

Libretto: An Artist's Regrets

WORDS AND MUSIC BY NELL CLOWDER

WITH LINDA NENNO

characters

20 year old self – soubrette
59 year old self – lyric soprano
80 year old self – mezzo
40 year old self – low mezzo or alto
Daughter (child 6 years, off stage) - soprano
Twenty, Forty, & Eighty also form the CHORUS

Audio & libretto at

www.ahundredtimesmore.org/regrets

SCENE 1: Regrets (FIFTYNINE and CHORUS)

A table or hat stand with painter's smock, housewife apron, and shawl. Enter: TWENTY, FORTY, and EIGHTY, dressed similarly. They take seats at rear of stage. It isn't yet apparent that these three characters are supposed to be the same character at different ages.

Music begins. Enter to front of stage: FIFTYNINE, costumed differently.

FIFTYNINE

I, I, I have regrets
I don't mind telling you
I have regrets.

FIFTYNINE

I have regrets

Sixty years old tomorrow

How much time is left?

I wasn't a failure
It isn't that

I didn't hurt anyone, much

It's just

I spent my whole life
Following my bliss!

CHORUS, softly, chanting

Regrets, regrets
Chorus stands
Sixty years old

How much time?
*Chorus moves slowly forward
to stand behind Fiftynine.*
Then what?

Then what?

What did you do?
Tell us.

INTERLUDE 1 (FIFTYNINE and CHORUS)

TWENTY

Oh for cryin' out loud.

EIGHTY

I thought this was something important.

FORTY

Let's go.

Chorus turns to go

FIFTYNINE

[spoken] No wait!

Chorus comes back, moves slowly in a circle around Fiftynine

CHORUS

[sung]

How can you regret following your bliss?

FIFTYNINE

You don't understand.

TWENTY

I'm sure it was terrible!

FORTY

Nasty bliss!

EIGHTY

Icky bliss!

FIFTYNINE

You can't buy health insurance with your bliss.

CHORUS

That's true.

FIFTYNINE

Can't pay the rent.

CHORUS

Wretched rent.

FIFTYNINE

And you can't drink your coffee in the morning
And look into bliss's dear face.

CHORUS

Dear face.

FIFTYNINE

I thought when you followed your bliss
Everything would fall into place.

CHORUS

Divine serendipity!

FIFTYNINE

I just wish my younger self
Had thought about the future!

EIGHTY

You should talk to your younger self.

FORTY

Let her know what you think.

EIGHTY

Eighty pushes Twenty forward

Here, she'll speak for your younger self.

TWENTY

Who, me?

EIGHTY, FORTY

Tell her: less bliss more reality.

*Forty and Eighty assist Twenty to don a painter's smock.
Forty and Eighty return to seats at rear of stage.*

SCENE 2: Line Color Shape (TWENTY and FIFTYNINE)

Twenty mimes painting to piano accompaniment. Fiftynine watches. Twenty is unaware of Fiftynine.

TWENTY

This brush is crap!
Line! Line!
Color! Color color color!
Form and shape.

FIFTYNINE

I remember this place
My boyfriend's house.
I remember this painting.
I don't recall being beautiful.

TWENTY

Line!
Line!
Color! Color color color.

TWENTY

Space, where's the space?
This is mush!

FIFTYNINE

Fiftynine taps Twenty on the shoulder.
Excuse me, I am yourself from the future!

TWENTY

Can you come back later?
My muse is hot, I dare not stop.
Ah!

FIFTYNINE

Put that brush down and listen to me.

*Twenty stops painting, reluctantly.
Hymn-like music. seated CHORUS sings backup harmonies.*

Sweetheart, you've got to think
about your future.

TWENTY

It needs more space!

FIFTYNINE

Sweetheart, have you paid the rent?

TWENTY

More space, but where?

FIFTYNINE

Sweetheart, your boyfriend is going to throw you out.
(end chorus backup harmonies)

TWENTY

Never! He loves me!

FIFTYNINE

But do you love him?

Twenty, then Fiftynine, look at canvass

TWENTY

Maybe if I turn it this way.

FIFTYNINE

No, not like that.

Fiftynine takes paint brush

It just needs...like so.

Fiftynine gives paint brush back.

FIFTYNINE

What I mean is: You need a job.

TWENTY

You must be
crazy!
I live to paint
It's how I breathe.
There is no time

FIFTYNINE

That's what I'm
saying

Now is the time

CHORUS

*40 & 80 stand
and move forward*

There is no time

There is no time

There is no time
For anything else!
Ah!

Chorus stands behind Twenty

TWENTY

Why are you worried
About my future?

Was my work terrible?

Did I amount to nothing?

Am I shit?

CHORUS (chant-like)

Line color shape, line color shape
Line color shape, line color shape
What's the big deal?
Why are you scared?
Line color shape
Line color shape
Nothing at all?
Nothing at all?
Nothing

Shit!

FIFTYNINE

O god, I forgot, how sensitive,
How insecure.

Don't worry about what others think.

Fifty-nine puts arm around Twenty.

TWENTY

It's not so bad, is it?

Twenty looks at canvass

FIFTYNINE

No, it's not bad at all.
I've always loved this one.
My daughter has it now.

Fifty-nine looks at canvass

INTERLUDE 2 (FIFTYNINE and CHORUS)

*Forty and Eighty step in to separate Twenty and Fifty-nine.
Twenty takes off painter's smock. Chorus (all 3) moves slowly in a circle
around Fifty-nine.*

CHORUS

That did not go quite as we expected.

FIFTYNINE

No, it did not.

TWENTY

The young one is passionate

EIGHTY

About her art

FORTY

Nothing else

FIFTYNINE

I can't make her think about the future.

CHORUS

That's true.

FIFTYNINE

She'd be destroyed.

CHORUS

Yes she would.

FIFTYNINE

I should talk to myself a little older,
More settled and more secure.

CHORUS

Agreed.

FIFTYNINE

I think maybe forty is good.
At forty we are wise and mature.

CHORUS

At forty we are very wise!

FIFTYNINE

I just wonder, that youthful passion,
Where did it go?

Twenty pushes Forty forward.

TWENTY

Here, this is yourself at forty.

FORTY

Yes, I will be you at forty.

TWENTY, EIGHTY

Stay focused and remember:
Less bliss, more reality!

*Twenty and Eighty assist Forty to don a housewife's apron.
Twenty and Eighty return to seats at rear of stage.*

SCENE 3: A different bliss (FORTY and FIFTYNINE)

Forty mimes doing house chores. Fiftynine watches. Forty is unaware of Fiftynine.

CHORUS

Look at her taking care of the house.
Very mature and responsible.

(seated)

FORTY

These socks don't belong here
and here's my missing bra,
right where I left it.

DAUGHTER (offstage)

Mommie!

FORTY

What is it, Pumpkin?

DAUGHTER (offstage)

Is Daddy coming home for dinner?

FORTY

Yes, he is.

FORTY

I better buy cheese for the tacos tonight.
I can't believe that my baby girl
Is starting school tomorrow!
Tomorrow, tomorrow,
Is special for me too.
I can paint again! *(with CHORUS harmonies)*

FIFTYNINE

I can't believe I stopped painting.

FORTY

I am so lucky, I am so lucky,
I have everything I want!

Forty mimes doing household chores

FIFTYNINE

How on earth will I get through to her?
She's living in a bubble.

TWENTY, EIGHTY

You must try.

(seated)

Fiftynine taps Forty on the shoulder

FIFTYNINE

Excuse me, I am yourself from the future!

FORTY

You are me?

FIFTYNINE

Yes, I am.

FORTY

Wonderful! Would you please wash the dishes?

TWENTY, EIGHTY

Stay focused. Tell her what you need.

Twenty and Eighty stand

FIFTYNINE (with Twenty backup)

That's not why I'm here.
I'm here to warn you.
I implore you to listen to me.

FORTY

Why? Does something happen to my daughter?

Eighty positions herself near Forty

Eighty positions herself near Forty

FIFTYNINE

No, she's fine.

Twenty positions herself near Fiftynine

FORTY/CHORUS/FIFTYNINE

Thank god! I can survive anything but that.

FIFTYNINE

This beautiful life
Is not going to last.
Things are going to get
Very bad.

FORTY

Why do you tell me?
What good does it do?

FIFTYNINE

It's not too late.
Put your name on the house.
Take charge of your life
Right now.

FORTY

I am in charge.
You ought to know that.

FIFTYNINE with Twenty

He's going to divorce you.

FORTY with Eighty

Divorce me?

The divorce will be terrible.

Divorce me?

You, me, our daughter,
We will be destitute!

I don't believe you.
If something goes wrong
with my marriage,
I will fix the problem, not
run away.

At least get a job.

I can't be a wife and a
mother,
A painter and hold a job,
too.

I only suggest sensible
precautions.

I won't live my life from a
place of fear,
Mistrusting the man I love,
The man I love

That man, that man
Made you stop painting!

FORTY

It was my decision, too!

FIFTYNINE

That's even worse!

Twenty and Eighty look at each other in shock

FORTY

You are faithless!

FIFTYNINE

You are so naïve!

Twenty and Eighty bring Forty back to the chorus

TWENTY, EIGHTY

We let this go on too long.

Forty takes off apron and resumes Chorus role

INTERLUDE 3 (FIFTYNINE and CHORUS)

*Fifty-nine and chorus have "swapped" parts musically.
Chorus bunches together, Fifty-nine paces around them.*

FIFTYNINE

How, how could I have been
In such denial?

CHORUS

You did your best.

FIFTYNINE

I put my head in the sand,
Way down in, very deep.

CHORUS

You still have your daughter and your art.

FIFTYNINE

That's true.

CHORUS

And that's a lot.

FIFTYNINE

I suppose.

CHORUS

We just think that you're being kind of greedy
And maybe expecting too much.

FIFTYNINE

That's crap!
I don't think it's asking too much:
Art, love, and financial security.

CHORUS

Art, love, **and** financial security?

FIFTYNINE

Yes, why not?

CHORUS

Art, love, **and** financial security.
Why not?
Everyone wants them.
Why not you?

Chorus members huddle to confer

FIFTYNINE

Fifty! No, fifty-three!

Twenty and Forty give Eighty a shawl, push her toward Fifty-nine

Twenty and Forty return to seats at rear of stage

At fifty-three, I'm sure I would understand!

Eighty, wearing shawl, taps Fifty-nine on the shoulder

EIGHTY

Excuse me, I am yourself from the future.

FIFTYNINE

[spoken] What?

SCENE 4: EIGHTY and FIFTYNINE

FIFTYNINE

You're really me?

EIGHTY

Yes, I am.

FIFTYNINE

How old?

EIGHTY

Eighty years.

FIFTYNINE

I have twenty more years to live?

EIGHTY

Don't kill me off just yet.

CHORUS

She is old now, surely wise now.

(seated)

FIFTYNINE

You're here because I never fixed things.
I'm so sorry!

EIGHTY

I'm here to remember you.
So passionate,
So devoted,
So stuck.

*Twenty, Forty stand
Twenty picks up smock
Forty picks up apron*

CHORUS

Passionate and devoted.

*Holding smock/apron
over chest/waist*

FIFTYNINE

Stuck? You mean like them?

Fifty-nine points at chorus

CHORUS

Passionate and devoted.

EIGHTY

I mean stuck like you.
Listen, you have twenty more years,
I have, well, less.
Do you think that I care
How much money I have or had?
No more than I care
How many brush strokes
I put on my canvasses.

FIFTYNINE

Then everything worked out?
I fixed the past and all is well?

CHORUS

Stuck, really stuck.

EIGHTY

I wish you would leave the past alone.

If you change it,

Change them,

You will be changed,

I will be changed,

Who knows how?

Eighty points to Chorus

EIGHTY

We might even be dead.

What if we

Never meet

The people we've loved?

CHORUS

-- dead.

What if we

Never meet

The people we've loved?

FIFTYNINE

I never thought of that.

So you don't want to change anything?

EIGHTY, CHORUS

No.

FIFTYNINE

You have no regrets?

EIGHTY, CHORUS

A few.

EIGHTY

But I can live with them.

FIFTYNINE

What do you regret?

Eighty whispers into Fiftynine's ear while

Chorus sings a vocalise.

Eighty squeezes Fiftynine's shoulder and returns to chorus.

Chorus stands in semicircle behind Fiftynine.

CONCLUSION

FIFTYNINE

I,

TWENTY

Line, line!

FIFTYNINE

I,

FORTY

These socks don't belong here

And here's my missing bra.

FIFTYNINE

I, I, I, I...

I have things to do.

Fiftynine exits, followed by chorus.

~~ The End ~~