

ALICE TIERNEY



EXCERPTS: THREE ARIAS FOR SOPRANO

I Wish That You Could See You (Lyra)

I am Alice 1 (Alice 1)

I Might be Alice 3 (Alice 3)

Music by Melissa Dunphy

Libretto by Jacqueline Goldfinger

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Synopsis

A present-day archaeological dig in Philadelphia. Three graduate students, John, Quinn, and Zandra, are digging amid the ruins of a boarding house once run by Alice Tierney, a 19th-century sex worker whose death remains a mystery. The students count artifacts and joke about inconsequential finds, exhausted by the drudgery of the dig. Quinn discovers a teaspoon, triggering memories of her working-class childhood, while Zandra shares her heartbreak from a recent broken engagement. Lyra arrives at the site; she and Zandra have just begun a relationship, though Zandra is troubled by its rapid intensity. John sees them together and crudely reminds them of HR guidelines governing workplace relationships, causing Quinn to snap at him.

John shares his evolving passion for archaeology. Zandra imagines Alice through her feminist lens, while Lyra warns her about the dangers of projecting herself onto historical figures. Lyra expresses her love for Zandra, revealing some of their relationship's backstory and her confidence that Zandra is "the one" ("I Wish That You Could See You").

John and Quinn discover artifacts of significance. As John explains how his artifact, a shoe with a broken heel, unveils information about Alice Tierney, a version of her appears ("I Am Alice 1"). As imagined by John, Alice is a 19th-century sex worker trope: a coquettish femme fatale who manipulates men for pleasure and profit. Quinn is unimpressed with John's version of Alice, criticizing him for his reliance on sexist stereotypes. She shares her artifact, a teapot with a suffragette slogan, and her version of Alice: an anachronistically liberated feminist who joins Quinn in a powerful pop-rock duet.

John throws Quinn's words back at her as he pronounces her Alice unrealistic. Zandra and Lyra break up the argument, and Zandra encourages them to focus on what they know, rather than making assumptions. Her version of Alice Tierney appears and gives a nuanced if indistinct biography ("I Might Be Alice 3").

The four argue about the power and currency of certainty in academic careers, but the argument is cut short when prior sexual drama between Quinn and John is unexpectedly revealed. After an awkward moment, they all return to work. John and Quinn continue to interact with their Alices, each respectively realizing that they have created inauthentic visions of her, which fade away.

Lyra accepts Zandra's version of Alice, and the three women share how they are each struggling to break free of society's assumptions. They promise to embrace the uncertainty of Alice Tierney's life and death, as Lyra declares her love for Zandra's human complexity.

Quinn and John join Lyra and Zandra in accepting what they do not know. The four archaeologists recognize their pasts' influence on the way they construct their stories and view the world. Together, the characters look to the future as they continue to work on the dig, watched by the three Alices.



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I Wish that You Could See You

LYRA: I wish that you could see you
the way that I see you.
I wish that you could feel you
the way that I feel you.
Not broken but brave,
and brilliant and bold,
and genuine and strong, so strong.
A beautiful monster of madness and rage
that only I can tame,
that only I can hold.
I thought I was in love, once long ago.
I thought she made me whole.
I didn't know it was really you.
My love, I was waiting for you.
My love, who arrived at my door,
soaked and freezing,
Lost in a storm with only me to keep you warm,
give you a home, give you...
I was never one for the spotlight.
I never wanted the top prize.
Once I earn this degree for my mother,
I'll begin my own life—at last!—by your side,
my love, my own.
I didn't get it wrong, did I? No!
You're the one,
and I will make it work.
This time,
no more mistakes,
just more.

I Am Alice 1

ALICE 1: It did break.
It broke on the night I was murdered.
It broke in the struggle.
They threw it into the privy and left me dangling on
the fence.
Lifeless.
Alone.
I am Alice. I am Alice Tierney.
I danced my way from New York to New Jersey,
New Jersey to the Philadelphia-shore.
Parties, glamour, and fashion
Then, broke.

I ran out of money
but not out of men, or women, or...
I built a place for those who hide in the shadows.
From the Merchant's doors at Penn Harbor they
came.
Top coats, top hats, striking silhouettes.
I open my front door wide.
They are ready for a loosened collar,
the gaze of someone who can truly see them,
the finest wine and company,
this is the life I was destined for.
No stuffy ballrooms,
no husband littering the city with bastards.
This is me.
No one will ever stop me.
I am Alice. I am Alice Tierney.

I Might Be Alice 3

ALICE 3: I might be Alice.
I might be Alice Tierney.
I cannot tell you where I come from,
but I can tell you where I've been.
I've been in bars where men profess love,
only to turn their backs when the next ship comes
in.
I have lost lovers to conscription
and civil war.
I have lost lovers to the meddling church,
and the cruel illness of Philadelphia summers.
But I have gained as I have lost,
and I have loved more than most.
Live on, all those who love
and wish to be loved.
Destroy all but the proof of your passion
for the future to hold and judge.
In the end, the gavel sounds, a jury stands,
and I swing from a fence behind a boarding
house.
A murder?
A mistake?
A suicide in the rough?
I might be Alice Tierney.

I Wish that You Could See You

Text by Jacqueline Goldfinger

Lyra

Music by Melissa Dunphy

Allegretto $\text{J}=52$

The musical score consists of four staves of music. The top staff is for 'Lyra' (soprano) and includes dynamic markings *p* and *pp*. The second staff is for 'L.' (piano). The third and fourth staves are also for 'L.' (piano). The lyrics are written below the piano staves. Measure numbers 1 through 11 are indicated above the staves. The piano part features various rhythmic patterns and dynamics, including *p*, *pp*, *mp*, and *f*.

1
Lyra: - - - - -
L.: *pp* *p* 2 2

5
L.: wish that you could see you the way that I
L.: 2 2 2 2

8
L.: see you. I wish that you could feel you the
L.: 2 2 2 2

11
L.: way that I feel you. Not brok - en but brave. And
L.: 2 2 2 2

14

L. brill - iant and bold,____ and gen - uine____ and strong,

17

L. — so strong. A beau - ti-ful mon-ster of

21

L. mad-ness and rage____ that on - ly I____ can tame,____ that

24

L. on - - ly I can hold.

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27

L. 

I thought I was in love once long a - go. I

thought she made me whole. I did-n't know it was real - ly

you, real - ly you, My

love I was wait-ing for you, for you. My love, who ar-rived at my

42

L. door, soaked and freez-ing. Lost in a storm_____ with on - ly

46

L. me__ to keep_ you warm,_____ give you a home,_____ give_ you...

49

mf

L. I was nev - er one for the spot light. I nev - er want-ed the top prize.

53

p

L. Once I earn this de - gree for my moth- er, I'll be-gin my own life,__ at last by your

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57 *f*

L. side, my love, my own. I did - n't get it wrong,—

mp

f

60

L. did I? No! You're the one and I will make it work.—

mp

63

L. This time, no more mis- takes, just

rit. *p*

L. more, just more, just more.

p

I Am Alice 1

Solemnly ♩ = 56

Alice 1

Alice #1 (John's Alice) takes the shoe from his hand. It did break. It

A1.

broke on the night I was mur-dered. It broke in the

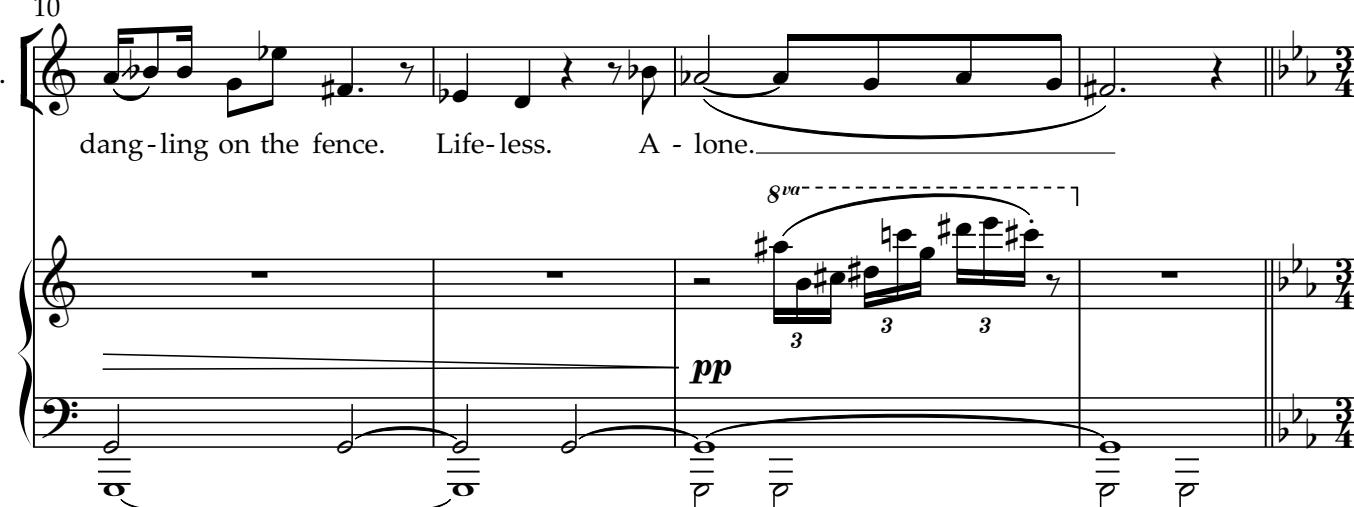
A1.

increasingly pouty and flirty

strug-gle.. They threw it in-to the priv-y— and left me

mf

10

A1. 

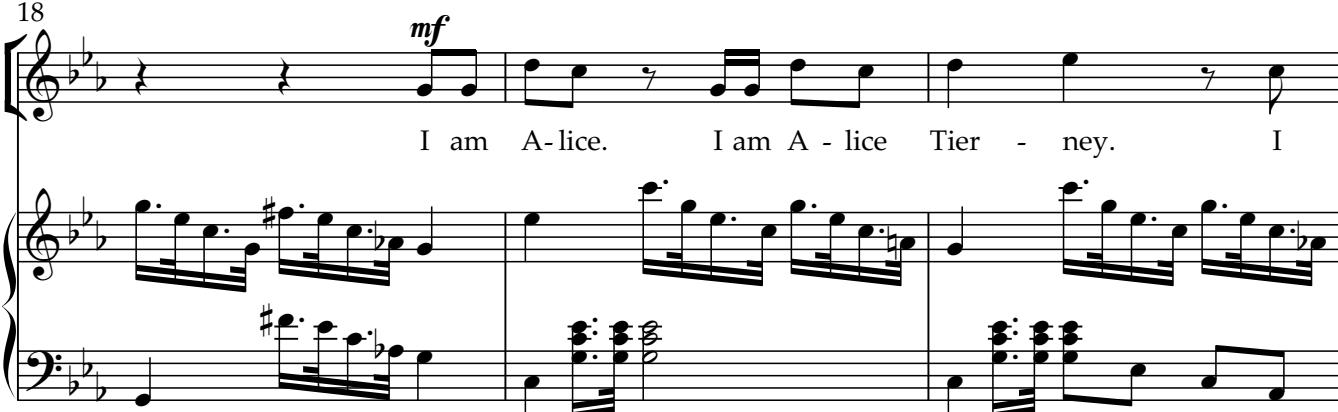
dang-ling on the fence. Life-less. A - lone.

Drunk Allegretto $\text{♩} = 66$

14



18

A1. 

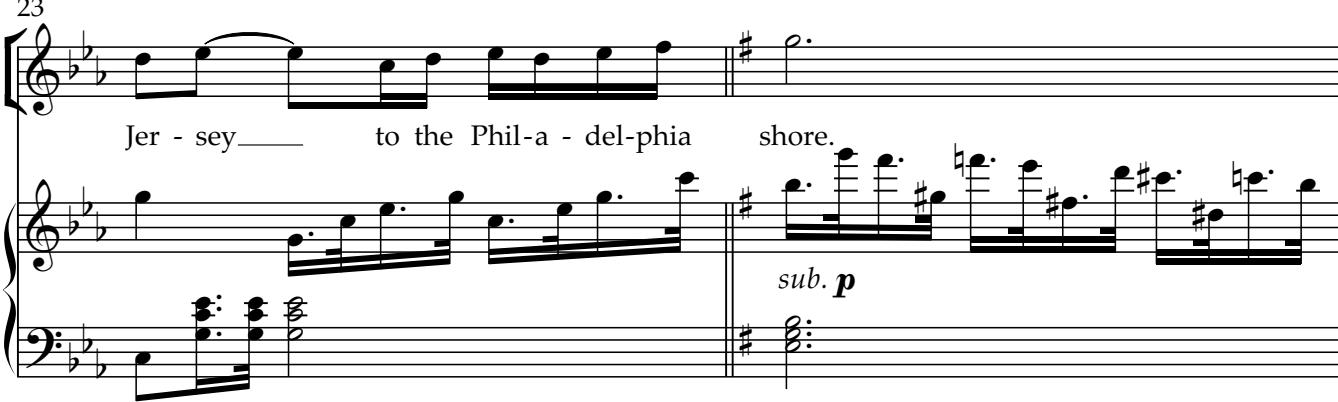
I am A-lice. I am A - lice Tier - ney. I

21

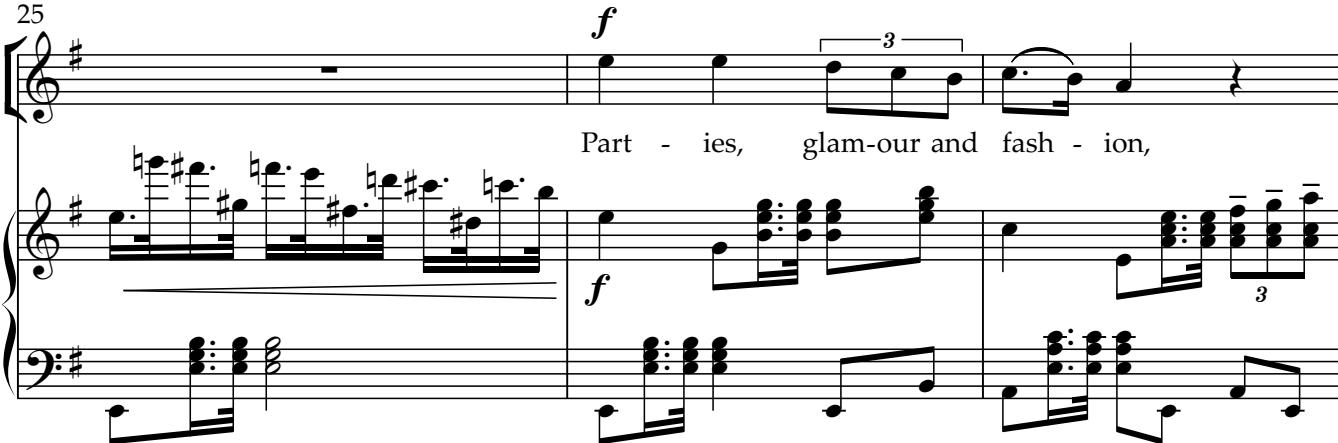
A1. 

danced my way from New York to New Jer - sey, New

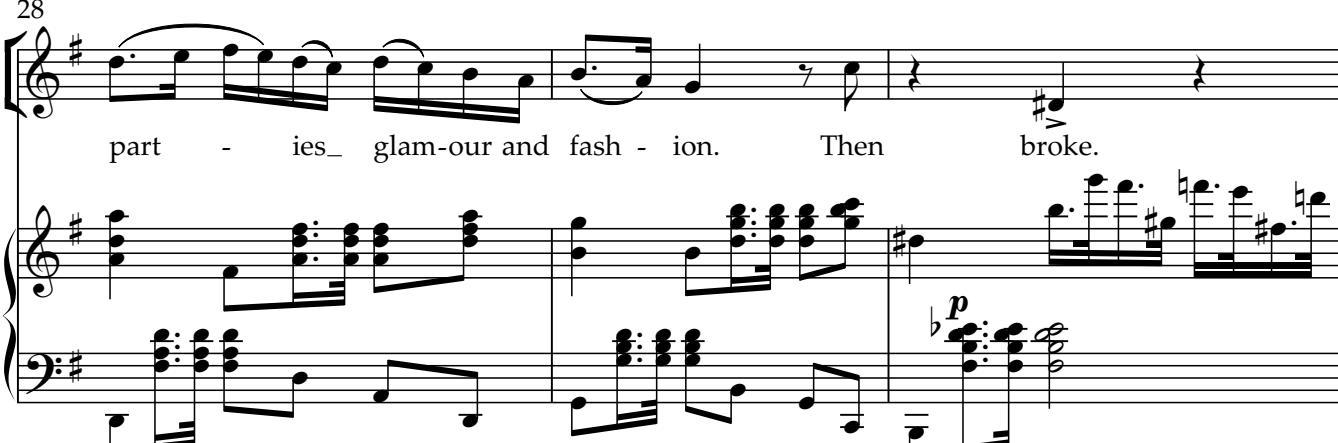
23

A1. 

25

A1. 

28

A1. 

31

A1. 

34

A1. men, or wo-men, or... 

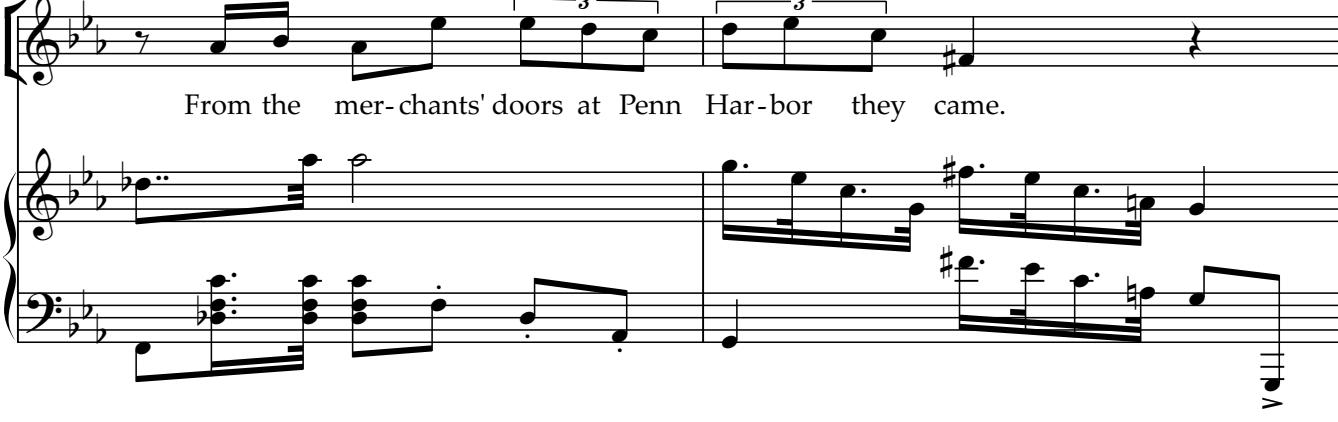
fp

37

A1. I built a place, for those who hide in the shad-ows. 

f

40

A1. From the mer-chants' doors at Penn Har-bor they came. 

v

42

A1. Top coats, top-hats, strik-ing sil-hou-ettes. I o-pen my front door 

v

45

A1. wide. They are ready for a loo - sed col - lar,

48

A1. the gaze of some-one who can tru - ly see them. the fi - nest wine and

51

A1. com - pan - y, this is the life I was des - tined for.

54

A1. No stuf - fy ball - rooms, no hus - band litt'ring the

57

A1.

ci - ty with bas - tards. This is me.

rit.

60

A1.

No one will ev - er stop me. I am

Rubato

f

mf

64

A1.

Moderato ♩ = 60

A - lice. I am A - lice Tier - ney.

p

I Might Be Alice 3

Dreamlike ♩ = 72

Alice 3

Zandra's Alice enters. I might be A - lice. I

A3.

6

might be A-lice Tier - ney. I can-not tell you where I

A3.

11

come from, but I can tell you where I've been.

17

mp

ped.

*ped.

* sim.

32

A3.

I have lost lov - ers to the med-dling church,

35

A3.

and the cruel ill - ness of Phil - a - del - phia

38

A3.

sum - - mers.

41

A3.

But I have gained as I have

44

A3.

lost, _____ and I have loved _____ more than

47

A3.

most. _____ Live on, _____

50

A3.

— live on, all those who

53

A3.

love and wish to be loved.

mp

56

A3.

poco rit. a tempo

Des - troy all but the

59

A3.

proof of your pas - sion for the fu -

A3.

62

ture to hold and judge. In the

A3.

65

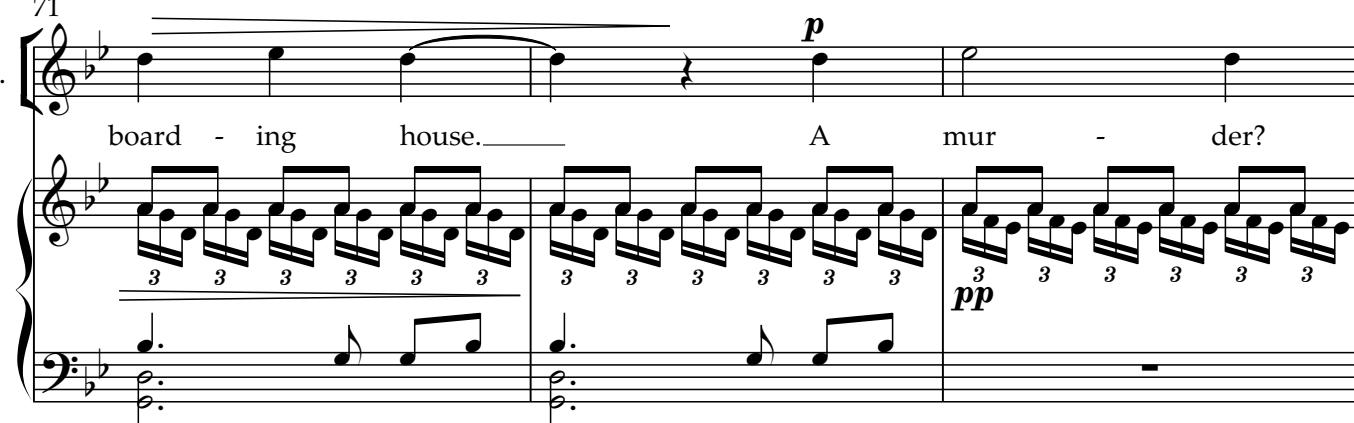
end, the gav - el sounds, a ju - ry stands,

A3.

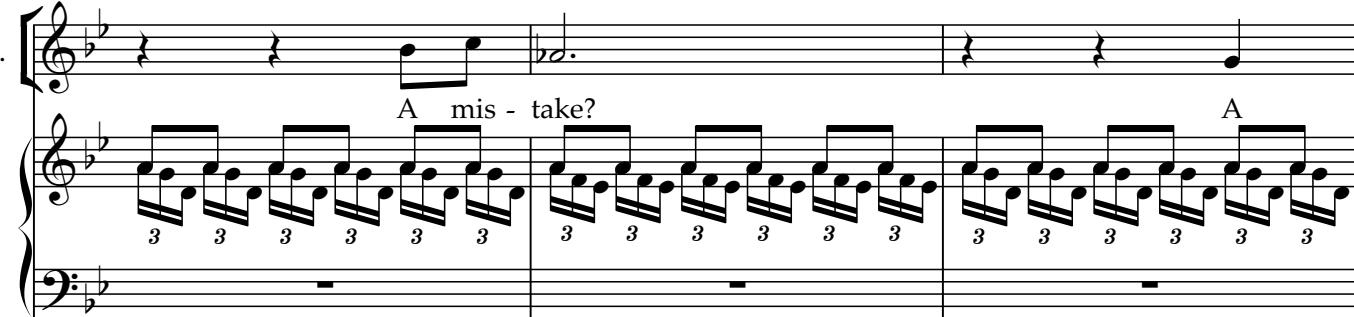
68

and I swing from a fence behind a

71

A3. 

74

A3. 

77

A3. 

81

A3. 