We Wear the Sea Like a Coat

Music by
Sally McCune

Libretto by
Yvonne Gray & Rachel Lampert
CAST of CHARACTERS

SARA Mezzo-Soprano
JONATHAN Tenor
ALASTAIR Baritone
ROWAN Mezzo-Soprano
COLIN Tenor
MAGNUS Bass
BRIAN Bass-Baritone
MAGGIE Soprano
CHARLIE Tenor

Three Arctic Terns
TERN 1 Soprano
TERN 2 Counter-Tenor
TERN 3 Alto

Instrumentation: Instrumentation will eventually consist of a full chamber orchestra. Piano-vocal score, and in some places, string quartet with select winds and percussion will be used as the opera develops.
We Wear the Sea Like a Coat
Opera in One Act

Yvonne Gray, Rachel Lampert

Sally McCune

Orkney, Scotland. Three Arctic Terns sing from atop a cliff. A woman (Sara) and a man (Jonathan) race down to the beach (Rehearsal A). They are in their mid 30s. It is a bright, glorious day. Although the wind is strong, they quickly strip to their bathing suits. They run into the shallows laughing.

They wade out and dive into deeper water. They emerge gasping, exhilarated. “There’s a seal,” Sara calls and they tread water, gazing towards it, enthralled by its proximity. Terns fly above them, silver blades of light.

We Wear the Sea Like a Coat
I'm on!
Come on!
Sara, look at this glorious sea!
Let's get in!
Oh! So refreshing!

Kee'arr, kee'arr, kee'arr, kee'arr!
Kee'arr, kee'arr, kee'arr, kee'arr!
Kee'arr, kee'arr, kee'arr, kee'arr!
I think they call this bracing. It's cold like Maine!

\[ \sum \sum \sum \sum \sum \sum \]
Smell this air! An entire...
An en-tire year to breathe in ev-ry breeze, ev-ry

Sara (M-S.)

Jonathan (T.)

Tern 1 (S.)

Tern 2 (Ct.)

Tern 3 (A.)

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Pno.

Pno.
mol-e-cule, ev'-ry scent of sand and sea.
For-ev-er the poet.
One doesn't 'breathe' the breeze.

For-ev-er the sci-en-tist.
To the poet.
Look! Jon-a-than!

Says the scientist.

Kee'arr, kee'arr, kee'arr, kee'arr!
Kee'arr, kee'arr, kee'arr, kee'arr!
Kee'arr, kee'arr, kee'arr, kee'arr!
Sara (M-S.)

Jonathan (T.)

It's so close!

Oh, gone!

mf

pizz.

And so beau-ti-ful!
Jonathan (T.)

It's dived.

Tern 1 (S.)

Tern 2 (Ct.)

Tern 3 (A.)

Pno.

Pno.
Let's not stay in too long.

Sara (M-S.)

Jonathan (T.)

Tern 1 (S.)

Tern 2 (Ct.)

Tern 3 (A.)

Pno.

Pno.

It's cold, and we're disturbing the terns.
The wind's up. We've got what's wrong?

poco accel...
Jonathan (T.)

Sara (M-S.)

Pno.

Sara (M-S.)

Jonathan (T.)

Pno.

Tern 1 (S.)

Pno.

Tern 1 (S.)

Sara (M-S.)

Jonathan (T.)

Pno.

Pno.

115

= 130

119

= 130

122

= 130

We have to get back now!

drift-ed too far.

Kee'arr, kee'arr, kip- kip, kee-arr!

Ah!

Here!

grab my hand!
Jonathan (T.)

I can't. I can't!

You've got it. You're going to be o-kay.

That's it!

Pno.

Sara (M-S.)

Swim on your side! We're almost there!

Pno.

Pno.

Sara (M-S.)

rit. . . . . . . . . . . . . . more calmly \( \times = 92 \)

Jonathan (T.)

rit. . . . . . . . . . . . . . more calmly \( \times = 92 \)

Pno.

Pno.
Yes. I'm angry with myself.

Are you alright?

I should have known better.

Tenderly I won't tell.

It was an attractive seal.
Thank you.

I'll save your life any day!

Thank you for saying yes to this.

Yes to this? Of course! An entire year a-

broad with your oceanic institute foot-ing the bill. What
more could a down and out, tenure-denied, ersatz professor/writer ask for?

You're on an adventure that started out with saving your wife's life.

True. What more could I ask for?
This world is...

Perhaps a family?

I worry about the future of this world.

What would our children inherit? I'm afraid.

I know you are.
We can be afraid to get together. You and I or the three of us.

But in the meantime, I'll love you and will do my best to be your humble husband and bring you pots of tea down to the...
You'll not be my husband!

You'll be writing your second great American novel!
I'll Be Waiting for You

Expressively with rubato, $\mathbb{\text{\textit{T}}}$ = ca. 84

Sara (M-S.)

When you've finished writing for the day,

Jonathan (T.)

Expressively with rubato, $\mathbb{\text{\textit{T}}}$ = ca. 84

When I've put down my instruments and tools,

Pno.

when your story has begun to take shape, then I'll be waiting for you on the
When I've made all my measurements,

spring tide and neap tide, I will be waiting for

you on the shore! When your story has begun to sweep you along,
When your characters call from the page in voices,

of their own, I'll be waiting for you.

I love to see your eyes shine, the swell of your thoughts, that tide of ideas and plans!
I love the man I mar - ried, I love him still

That pas - sion you have for cre - at - ing, I know that can hap - pen here, I

know that can hap - pen here, It's going to be a good
Sara (M-S.)

Jonathan (T.)

Phoo.

I know that can happen.

I know that can happen.

poco rit.

poco rit.
Transition to Scene 2

Birds fly overhead and are heard singing in their nests. Sara and Jonathan exit. Maggie enters holding binoculars. She watches the birds.
They traveled from seas of ice. Soaring, soaring...
Maggie (S).

Tern 1 (S.)

Tern 2 (Ct.)

Tern 3 (A.)

Pno.

north,

they long for the

Kip, kip, kip, kip,

Kip, kip, kip, kip,

Kip, kip, kip, kip,

Kip, kip, kip, kip,

Kip, kip, kip, kip,

kor, kor, kor, kor,
Scene 2: First Full Day on the Island

Sara (M-S.)

Jonathan (T.)

Pno.
"The Trowie Mound"

A stone ship sailed in the swell of the earth.
be.neath the waves of bar. ley-o,
Mir-rie dan.cers sway'd through the
Maggie (S).

Brian (Bass Bar.)

S. Lashed the whale - - backs to the shore. Oh, stay a-way from the

A. Lashed the whale - - backs to the shore

T. Lashed the whale - - to the shore

B. Lashed the whale - - to the shore

Pno.

Pno.
Your eyes like stones, your body so cold, let me

hold your hand and warm you, no light, no light, in your

eyes. No breath on your lips. No love, no love, no laughter, no voice in the

room, no words, no words, no more words.
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Player 1: Sura (M-S.)
Player 2: Tern 1 (S.)
Player 3: Tern 2 (Ct.)
Player 4: Tern 3 (A.)
Player 5: Pno.
Transition from Scene 11 to 12
"Criss-Cross"

Maggie (S).

Brian (Bass Bar.)

S.

A.

T.

B.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Pno.

Pno.

*3rd partial on D string or 2nd partial on A string
They travel such long paths from seas of ice,
cris-cross, criss-cross, criss-cross, criss-cross, criss-cross, criss-cross,
kip kip, criss-cross, criss-cross, criss-cross, criss-cross, criss-cross,
Ocean currents of air, criss-cross, criss-cross, criss-cross, criss-cross, kip-kip, kip-kip, kip-kip.
see light-ed con-ti-nents drift by, vast ships in the night.

criss-cross, criss-cross, criss-cross, criss-cross, criss-cross,

kip, kip kip kip, criss-cross criss-cross

criss-cross, criss-cross, criss-cross, criss-cross, criss-cross,

criss-cross, criss-cross, criss-cross, criss-cross, criss-cross

criss-cross, criss-cross, criss-cross, criss-cross, criss-cross
Maggie (S).

Brian (Bass Bar.)

What long-ing draws them north? What call we cannot hear?

criss-cross, criss-cross, criss-cross, criss-cross, criss-cross, criss-cross,

kip-kip kip, kip-kip kip, criss-cross criss-cross

criss-cross, criss-cross, criss-cross, criss-cross, criss-cross, criss-cross,
But the waves round these lands grow empty,
shoals of sand eels move on, the terns’ eggs are
criss-cross, criss-cross, criss-cross, criss-cross, criss-cross, criss-cross
kip-kip kip, kip-kip kip, criss-cross
criss-cross, criss-cross, criss-cross, criss-cross, criss-cross, criss-cross
  criss-cross
  criss-cross
  criss-cross
  criss-cross
  criss-cross
  criss-cross

Do we hear tiny voices tremble inside?
Do we hear the silence fall?

Emp -

criss cross, -

criss cross, -

criss cross,

- kip kip,

- kip kip,

- kip, criss cross,
Maggie (S.)

Brian (Bass Bar.)

S.

A.

T.

B.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Pno.

Pno.

shells, empty nests, empty shells,

criss-cross, criss-cross, criss-cross, criss-cross, criss-cross,

criss-cross criss-cross

criss-cross, criss-cross, criss-cross, criss-cross, criss-cross,

criss-cross, criss-cross, criss-cross, criss-cross, criss-cross,

criss-cross, criss-cross, criss-cross, criss-cross, criss-cross,

criss-cross, criss-cross, criss-cross, criss-cross, criss-cross,