

SONG AND MUSIC CRITICISM

CAPTAIN SWING

Tune Changes

Make use of instrumental repetition, by repeating the first part of line 1 in the first 3 lines. Then allow the tune to change in line 4.

Lines 1 and 3 are of greater strength than line 2 and 4.

In the last line corresponding to 'better', allow the note to change on the second syllable, eg raise it.

Words:

FETTERED is hard to sing. It will come across if it is clipped and not allowed to become extended. Get a marching quality in these words.

'AND TO A HORSE WE'RE FETTERED'

'IN AYLESBURY TOWN'

These are mouthfuls. Probably the lines are carrying too much factual information. Try to decide which of the images is vital. Sometimes it is handy to experiment first with one, then two and then three lines, trying to get in the information you want. Then switch them around after.

HORSEWHIPPED – a hard word to end on. Could lines 2 and 3 be joined to get the sense 'whipped behind a cart'? Really, instead of horsewhipped a word is needed in the same meter as fettered, better, winter. Or else a word in completely different meter. Or change the musical tune – there is no law which says the tune should be the same for each verse. A thesaurus is very handy.

'JUST' AND 'GOOD'. The song is not ironic. Are these words intended to be ironic? The song has a strong construction because it is poor men talking about their condition. As the song stands the last line is ambiguous. Peggy liked the use of the last lines – but felt they could be worded better. Ewan criticized the song for not moving forward dramatically and suggested that to echo the mood of the scene the last line of v.4 should have a menacing note to it. Although the movement itself was conservative – to maintain the status quo of the labourers, the men involved were active. The menacing note would be a good lead into the yeoman scene.

A YEAR TOGETHER – not easily understood. Sounds as if our 2 fathers worked together.

VISCIOUS – loaded word. How about 'only'.

Arrangement: Use male and female voice to give the effect of harmony but have no decoration on the tune.

Hit the intervals clean and exact to give an angular musical effect.

Peggy thinks this song should be made to stand by itself without the support of the scene.

ALL CHANGE

Similarity with Captain Swing:

All change and Captain Swing are close together in the script. At present they sound very similar.

Objective: This song should be memorable. At present it has a slow contemplative form with long pauses at the end of each verse. Jay wanted to have the contrast of a slow verse and lively chorus. Also the song is broken after the first verse by the 'overseer scene'. He also aimed to give the point of view of different parties affected by the railway in each verse. The song will also be used at the end of the show.

Recommendations:

Use and up tempo.

Q.v. Mole Travis – 16 tons.

Also note in this song that the writer brought symbols of the world into the coal mining world. Jay has tried to take the railway symbols into a song which is not rooted in the railways, rather in worldly affairs.

Need a moving song. When describing a fair ground for instance, you need a lot of words to convey the scene. When describing a big concept – like change – it is more effective to use simple words. Brecht uses the form of the quatrain and has a philosophical thought in the last line of each verse.

Probably written in the 1st person singular or plural.

For a fresh start:

Peggy:

The words of the first verse are good. How about singing the first verse to Captain Swing as the words would fit with a little modification.

Sing Captain Swing with a concertina drone for backing – one note only.

Let this play on through the yeoman scene, but then playing the tune.

Then into Jay's first verse set to Captain Swing tune.

Allow 10 secs (an uncomfortably long silence) as the labourer stands before the overseer.

As soon as the scene finishes, go into the 'All Change' song.

Ewan and Peggy:

Shorten the chorus – perhaps the audience would then learn it and sing along. Need a strong tune for it to be memorised. Use the verses as intended originally to tell different people's attitude to the coming of the railways. If the verses aren't too long, then each party could have two verses, making it a 6 verse song. At present there is probably too much information in each line. The language in each verse can be characteristic of the party concerned, giving added variation. But don't allow there to be cross-intention within a verse. Jay added that he couldn't see 3 time fitting the bill. (If you use adjectives try not to quantify them – eg very or disturbing in this song.)

See: The Iron Horse – Christie collection of Traditional Songs and Airs.

Everything has been in major and 2 4.

All Change must be in minor and have an optimistic mood.

Use the Dorian Mode. Begins in D and is a traditional English mode.

When doing the musical settings for songs always consider the previous two songs and the following two songs.

MONEY SONG

Content:

As we look back on the Victorian era, with historical perspective, the battle between the railway lords and the landed gentry/aristocracy is an example of the classic power

struggle of that era. Actually the aristocracy did not lose – they were married into.

Song form: should be one of conflict. Who won on the context of the scene in the play? The aristocracy. The song could be in the form of a Gilbert and Sullivan confrontation. Make it twice as long. In each verse, the last line could be sung by the opposing side in each case. This would enable the song to clarify the issues more than it does at present. Irony is fine.

In order to raise the level of excitement allow verses 6 and 8 to rise up a key higher than the others.

Gilbert and Sullivan are full of hard consonants. Some of the ones in Jay's song are a bit soft eg honourable, blasted.

Also you can use pauses to allow the audience to catch up -- so ____ the company....

ACCOMPANIONMENT:

Use pick fiddle or mandolin. Piano is not good. Drown voices. Also use drums (Andy).

CREED'S SPEECH – Could use the money song music.

ARRANGEMENT: As it's a speech use recitative and let it be funny. Could set it to Wagner with someone playing on the piano.

WENCESLAS OK Sorry I have no notes on this, the others can help I'm sure with ideas but overall it was OK.

DENBIGH HALL AND PLACE NAME SONG

DENBIGH HALL:

Arrangement: verse 1 – singers and instruments in unison.
Verses following: use recitative

Form Needs an ending, eg 'and then, the coach is on the way.'
Don't let it go too fast – the audience will try to hurry it on.
Don't let them.