of the self that is always just outside the self, looking on. The fact that the actor playing the aspect of Clarissa Dalloway is played by the actor who plays Sally Seton, Clarissa’s first great love, is intentional and provides further nuance to the nature of this presence inside her consciousness. What we are trying to capture is a psychological reality-- the way that consciousness has multiplicity, a sense that there is more than one voice speaking one’s thoughts and that those other voices are sometimes tinged by the ghosts of people outside the self. Septimus’s aspect, for instance, is played by the actor, (Ensemble 2), who plays Evans, the officer whose death quite literally haunts Septimus. It is as if Evans’s presence had been internalized after his death to become Septimus’s other self, the presence that is always speaking inside him and watching what he does.

Note on the text:

One speech follows another except when a slash (/) indicates that the second speaker should begin to overlap his or her line over the end of the first's.

For instance:

CLARISSA: and at the same time a grown woman / coming to her parents who stood by the lake,

YOUNG CLARISSA: coming to her parents who stood by the lake, holding her life in her arms which, as she neared them, grew larger and larger in her arms, until it became a whole life,

This indicates that Clarissa and Young Clarissa say “coming to her parents who stood by the lake” together, after which Young Clarissa goes on to finish her line.

The play is performed by nine actors.

The major characters played by the actors are as follows:

Clarissa Dalloway

Septimus Warren Smith

Ensemble 1., Aspect of Clarissa, Sally Seton, Lady Bradshaw

Ensemble 2., Aspect of Septimus, Young Peter, Evans

Ensemble 3., Peter Walsh, Dr. Holmes

Ensemble 4., Miss Kilman, Aunt Helena, Older Sally

Ensemble 5., Aspect of Peter Walsh, Richard Dalloway, Dr. Bradshaw

Ensemble 6., Lucretia Smith, Elizabeth

Ensemble 7., Young Clarissa, Old Lady (Clarissa's neighbor)

Setting:

A June day in London, 1923.

SEPTIMUS AND CLARISSA

(The set consists of a staircase that ascends to a top landing at twelve feet and an empty iron doorframe. The staircase has ironwork details and is on wheels. There is a middle landing at about eight feet. Along the edge of the central playing area six chairs are set facing the stage, three on either side, in which members of the ensemble sit to watch when not in scenes. There are three small (four foot high) rolling wooden London town houses, painted white. Three white wooden doorway frames are in stands along the edge of the stage. In the back wall are three doorway portals that can be opened and closed. The lowest doorway lets out onto the stage floor and the highest can let out onto the top landing of the stairway. The third portal can let out onto the middle landing when the stairs are positioned against the wall as they are at the beginning of the play. Often, as at the opening, the portal that lets out onto the middle landing functions as Clarissa's room. Similarly, the area underneath the stairs often functions as Septimus's flat in Bloomsbury.)

Preshow

(As the audience enters, we see Septimus and Clarissa in their separate spaces, Clarissa is seated inside the portal that opens onto the landing of the staircase, Septimus is below her, underneath the stairs. Both are writing. Septimus is writing phrases on the back wall, underneath the stairs and on the floor of the staircase unit in chalk. Clarissa has a small notebook in which she jots down notes. There is a radio beneath the stairs which Septimus occasionally adjusts broadcasting bits of news, static and music.)

Opening

(Lights dim, the static of the radio becomes a glass tone, then music. The ensemble enters and they stand just off of the playing area, in front of the

line of chairs, looking up at Clarissa. She stands and leads the ensemble in a gesture, crossed hands at her chest opening out in offering and then to the side, palms down, as she steps forward onto the landing of the stairs and the company step onto the playing space. The ensemble comes to the staircase and begins to move it away from the wall to the center of the stage. Clarissa and Septimus are both looking up and out. The staircase begins to rotate, picking up speed with every rotation. Music and sound increase. As the spinning accelerates, Clarissa and Septimus are moving in their separate spaces, looking up, each in the eye of a storm of memory and nightmare, one above the other. At the peak of the tempest, both begin to fall. Sudden blackout and silence. Lights snap up to restore the calm June day. Clarissa and Septimus stand as before, looking out. Sound of birds. The company look up at Clarissa as they slowly restore the staircase to its initial position along the back wall.)

PETER: “Clarissa!”

CLARISSA’S MAID: “Mrs. Dalloway?”

SALLY: “Clarissa!”

DALLOWAY: “Mrs. Dalloway.”

(The stairway is now still, Clarissa stands, looking out. Silence.)

CLARISSA: Mrs. Dalloway said she would buy the flowers herself.

(Music.)

What a morning! She couldn’t help but think of when

(Young Clarissa, holding a frame, stands below Clarissa, looking out.)

YOUNG CLARISSA: as a girl, she used to burst open the French windows at the summer house at Bourton

(Young Clarissa steps through the frame she is holding. As she does so, the company spreads across the stage, looking out. A sense of suspended

movement, anticipation.)

CLARISSA: and plunge into the morning, into the open air

YOUNG CLARISSA: How fresh, how calm

CLARISSA: and yet

YOUNG CLARISSA: (for a girl of eighteen as she then was)

CLARISSA: solemn,

YOUNG CLARISSA: looking at the trees with the morning fog winding off them

.CLARISSA: and the rooks rising, falling;

(The London street. The company in movement, some of them shifting the houses, as Clarissa begins to come down the stairs. Then another moment of suspended movement, as:)

Even now, thirty years later, standing at the kerb

in the bustle of her beloved Westminster, she felt it.

ENSEMBLE 1: The sense of standing on a precipice looking out

YOUNG CLARISSA out, out, looking out at it all, feeling on the verge

CLARISSA: on the verge of what?

ENSEMBLE 1: And these people about her on the street,

CLARISSA: going about their business,

ENSEMBLE 1: all of them felt it too

CLARISSA: the sense of what?

ENSEMBLE 2. Something was imminent.

ENSEMBLE 3: Coming their way.

ENSEMBLE 4: Something terrible?

ENSEMBLE 5: Something remarkable?

ENSEMBLE 6: What was it?

(A release of movement again, and then a hold.)

CLARISSA: Ah yes, of course.

ENSEMBLE 1: even in the midst of the traffic,

CLARISSA: or waking at night,

ENSEMBLE 2: a particular hush,

CLARISSA: or solemnity;

ENSEMBLE 5: a suspense, was it?

CLARISSA: an indescribable pause

ENSEMBLE 3: before Big Ben strikes.

(Big Ben strikes. The entire company revolves slowly as one, looking up, as if the sound of the bells pealing is a circling flock of birds they watch fly around them.)

ENSEMBLE 4: The leaden circles dissolved in the air.

(The streets of London reanimate as Clarissa makes her way down the stairs. Young Clarissa is now a member of the ensemble, #7.)

CLARISSA: Such fools we are, she thought,

ENSEMBLE 1: crossing Victoria Street.

CLARISSA: For Heaven only knows why one loves it so,
creating it every moment afresh;

ENSEMBLE 5: in the swing,

ENSEMBLE 7: tramp, and trudge;

ENSEMBLE 3: in the bellow

ENSEMBLE 1: and the uproar;

ENSEMBLE 2: the carriages,

ENSEMBLE 5: motor cars,

ENSEMBLE 4: in the triumph and the jingle

CLARISSA: and in the strange high singing of some aeroplane overhead,
this was what she loved;

ENSEMBLE 3, 7 and CLARISSA: life;

ENSEMBLE 1, 4 and CLARISSA: London;

ALL: this moment of June.

(Music. Clarissa is moving downstage through the crowds.)

CLARISSA: For it was the middle of June. The summer had come in in her glory.

ENSEMBLE 3, 4 and 5: June.

CLARISSA: She had left her sick bed at last, the influenza that nearly killed her, she was walking her beloved streets again, out in the world.

ENSEMBLE 1 and 5: It was June.

CLARISSA: And she, too, loving it as she did, being part of it, she, too, was going that very night to kindle and illuminate; to give her party.

ENSEMBLE 1, 4 and 5: June.

ENSEMBLE 5: The War was over,

CLARISSA: The war.

(The ensemble, now gathered center downstage behind Clarissa, freeze. Ensemble 2 turns upstage as Septimus runs and leaps at an angle to be caught by Ensemble 2 at hip height, splayed in a horizontal. At the moment of impact, the company reacts with a gasp, as if to a bomb blast.)

ENSEMBLE 3: The war

ENSEMBLE 4: The war

ENSEMBLE 6: The war

CLARISSA: But they had woken from the nightmare. The war was over.

(Septimus has been released to the ground and moves off, unnoticed. The company recovers, gradually moving away.)

ENSEMBLE 1: thank Heaven

ENSEMBLE 3: —over.

ENSEMBLE 4: —over.

(The London street dissipates. Music changes. As Clarissa backs up center. Ensemble 1 now begins to work as an aspect to Clarissa and Ensemble 7 as Young Clarissa.)

CLARISSA: How strange, on entering the Park,

ASPECT OF CLARISSA: the silence, the mist,

CLARISSA: that she should find herself thinking of

(Young Peter holds a frame for Peter, who steps through it, looking out. Clarissa looks at him.)

PETER: Peter Walsh

CLARISSA: Peter Walsh, after all these years.

(Aspect of Clarissa holds a frame Peter walks through downstage.)

ASPECT OF CLARISSA: He would be back from India one of these days, June or July, she forgot which,

CLARISSA: back from India, where he'd been for years, not succeeding somehow.

(Young Peter looks at Young Clarissa, both of them holding frames.)

YOUNG CLARISSA: Despite all his promise.

(Young Peter steps through his frame.)

YOUNG PETER: Peter.

CLARISSA: But why should she be thinking of Peter?

ASPECT OF CLARISSA: Was it just remembering those mornings at Bourton?

(Young Peter and Young Clarissa circle each other with their frames.)

YOUNG CLARISSA: That terrible summer when he was in love with her and she couldn't—

ASPECT OF CLARISSA: Thirty years ago now, but still--

(Clarissa goes to Peter and takes his arm. They walk across the stage.)

CLARISSA: After all these years, he was still somehow the person one wanted to walk with on a morning like this, talk to, but why Peter?

(She drops his arm and backs away as he looks at her, cynically.)

ASPECT OF CLARISSA: He could be impossible, after all;

CLARISSA: The torments he had put her through!

YOUNG CLARISSA: How he criticised her!

CLARISSA: How he had lectured her on the defects of her character!

YOUNG CLARISSA: She had the makings of the perfect hostess, he had said.

YOUNG PETER: She would marry a Prime Minister and stand at the top of a staircase;

YOUNG PETER and PETER: The Perfect Hostess.

CLARISSA: So she would still find herself arguing in St. James's Park, still insisting that she had been right

YOUNG CLARISSA and CLARISSA: —and she had too—

CLARISSA: not to marry him.

ASPECT OF CLARISSA: One wants, in a marriage,

CLARISSA: some space, some air

ASPECT OF CLARISSA: Peter would never have given her that,

(Ensemble 5, now Dalloway, stands and walks onto the stage.)

DALLOWAY: But she hadn't married Peter Walsh.

CLARISSA: If she'd married Peter--

YOUNG CLARISSA: always nipping at her like a sheep dog, taking her to task.

DALLOWAY: Richard Dalloway

ASPECT OF CLARISSA: What she had wanted in a husband--

(Dalloway walks past Clarissa, center, and through a frame stage right.)

CLARISSA: Richard.

YOUNG CLARISSA: Giving her his hand as she got out of the boat that first day.

CLARISSA: Where was he this morning? She didn't need to know.

ASPECT OF CLARISSA: Richard let her be herself and she did the same for him.

(Dalloway looks back at her.)

CLARISSA: His kind eyes on her across the length of a good room.

YOUNG CLARISSA: Never his breath on her face, hemming her in the way Peter—

(Peter steps in and takes Clarissa's hand. They dance, as do Young Clarissa and Young Peter.)

YOUNG CLARISSA and CLARISSA: Oh, but with Peter—

CLARISSA: she could remember when it was as if they were running after each other's thoughts, talking the way they did,

YOUNG CLARISSA: catching at each other, playing at ideas,

CLARISSA: the fun of it, never had she ever felt quite like—

But no.

(Both couples stop dancing. The women stand, looking out.)

They would have been destroyed

YOUNG CLARISSA and CLARISSA: both of them,

YOUNG CLARISSA: ruined,

CLARISSA: she was convinced; wasn't she?

(Aspect of Clarissa and Young Clarissa hold a frame center for Clarissa.)

CLARISSA: She had reached the Park gates.

ASPECT OF CLARISSA: She stood for a moment, looking out at Piccadilly.

CLARISSA: She had a perpetual sense, as she watched the taxi cabs, of being out, / out, far out to sea

YOUNG CLARISSA: out, / out, far out to sea

ASPECT OF CLARISSA: out, out, far out to sea

(Clarissa steps through the frame.)

CLARISSA: And death?

Yes, death might be the end of her, of this now

ASPECT OF CLARISSA: but somehow in the streets of London,

CLARISSA: on the ebb and flow of things,

ASPECT OF CLARISSA: here,

YOUNG CLARISSA: there,

CLARISSA: she would survive.

(All three frames are now being circled about her, held on a horizontal.)

YOUNG CLARISSA: In the mist in the trees unwreathing itself those mornings at Bourton

CLARISSA: a part of it all,

YOUNG CLARISSA: people she had known

ASPECT OF CLARISSA: but also people she had never met

CLARISSA: It spread ever so far, her life, herself.

ASPECT OF CLARISSA: But what was this she was reading?

CLARISSA: The book spread open before her in the bookshop window:

(Clarissa is standing at the center of the three undulating frames, as if being rocked by waves.)

CLARISSA and SEPTIMUS: *(Voiceover)*

Fear no more the heat o' the sun

Nor the furious winter's rages.

The war...The war.....The war

(The frames are now still, Clarissa looks out, as if at her reflection. Her voice alone continues the voiceover.)

Strange, she thought, looking into her own eyes reflected in the shop window.

She had the oddest sense of being invisible; unseen; unknown; there being no more marrying, no more having of children now, but only this

ASPECT OF CLARISSA: this being Mrs. Dalloway;

YOUNG CLARISSA: not even Clarissa any more;

CLARISSA: this being Mrs. Richard Dalloway.

(The frames become vertical shop windows.)

"That is all,"

ASPECT OF CLARISSA: she thought, looking at salmon on an iceblock.

CLARISSA: *"That is all,"*

ASPECT OF CLARISSA: she thought, pausing for a moment at the window of a glove shop where, before the war, you could buy almost perfect gloves.

CLARISSA: and her old Uncle William used to say,

(Ensemble 5, as Uncle William, comes up behind her.)

ENSEMBLE 5/ UNCLE WILLIAM: *"A lady is known by her shoes and her gloves."*

(Elizabeth walks past the frames, nudging them idly)

ELIZABETH: But her own daughter, her Elizabeth, cared not a straw for gloves.

CLARISSA: Not a straw,

ELIZABETH: Elizabeth really cared for her dog most of all.

CLARISSA: Still, better her spaniel than Miss Kilman.

(Elizabeth has joined Miss Kilman, and they stand together. Clarissa watches them through a frame.)

MISS KILMAN: Who had begun by tutoring Elizabeth in history

CLARISSA: but now spent quite a lot of time in Elizabeth's room with her, apparently

MISS KILMAN: praying.

CLARISSA: They were inseparable.

MISS KILMAN: Miss Kilman

CLARISSA: Why was she so repellent?

ASPECT OF CLARISSA: Was it her religious righteousness?

CLARISSA: or the way she perspired, the way she glared?

ASPECT OF CLARISSA: for she was never in the room five minutes without making you feel her superiority, your inferiority;

MISS KILMAN: how poor she was; how rich you were.

CLARISSA: Still, it was not her one hated but the idea of her,

ASPECT OF CLARISSA: for no doubt with another throw of the dice, she would have loved Miss Kilman!

CLARISSA: But not / in this world.

ASPECT OF CLARISSA: But not in this /world.

CLARISSA: Not in this world.

ASPECT OF CLARISSA: No.

CLARISSA: No

ASPECT OF CLARISSA: No.

(The frames become a shivering forest, through which Clarissa walks.)

CLARISSA: It disturbed her though,

ASPECT OF CLARISSA: to have stirring about in her this brutal monster!

CLARISSA: to hear twigs cracking and feel hooves planted down in the depths of that leaf-encumbered forest, the soul;

ASPECT OF CLARISSA and CLARISSA: Hatred!

CLARISSA: Nonsense, nonsense! she cried to herself, pushing through the swing doors of Mulberry's the florists,

(The frames spin off as Clarissa steps through them, entering the flower shop. Ensemble 4, recently Miss Kilman, is now Miss Pym, who approaches Clarissa with a bouquet of roses.)

MISS PYM: to be greeted at once by button-faced Miss Pym, who had always liked Mrs. Dalloway and thought her kind.

CLARISSA: There were flowers: delphiniums, sweet peas, bunches of lilac; and carnations, masses of carnations.

ASPECT OF CLARISSA: There were roses;

ENSEMBLE 7: there were irises.

CLARISSA: Ah / yes—

ENSEMBLE 7: Ah / yes—

ASPECT OF CLARISSA: Ah yes—

(As Clarissa breathes in the scent, the music becomes expansive and a dream of romance is evoked. The company dances, one couple spins. A sudden gunshot. The company reacts with shock.)

MISS PYM: "Dear, those motor cars!"

(Aspect of Clarissa and Young Clarissa are absorbed again into the company, becoming Ensemble 1 and Ensemble 7, passersby on the London streets. The company moves apart, looking out, as if trying to see into the car.)

ENSEMBLE 1: Was it the motorcar which had drawn up outside Mulberry's shop window?

ENSEMBLE 5: Passers-by had only a glimpse of a face of the very greatest importance before the blind was drawn,

ENSEMBLE 4: Whose face had been seen?

ENSEMBLE 2: Was it the Prince of Wales's,

ENSEMBLE 1: the Queen's,

ENSEMBLE 2: the Prime Minister's?

ENSEMBLE 7: Whose face / was it?

ENSEMBLE 5: Whose /face was it?

ENSEMBLE 4: Whose face was it?

ENSEMBLE 1, 4, 5 and 7: Nobody knew.

(The company, some moving houses, create a moving bull's-eye, slowly circling around Septimus and Lucrezia, who stand center stage, looking out. Ensemble 2, now Aspect of Septimus, like the rest of the circling ensemble, is looking at Septimus.)

SEPTIMUS: *It is I*, Septimus thought.

ASPECT OF SEPTIMUS: Septimus Warren Smith, waiting at the crossing, unable to pass.

ENSEMBLE 5: Everything had come to a standstill as the great car stood thrumming,

ENSEMBLE 7: blinkered in the traffic,

ENSEMBLE 7 and ENSEMBLE 5: the world looking on.

SEPTIMUS: *It is I who am blocking the way*, he thought.

LUCREZIA: *"Let us go on, Septimus,"* Lucrezia Smith said to her husband.

SEPTIMUS *There was a reason he was weighted there, rooted to the pavement.*

LUCREZIA: *He was talking to himself again. People must notice; people must see.*

SEPTIMUS: He must be there for a purpose.

ASPECT OF SEPTIMUS: But for what purpose?

LUCREZIA: The English people, with their children and their horses and their clothes. Suppose they had heard him?

ASPECT OF SEPTIMUS: A week ago, Septimus had said,

LUCREZIA: he had actually said

SEPTIMUS *"I will kill myself"*

(Circling stops. All continue looking at Septimus.)

LUCREZIA: an awful thing to say.

(Circling continues)

Help, help! she wanted to cry out to these butchers' boys, these women.

Help!

ASPECT OF SEPTIMUS: She would take him away into some park.

LUCREZIA: *"Now we will cross,"* she said.

She had a right to his arm, though it was without feeling.

ASPECT OF SEPTIMUS: He would give her,

LUCREZIA: who was only twenty-four, who had left Italy for his sake,

ASPECT OF SEPTIMUS: he would give her his arm,

LUCREZIA: a piece of bone.

ASPECT OF SEPTIMUS: And so they crossed. Mr. and Mrs. Septimus Smith.

(Music swells. Houses are danced forward and back. Septimus and Lucrezia do an agonized, broken dance, pulling at each other and collapsing in each other's arms in turn before they exit up left to a bench.)

CLARISSA: It is probably the Queen, thought Mrs. Dalloway.

(Clarissa has gone a few steps up the staircase and stops, looking out.

Some of the ensemble gather center, looking out, a crowd of commoners in front of Buckingham Palace.)

The Queen going to some hospital;
the Queen off to cut a ribbon somewhere

ENSEMBLE 7: A small crowd had gathered at the gates of Buckingham Palace.

ENSEMBLE 5: They looked at the Palace itself with the flag flying;

ENSEMBLE 7: and thought of Royalty

ENSEMBLE 4: the Queen;

ENSEMBLE 2: the Prince

ENSEMBLE 3: who took wonderfully, they said, after old King Edward, but was ever so much slimmer, said an elderly gentleman with an Aberdeen terrier,

ENSEMBLE 1: —ah! the Prince! said Sarah Bletchley with her baby in her arms,

ENSEMBLE 7: Emmie Coates looked at the Palace windows and thought of the housemaids, so many housemaids, the bedrooms, so many bedrooms.

ENSEMBLE 2: Little Mr. Bowley could be moved by this sort of thing—the poor waiting to see the Queen go past—little children, orphans, widows, the War—oh, dear—he actually had tears in his eyes. He raised his cap.

ENSEMBLE 3: The car came on.

ENSEMBLE 7: Suddenly Emmie looked up into the sky.

ENSEMBLE 1: The sound of an aeroplane

ENSEMBLE 5: coming over the trees, letting out white smoke from behind,

ENSEMBLE 1: actually writing something!

ENSEMBLE 7: making letters in the sky!

ENSEMBLE 3: Dropping down, then soaring straight up,

ENSEMBLE 4: curved in a loop,

ENSEMBLE 2: raced,

ENSEMBLE 4: sank,

ENSEMBLE 5: rose,

ENSEMBLE 4: the white smoke it made curling upon the sky in letters.

ENSEMBLE 1: But what letters?

ENSEMBLE 3: A C was it?

ENSEMBLE 1: an E, then an L?

ENSEMBLE 5: But the letters didn't lie still;

ENSEMBLE 3: they moved and melted

ENSEMBLE 1: and then the aeroplane shot away from them into a fresh space of sky,

ENSEMBLE 4: began writing a K,

ENSEMBLE 7: an E,

ENSEMBLE 4: a Y perhaps?

ENSEMBLE 7: "Glaxo!"

ENSEMBLE 1: "Kreemo!"

ENSEMBLE 5: "That's an E,"

ENSEMBLE 3: "It's toffee."

ENSEMBLE 4: (and the car went in at the gates and nobody looked at it.)

(The group of commoners disperses and stands looking up, backs to the audience. Clarissa is now partway up the stairs, looking up.)

CLARISSA: Like everyone else on Bond Street, Mrs. Dalloway had stopped to watch it.

(Lights up on Lucrezia and Septimus sitting on a park bench.)

LUCREZIA: In the sky over Regent's Park you could see it now.

CLARISSA: The street was transfixed, everyone looking up.

LUCREZIA: *“Beautiful!”*

CLARISSA: How strange, she thought,

LUCREZIA: *“Look, look, Septimus!”*

CLARISSA: watching the letters form and die.

SEPTIMUS: So they are signaling to me, thought Septimus, the smoke words melting in the sky.

LUCREZIA: *“It’s spelling something, Septimus, look!”/ “T...O...R?...F?”*

SEPTIMUS: He would not go mad. He must find a way to approach this scientifically, rationally. He would shut his eyes; he would see no more. But everything beckoned. The world was begging him to comprehend it now. All things were connected, he could see that. And he was one with it, this web of meaning and glory. He must write it down, make it known. The sparrows rising, falling, it was all part of a larger pattern. Noises, sounds becoming harmony. It was an announcement, the birth of a new religion—

LUCREZIA: *“Septimus!”*

SEPTIMUS: She interrupted him.

LUCREZIA: *“I am going to walk to the fountain and back,”* she said.

(She walks down center, away from the bench as he continues looking out)

Because she couldn’t stand it any longer. Dr. Holmes might say there was nothing the matter. But she would rather have him dead than like this. Staring and not seeing her and making everything terrible; sky and tree, children playing, he made all of it terrible. He was not Septimus anymore. Italy was so far away now and the white houses and the room where her sisters sat making hats, and the streets crowded every evening with people walking, laughing out loud, not half alive like people here,

huddled up in chairs, looking at a few ugly flowers stuck in pots!
(Dance sequence with following text. Septimus rolling from one standing ensemble member to the next.)

SEPTIMUS: Men must not cut down trees.

LUCREZIA: She couldn't bear to look at him now,

SEPTIMUS: There is a God.

LUCREZIA: hunched in his shabby overcoat, staring, talking to himself,

SEPTIMUS: Write it down.

LUCREZIA: or to that dead man, Evans,

SEPTIMUS: Change the world.

LUCREZIA: his great friend who had been killed.

SEPTIMUS: No one kills from hatred.

LUCREZIA: It was awful.

SEPTIMUS: Make it known.

LUCREZIA: It was awful to look at him like this.

SEPTIMUS: A sparrow perched on the railing opposite and chirped

ENSEMBLE 7 and ENSEMBLE 3: "*Septimus, Septimus*"...

(A chorus of the ensemble, watching Septimus, begin calling his name softly, as if birds. Slowly, in the course of the following speech, they begin walking toward him, encroaching on him. He looks out.)

CHORUS: "*Septimus, Septimus*"... *(continue under the following)*

SEPTIMUS: they sang ancient words, from trees in the meadow of life beyond a river where the dead walk, how there is no death. And now white things were assembling behind the railings there. But he dared not look. Evans was behind the railings!

(Ensemble 2, now Evans in uniform, appears in the highest portal, beginning to crouch into a position as a bird of prey, the company too begin to lower

into that position, all of them looking at Septimus, who cowers, when suddenly the lights snap up and the music shifts. The company abruptly returns to being ordinary people in the park, oblivious of Septimus. Lucrezia has returned to Septimus, who is still crouching.)

LUCREZIA: “What are you saying?”

SEPTIMUS: Interrupted again! She was always interrupting.

LUCREZIA: “Look,” Dr. Holmes had told her to make him notice real things,

SEPTIMUS: “Look,” the unseen bade him,

LUCREZIA: “Look,”

SEPTIMUS: It was calling him forth to a fate he did not want.

LUCREZIA: “Look,”

SEPTIMUS: The scapegoat,

LUCREZIA: “Oh, look,”

SEPTIMUS: The eternal sufferer,.

LUCREZIA: But what was there to look at?

SEPTIMUS: Was there no going back now?

LUCREZIA: Flowers stuck in pots. That was all.

SEPTIMUS: Must he accept it? Was there no way to evade his terrible importance?

(Sound of the plane. The group in front of Buckingham Palace are assembled again, center.)

ENSEMBLE 1, 4 and 5: *Look!*

ENSEMBLE 5: There it was again, breaking into new sky

ENSEMBLE 7: curving up and up,

ENSEMBLE 3: straight up,

ENSEMBLE 1, 4 and 5: *Look!*

ENSEMBLE 5: like something mounting in ecstasy,

ENSEMBLE 7: in pure delight,

ENSEMBLE 1: a spark,

ENSEMBLE 3: an aspiration

CHORUS: *Look!*

(End of scene.)

(Ticking. Music. Lucrezia calls, "Septimus?" Septimus runs upstage to the staircase. Frames are whirled on, creating a crooked hallway through which he walks in painful progress, trying to see his way. He ends downstage center. The frames are brought back upstage to Clarissa, who has come down the stairs to the stage floor. The frames telescope out and she walks through them, sensing Septimus and looking in his direction, though not directly at him. She reaches center stage and stops before stepping through the central frame. Septimus senses Clarissa behind him. Lucrezia, off, says, "Septimus?" and Septimus runs left. Clarissa steps through a frame looking at the place Septimus was, stage center, just after he leaves it. The frames are shifted right to create a hallway on a diagonal, Clarissa's house. The maid, standing behind her (Ensemble 4) says, "Mrs. Dalloway?" Clarissa, still looking at the front frame, as if at the trace of Septimus's presence, is shocked back to reality. The music shifts. Disoriented, she looks around her and then walks right, realizing where she is.)