

Vincent: An A Cappella Opera – Script Excerpt

VINCENT AN A CAPPELLA OPERA

The Opera takes place in both the past and the present which exist simultaneously.

The set: *Several cornflower blue chairs – an easel and paint brushes.*

The past: *The Asylum at St. Remy where Vincent has interred himself – after famously cutting off the lower part of his ear - shortly before his suicide in 1890.*

In the Asylum Vincent has visions and memories. The inmates of the Asylum transform into characters from Vincent's life – then back again.

They also transform into 'minions' working for 'The Auctioneer' who exist in the present.

They are dressed in business suits for the entire opera – even as inmates of the Asylum – and when they become characters from Vincent's life.

The present: *Represented by omnipresent character of the Auctioneer who is selling a work of art by Van Gogh, though what that work of art is remains a mystery. She is determined to get the highest price that she can for it.*

The Auctioneer sees Vincent – and interacts with him – but Vincent cannot see her until after 'So Many Artists' and then at the very end of the Opera – where she may or may not appear to him like some terrible nightmare he doesn't understand.

VINCENT

It's late and I can't sleep and rest my walking mind
The conversations in my head
The voices I can't define
I'm waltzing with thoughts and memories
Partners of my past
One by one we dance

INMATES

Pa, Pa Da – etc.

VINCENT

Voices seem familiar even though they keep --

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INMATES

Reappearing, disappearing.

VINCENT

Stepping from the Shadows into light then they're –

INMATES

Here today then gone away

VINCENT

Voices from the paintings in my life

INMATES

Who are they, don't go away

VINCENT

Voices of the memories of my life.

The inmates become 'minions' working for the Auctioneer – in the present.

MINIONS

Ahh – etc

AUCTIONER AND MINIONS

Buy / more money, money, money / buy / more money / buy / more money
Buy / more money, money, money / buy / MONEY

Buy / more money, money, money / buy / more money / buy / more money
Buy / more money, money, money / buy / MONEY FOR –

Art / more money, money, money / buy / more money / sell / more money
Sell / more money, money, money, MONEY

Buy / more money, money, money / buy / more money / sell / more money
Buy / more money, money, money / buy / MONEY FOR –

Art / more money, money, money / sell - buy / bid higher / sell / bid higher / more money
money, money, HIGHER

Sell / More money, money, money / Buy – Sell / Bid higher / Buy / Bid higher / Sell More
money, money, money / Buy / HIKE UP THE

Price / More money, money, money / Buy sell / bid higher / Buy Bid higher / Sell / More
money, money, money / buy / HIGHER

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Sell / More money, money, money / buy / Sell / Bid higher / Buy Bid higher / Sell more money, money, money / buy / HIKE UP THE

PRICE / more money, money, money / sell / a buyer / sell / a buyer / sell more money money, money / sell / HIGHER

Sell / more money, money, money / sell / A buyer / sell / A buyer / Sell / more money money, money, money for –

ART / more money, money, money / sell / a buyer / sell / a buyer / sell more money money, money / sell / HIGHER

Sell / more money, money, money / sell / A buyer / sell / A buyer / Sell / more money money, money, money ONCE TWICE AND SOLD!

AUCTIONEER

I am the Auctioneer
The anti-Christ of Christies Southeby's Santaneer
I am Lucrezia Borgia, I am Al Capone
I am the Emporer Nero – all rolled into to one.

MINIONS

The Auctioneer is here now
Have fear now
She's here now
The Auctioneer is here now ALL HAIL
Who will she sell today – Degas? Monet?
Who's lives are on display SOULS TO BE SOLD

AUCTIONEER

I am the Lord of Profit
The Duke of Lust and Greed
The Queen of Culture Vultures
A Sheik of shameless deeds
I am Vlad the Impaler – Monsieur Marquis de Sade
I am also Jack The Ripper and I'll rip the heart from art like
Rambo with a Renoir I'll blow you all away
I'll blast the pieces skyward and I'll dare you all to pay
I'll swoon like Elvis Presley seduce like Miss Monroe
Sweet talk you into buying before you even know

MINIONS

The Auctioneer is here now
Have fear now, she's here now
The Auctioneer is here now ALL HAIL
Who will sell today Degas? Manet?
Who's lives are on display, souls to be –

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Tell us a bedtime story
Give us a tale of glory
Of battles raw and rampant – GORY
Tell us of artists conquered
Masterpieces plundered
Ransacking, looting, murder, genius being ripped.

AUCTIONEER

Scuttling with my minions
Through the country-side
Peeping though the window
“My what’s that inside?”
Knock gently on the door
“Well hello a lovely day – just passing with the chaps and you
Looked like likely prey”
“Let me introduce myself – I represent some firms
We like to look for likely paintings, lovely paintings high returns”
“That little pastoral pleantry – a hanging by the phone might be the little nest egg that you
never knew you owned”.
“What’s that – what’s that I hear? You could never sell?”
“I’ll level with you my darling LIKE BLOODY HELL – BOYS!”
Chisel off the smoke stains – scrape away the grime.
Blow torch all the cobwebs there’s a signature to find.

*Refer to score: The Auctioneer discovered the signature of
MONET on the painting that gradually becomes the word
MONEY. The Auctioneer is delirious.*

AUCTIONEER

The power of the priceless the hallucinating green
My eyes becoming sightless just commission can be seen
Like Mana from the heavens the treasures torrent down and
Money rains and floods the earth and I would gladly drown.

MINIONS

Who – who’s up today?
For sale today?

AUCTIONEER

Who like to know about it?
Who’d like to guess upon it?
Who’d lay a bet upon it?
Who’d bet their life upon it?
Who’d like to know?

Today is someone tragic, someone to place on show
Someone who’s every sorrow is worth it’s weight in gold

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Someone who's tinged with madness
That hope did never know
And every pain within him sunken treasure to behold
So let's go fortune hunting see how far the price can go
Show no mercy – wakey, wakey – Vincent Van Gogh.

The minions become inmates of the Asylum. Vincent appears – painting.

LUNATIC WENDY & BORIS

The clock screams its morning, you're stretching and you're yawning
You slip into the white coats with the straps
The clock shouts it's half past
You stagger down to breakfast and line up with the rats to collect your swill
The sackcloth so unkind the sweet stench of urine
The cockroach you can't find that crawls up your back
The chains clang the rats gnaw
The shorn heads and bed sores
Blank stares and soft walls
Minds kept in mothballs
All of our sense behind barbed wire fences
We're shock treated bath-cured to drive us insane

CRAZY ELSIE

Well, here we are in the Asylum
Please feel free to join the club
But you need the right credentials
To be insane is not enough
You need a touch of imagination
Toss in a few little idiosyncrasies
I should know cause I'm a member for life
Then threw away the key when they put away me

No body really understands me, I see the world in my own way
But there's genius in my madness that won't see the light of day
We're all hanging from the ceiling we're all crawling up the walls
We explore our hidden feelings while we're barking on all fours
(she slowly loses her sanity – madness ramps up)
And there's screaming from the cellar and there's monsters at the door
And I'm turning into butter and I'm spreading round the floor
And my head is growing flowers and I've given birth to pups
And they chase me round for hours until they lock me up.

VINCENT

They're all crazy here they'll drive me mad.
They'll wear away my mind I'll lose what little I have
So I'm locked away in my room I'll stay and I'll hide from their eyes

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And I'll paint away the insanity of their cries

LUNATIC SUSAN

We've got these crazy old Asylum blues
Just locked in these hazy old Asylum blues
It's making us sad, it's sending us mad
Those old asylum blues.
Well it seems like only yesterday when Vincent joined us here
He had a bad time down in Old Arle town and chopped off his ear
But he had one saving grace
He put himself away in this place to further his career

When he first came our way he sat all day and painted in a rush
But then he had one of his fits too many and too bad he broke his brush
So he locked himself inside
In his room he chooses to hide and there he stays

VINCENT

They're all crazy here they'll drive me mad.
They'll wear away my mind I'll lose what little I have
I'm locked away in my room I'll stay and I'll hide from their eyes
And I'll paint away the insanity of their cries

SCRIPT EXCERPT