

# **PERCY AND ROSE**

## **A MUSICAL FOR TWO PERFORMERS**

a tragic love story in three acts  
constructed using some existing WW1 period songs,  
existing poems set to music, settings of historical letters,  
and some original material

by

AJ DEHANY

(DRAFT FOR THE 29 PLAYS LATER CHALLENGE DAY 6)

CHARACTERS:

ROSE

PERCY

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## **PROGRAMME**

### **ACT ONE - LONDON 1912-14**

OVERTURE: The Aeroplane Rag of 1912  
ROSE: A Hundred Years From Now  
PERCY: Beer Barrel Polka  
ROSE: Second Hand Rose  
DUET: The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face  
DUET: Smiles  
PERCY: It's Time For Every Boy To Be A Soldier  
DUET: Till We Meet Again

### **ACT TWO - LONDON AND FRANCE 1914-16**

ROSE: MCMXCIV  
DUET: The Roses of Picardy  
ROSE & PERCY exchange letters taken from historical sources  
PERCY: The Rose of No Man's Land  
ROSE: Letter to his commanding officer

### **ACT THREE: FRANCE AND LONDON 1916 AND BEYOND**

PERCY: If I Should Die  
ROSE: And Death Shall Have No Dominion  
PERCY: In Flanders Fields  
ROSE: The World Is Waiting For The Sunrise  
PERCY: When You Are Old  
DUET: A Hundred Years From Now

# ACT ONE - LONDON 1912-14

PERCY AND ROSE IN THIS ACT ARE DRESSED IN FASHION APPROPRIATE FOR YOUNG UNMARRIED PEOPLE IN THE PERIOD

MUSICAL OVERTURE: The Aeroplane Rag of 1912 (Albert Ball's Flying Aces)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NJEmuJmUjNw>

PLAY/TRANSCRIBE TO 0:27 THEN INTO NEXT SONG

ROSE SINGS "A Hundred Years From Now" (original song)

A hundred years from now  
Someone will be singing your name  
A hundred years from now.

A hundred years from now,  
Love will echo in our hearts

A hundred years from now,  
You and I together.

PERCY SINGS "Beer Barrel Polka"  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lbotaEmgFm4>  
(PERCY OUT ON THE TOWN)

There's a garden, what a garden  
Only happy faces bloom there  
And there's never any room there  
For a worry or a gloom there

Oh there's music and there's dancing  
And a lot of sweet romancing  
When they play the polka  
They all get in the swing

Every time they hear that oom pa pa  
Everybody feels so tra la la  
They want to throw their cares away  
They all go lah de ah de ay

Then they hear a rumble on the floor, the floor  
It's the big surprise they're waiting for

And all the couples form a ring  
For miles around you'll hear them sing

Roll out the barrel, we'll have a barrel of fun  
Roll out the barrel, we've got the blues on the run  
Zing boom tararrel, ring out a song of good cheer  
Now's the time to roll the barrel, for the gang's all here

Da da da da, da da da da, da da da da da da da da

Then they hear a rumble on the floor  
It's the big surprise they're waiting for  
And all the couples they form a ring  
For miles around you'll hear them sing

Drree mopado theedo da da da da

Roll it out, roll it out, roll out the barrel  
Da  
Sing a song of good cheer  
'Cause the whole gang is here  
Roll it out, roll it out  
Let's do the beer barrel polka

ROSE SINGS "Second Hand Rose"  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bYYegzlhV5c>  
(ROSE INTRODUCES HERSELF AND HER LIFE)

Father has a business  
Strictly second-hand  
Everything from toothpicks to a baby grand  
Stuff in our apartment  
Came from Father's store  
Even things I'm wearing, someone wore before  
It's no wonder that I feel abused  
I never get a thing that ain't been used

I'm wearing second-hand hats  
Second-hand clothes  
That's why they call me Second Hand Rose  
Even our piano in the parlor  
Father bought for ten cents on the dollar  
Second-hand pearls  
I'm wearing second-hand curls  
I never get a single thing that's new

Even Jackie Cohen, he's the man I adore  
Had the nerve to tell me he'd been married before  
Everyone knows that I'm just Second Hand Rose  
From Second Avenue

I'm wearing second-hand shoes  
Second-hand hose  
All the girls hand me their second-hand beaus  
Even my pajamas, when I don them  
Have somebody else's 'nitals on them  
Second-hand rings  
I'm sick of second-hand things  
I never get what other girlies do  
Once while strolling through the Ritz, a woman got my goat  
She nudged her friend and said, "Oh, look, there goes my last year's coat!"  
Everyone knows that I'm just Second Hand Rose  
From Second Avenue

DUET: "The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face"  
(ROSE AND PERCY MEET AND FALL IN LOVE)

PERCY

The first time ever I saw your face  
I thought the sun rose in your eyes  
And the moon and the stars were the gifts you gave  
To the dark and the endless skies, my love  
To the dark and the endless skies

ROSE

And the first time ever I kissed your mouth  
I felt the earth move in my hand  
Like the trembling heart of a captive bird  
That was there at my command, my love  
That was there at my command, my love

DUET

And the first time ever I lay with you  
I felt your heart so close to mine  
And I knew our joy would fill the earth  
And last 'til the end of time, my love  
And it would last 'til the end of time, my love

DUET: "Smiles"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ciHyZqy0R98>

Dearie, now I know  
Just what makes me love you so,  
Just what holds me and enfolds me  
In its golden glow.  
Dearie, now I see  
'Tis each smile so bright and free;  
For life's sadness turns to gladness  
When you smile on me.

There are smiles that make us happy,  
There are smiles that make us blue,  
There are smiles that steal away the teardrops,  
As the sunbeams steal away the dew.  
There are smiles that have a tender meaning,  
That the eyes of love alone may see,  
And the smiles that fill my life with sunshine  
Are the smiles that you give to me.

Dearie, when you smile,  
Everything in life's worthwhile;  
Love grows fonder as we wander  
Down each magic mile.  
Cheery melodies  
Seem to float upon the breeze;  
Doves are cooing while they're wooing  
In the leafy trees.

There are smiles...

DURING THE SONG PERCY CHANGES INTO UNIFORM AND RETURNS  
PRESENTING HIMSELF TO A SHOCKED ROSE

PERCY SINGS "It's time for every boy to be a soldier"  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RX3SuMQJQLY>

Most ev'ry fellow has a sweetheart  
Some little girl with eyes of blue  
My daddy also had a sweetheart  
And he fought to win her too  
There'll come a day when we must pay the price of love and duty  
Be there staunch and true

It's time for ev'ry boy to be a soldier  
To put his strength and courage to the test

It's time to place a musket on his shoulder  
And wrap the Stars and Stripes around his breast  
It's time to shout those noble words of Lincoln  
And stand up for the land that gave you birth  
"That the nation of the people by the people for the people  
Shall not perish from the earth"

DUET: "Till We Meet Again"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=psji0Q14Y0A>

Smile the while you kiss me sad adieu  
When the clouds roll by I'll come to you  
Then the skies will seem more blue  
Down in lover's lane, my dearie

Wedding bells will ring so merrily  
Every tear will be a memory  
So wait and pray each night for me  
Till we meet again

Tho' goodbye means the birth of a tear drop  
Hello means the birth of a smile  
And the smile will erase the tear blighting trace  
When we meet in the after awhile

Smile the while you kiss me sad adieu  
When the clouds roll by I'll come to you  
Then the skies will seem more blue  
Down in lover's lane, my dearie

# ACT TWO - ENGLAND AND FRANCE 1914-16

INSTRUMENTAL PASSAGE FOR COSTUME CHANGE

IN THIS ACT PERCY DRESSED IN UNIFORM, ROSE THE SMART HOUSEWIFE

ROSE SINGS "MCMXCIV"

Those long uneven lines  
Standing as patiently  
As if they were stretched outside  
The Oval or Villa Park,  
The crowns of hats, the sun  
On moustached [archaic](#) faces  
Grinning as if it were all  
An August Bank Holiday lark;

And the shut shops, the [bleached](#)  
Established names on the sunblinds,  
The farthings and sovereigns,  
And dark-clothed children at play  
Called after kings and queens,  
The tin advertisements  
For cocoa and twist, and the pubs  
Wide open all day;

And the countryside not caring:  
The place-names all hazed over  
With flowering grasses, and fields  
Shadowing Domesday lines  
Under wheat's restless silence;  
The differently-dressed servants  
With tiny rooms in huge houses,  
The dust behind limousines;

Never such innocence,  
Never before or since,  
As changed itself to past  
Without a word – the men

Leaving the gardens tidy,  
The thousands of marriages,  
Lasting a little while longer:  
Never such innocence again.

DUET: "Roses of Picardy"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-F9ip40h0vo>

She is watching by the poplars, Colinette with the sea-blue eyes,  
She is watching and longing and waiting Where the long white roadway lies.  
And a song stirs in the silence, As the wind in the boughs above,  
She listens and starts and trembles, 'Tis the first little song of love:

Roses are shining in Picardy, in the hush of the silver dew,  
Roses are flowering in Picardy, but there's never a rose like you!  
And the roses will die with the summertime, and our roads may be far apart,  
But there's one rose that dies not in Picardy!  
'tis the rose that I keep in my heart!

And the years fly on for ever, Till the shadows veil their skies,  
But he loves to hold her little hands, And look in her sea-blue eyes.  
And she sees the road by the poplars, Where they met in the bygone years,  
For the first little song of the roses Is the last little song she hears:

Roses are shining in Picardy, in the hush of the silver dew,  
Roses are flowering in Picardy, but there's never a rose like you!  
And the roses will die with the summertime, and our roads may be far apart,  
But there's one rose that dies not in Picardy!  
'tis the rose that I keep in my heart!

**THIS SECTION INCLUDES FULL  
TEXTS OF GENUINE HISTORICAL  
LETTERS TO BE ADAPTED, EDITED &  
SET TO MUSIC. ROSE AND PERCY  
ALTERNATE SINGING THEIR LETTERS**

**9-minute Video documentary - Love letters from the trenches of the First World War:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kQI2GOHcQu0>

**"A letter from Emily Chitticks to her fiancé." [Documents.2554](#)**

'My Dearest Will, I feel I must write you again dear altho there is not much news to tell you. I wonder how you are getting on. I shall be so relieved to get a letter from you. I can't help feeling a bit anxious dear. I know how you must have felt darling when you did not get my letters for so long. Of course I know dear you will write as soon as ever you can, but the time seems so dull and weary without any news of you, if only this war was over dear and we were together again. It will be one day I suppose.

Don't think dear I am worrying unnecessarily about you, because I know God can take care of you wherever you are and if it's his will darling he will so are you to come back to me, that's how I feel about it dear, if we only put our trust in Him. I am sure he will. I wonder how your Cousins are getting on dear. We are feeling very anxious about George, as no news has come from him yet. We can't understand why his wife doesn't write.

How are your hands now dear? Mine are very sore, so chapped, and my left hand has got several chilblains on it and they do irritate. I could scratch it to bits. Have you been receiving the books I have sent you dear. I am very pleased to say dear I am keeping very well indeed, and I trust you are the same.

There has been a bit of a fuss over Arthur this week. He has been trying to get in the Army unbeknown to his parents, but Mrs T. thought his parents ought to be informed about it, so she wrote and told them about him and he had to go home in hot haste last night. I guess he got in a fine row, but he won't say today. He is as miserable as anything. Really Will I never saw such a boy as he is. I am afraid he is going to the bad. I don't know if Mrs T. will keep him on or not. He says he has to join up in a fortnight, but as he is under age I suppose his parents could stop him. I don't know whether they will or not. For my part I hope he does go, he will be a jolly good riddance for there is nothing but rows and deceitfulness going on where he is.

Well darling I don't know much more to say now, so will close with fondest love and kisses from your loving little girl. Emily.

*Many touching personal stories are vividly brought to life through letters exchanged during the First World War. The correspondence between Private William Martin and his fiancée Emily Chitticks reveals one of the most heart-breaking of all of these stories. Emily wrote this letter to Will before she had heard the devastating news that he had been killed in action.*

**Gunner Wilfrid Cove to Ethel Cove**

Tuesday 14 November 1916

My Darling Ethel,

I hope you have received my birthday present, but in case you haven't here's again wishing you many many happy returns of your birthday. It is the first of your birthdays that we have been apart since you were sweet 17 that I can remember. I hope it will be the last.

Heaven send that by your next birthday – or mine come to that – this terrible war will be over & that we may both be spared & united on each of our birthdays and those of our dear little

kiddies & for many years to come.

It causes me many regrets and much sorrow when I remember that my selfishness has more than once caused you unhappiness and I sincerely hope that my future conduct will make you realise that notwithstanding my shortcomings I do love you with all my heart and realise I have one of the best wives in the world.

I can now quite understand the Late [Lord Kitchener's preference for bachelors as soldiers](#). He must have realised, altho' a bachelor himself, that it is not the coward's fear of death but the fear that by death many a good soldier may thus be prevented from rejoining the wife & family he loves so much. I have just that very feeling myself at times when the shells are dropping all around us and the air is whistling with them.

Goodnight my darling. Longing and hoping for a letter from you tomorrow. Xxxx

**Private Horace Humpage to Patty Hignett Horace**

5 December 1918

Dear Patty,

Just a few lines to thank you for a letter. I hope you have got over your flu. Well I must apologise to you for I have not been able to write lately; however it won't occur again. I am going to Bethlehem today to get a few things for home so if I see anything new I will get something for you.

Well Patty I'm going to talk serious to you. I think that we have known each other long enough now to come to some definite arrangement. I suppose some day or other I shall be coming home.

I think when I get settled I would like to get married. I'm not one at putting it very well but I think for your sake, if you think the same way, we ought to get engaged.

I suppose that's the proper way so let me know what you think. I think you know what I am and pretty well all about me and if you decide my way I will do my best to make you a good husband and a comfortable home. If you do, I suppose I should buy you an engagement ring so if you will have a look at some and will tell me the price I will send you the money for it.

Patty don't be frightened to tell me what you think and let me know there's a dear.

Yours Horace xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

**Dora Willatt to 2nd Lieutenant Cecil Slack**

7 June 1916

My dear Cecil,

I have come into that little wood and am sitting under a tree only about 10 yards away from where we sat together and you asked me to marry you. It was a very great surprise and even a shock when you told me you loved me and I had not the slightest idea you were going to tell me so then.

Betty Sowerbutts did tell me at Penrhos that you were keen on me but I'm afraid at that time I didn't think anything about you – when I left school I liked you just as I liked my other friends and it was not until after you were wounded last year and you came to our house a good deal for tennis that I liked you more than the others who came.

You will notice I am saying "liking" – I have never thought whether I loved you or not – I knew you liked me, somehow, but I had not thought you loved me – it is why I had not thought of it so much, that it has been so hard to see if my "liking" for you had turned into love for you.

I remember dreaming, one night since we came here, that you were married to another girl and I remember waking up with a miserable, hopeless feeling.

Before I say any more I want you to think whether you yourself are quite sure you love me, and that when you asked me to marry you you were not influenced by any excitement of the moment – because you had not seen me for some time or because you were just going away.

Think of it – and then think if you had got the wrong girl how awful it would be – it would be tragic.

When I went to bed I overheard Father tell Mother that your affaire you are going to do out there was jolly risky – I began to think and then realised if you never came back and I never saw you again – what I should do and what I should feel like.

It is horrible of me to talk like this but I am telling you all – it made me realise that I do love you Cecil – oh, that I could see you again now – but I cannot tell if I love you as much as you love me. How much do you love me Cecil?

I should like to get to know you yourself better and then at the end of six months if I am quite sure of my own mind and I have that sacred love for you that only man and woman can have I would promise definitely to become your wife. If you think differently from what you told me on Monday do be sure and tell me and we will carry on as before and be chums and I will be just the same to you.

Goodbye, Cecil, and remember I have some love for you,  
Dora

## **2nd Lieutenant Cecil Slack to Dora Willatt**

My dear Dora,

For a long time before asking you to marry me I had been thinking things over and I was and am quite certain of my own feelings. But I feel a rotter for asking you when I did. I ought to have waited, for one thing, until the war was over, and for another until I had more idea of

your feelings. As it is I have given you a shock and have kindled feelings which should not have been aroused. I am sorry and yet I am glad.

You asked me to be quite sure I was not influenced by any excitement of the moment. I was not. I have loved you ever since I was at Rydal. A schoolboy love then – it often happens to schoolboys and then dies out. Mine did not die.

You ask me how much I love you. All I can say is that I just love you with my whole heart. I love you together with my Mother and my Father and my honour, but on a different scale altogether.

There is just one thing I want to mention before I forget it, and it is this – if I should by any chance be crippled I shall cry off everything. I would not dream of marrying if I had not a sound body. That is one reason why I'm such a rotter for having asked you in the middle of the war. Perhaps it would be better if we put aside what has happened until after the war?

Goodbye,  
Love from Cecil

PERCY SINGS "The Rose of No Man's Land"  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QqoOgdq1wME>

I've seen some beautiful flowers  
Grow in life's garden fair  
I've spent some wonderful hours  
Lost in their fragrance rare  
But I have found another  
Wondrous beyond compare....

There's a rose that grows in no-man's land  
And it's wonderful to see  
Though its sprayed with tears, it will live for years  
In my garden of memory

It's the one red rose the soldier knows  
It's the work of the Master's hand  
'Neath the War's great curse stands a Red Cross nurse  
She's the rose of no-man's land

Out in the heavenly splendour  
Down to the trail of woe  
God in his mercy has sent her  
Fearing the World below  
We call her Rose of Heaven  
We've longed to love her so....

There's a rose that grows in no-man's land  
And it's wonderful to see  
Though its sprayed with tears, it will live for years  
In my garden of memory  
It's the one red rose the soldier knows  
It's the work of the Master's hand  
'Neath the War's great curse stands a Red Cross nurse  
She's the rose of no-man's land

ROSE SINGS AN ADAPTATION OF FRAU S'S LETTER TO HER HUSBAND'S  
COMMANDING OFFICER:

**Frau S to her husband's commanding officer**

2 January 1917

Dear Leader of the Company!

I, the signer below, have a request to make of you. Although my husband has only been in the field for four months, I would like to ask you to grant him a leave of absence, namely, because of our sexual relationship.

I would like to have my husband just once for the satisfaction of my natural desires. I just can't live like this any more. I can't stand it. It is, of course, impossible for me to be satisfied in other ways, firstly, because of all the children and secondly, because I do not want to betray my husband. So I would like to ask you very kindly to grant my request. I will then be able to carry on until we are victorious.

With all reverence,  
Frau S

# ACT THREE - FRANCE AND LONDON 1916 AND BEYOND

INSTRUMENTAL PASSAGE FOR COSTUME CHANGE

IN THIS ACT PERCY DRESSED IN A RUINED FLITHY UNIFORM, AND ROSE'S CLOTHES SLIGHTLY

PERCY SINGS

IF I should die, think only this of me:  
That there's some corner of a foreign field  
That is forever England. There shall be  
In that rich earth a richer dust concealed;  
A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware,  
Gave, once, her flowers to love, her ways to roam,  
A body of England's, breathing English air,  
Washed by the rivers, blest by the suns of home.

And think, this heart, all evil shed away,  
A pulse in the eternal mind, no less  
Gives somewhere back the thoughts by England given;  
Her sights and sounds; dreams happy as her day;  
And laughter, learnt of friends; and gentleness,  
In hearts at peace, under an English heaven.

ROSE SINGS

And death shall have no dominion.  
Dead man naked they shall be one  
With the man in the wind and the west moon;  
When their bones are picked clean and the clean bones gone,  
They shall have stars at elbow and foot;  
Though they go mad they shall be sane,  
Though they sink through the sea they shall rise again;  
Though lovers be lost love shall not;  
And death shall have no dominion.  
And death shall have no dominion.  
Under the windings of the sea  
They lying long shall not die windily;

Twisting on racks when sinews give way,  
Strapped to a wheel, yet they shall not break;  
Faith in their hands shall snap in two,  
And the unicorn evils run them through;  
Split all ends up they shan't crack;  
And death shall have no dominion.  
And death shall have no dominion.  
No more may gulls cry at their ears  
Or waves break loud on the seashores;  
Where blew a flower may a flower no more  
Lift its head to the blows of the rain;  
Though they be mad and dead as nails,  
Heads of the characters hammer through daisies;  
Break in the sun till the sun breaks down,  
And death shall have no dominion.

#### PERCY SINGS AS HE DIES

In Flanders fields the poppies blow  
Between the crosses, row on row,  
That mark our place; and in the sky  
The larks, still bravely singing, fly  
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead. Short days ago  
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,  
Loved and were loved, and now we lie  
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:  
To you from failing hands we throw  
The torch; be yours to hold it high.  
If ye break faith with us who die  
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow  
In Flanders fields.

ROSE, GRIEVING, SINGS "The world is waiting for the sunrise"  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E7N1tSeoTr8>

Dear one the world is waiting for the sunrise  
Ev'ry rose is covered with dew  
And while the world is waiting for the sunrise  
In my heart is calling you

Dear one the world is waiting for the sunrise  
Every little rose bud is covered with dew  
And my heart is calling for you  
The thrush on high his sleepy mate is calling  
And my heart is calling you

#### PERCY SINGS

When you are old and grey and full of sleep,  
And nodding by the fire, take down this book,  
And slowly read, and dream of the soft look  
Your eyes had once, and of their shadows deep;

How many loved your moments of glad grace,  
And loved your beauty with love false or true,  
But one man loved the pilgrim soul in you,  
And loved the sorrows of your changing face;

And bending down beside the glowing bars,  
Murmur, a little sadly, how Love fled  
And paced upon the mountains overhead  
And hid his face amid a crowd of stars.

#### DUET "A Hundred Years From Now" (original song)

A hundred years from now  
Someone will be singing your name  
A hundred years from now.

A hundred years from now,  
Love will echo in our hearts

A hundred years from now,  
You and I together.

The fight is right,  
This Great War is the War to end all Wars.

That's what it's for:  
This War must be the War to end all Wars.

(END)