

The Telephone

or L'Amour à trois

opera in a single act

libretto and composer di Gian Carlo Menotti

world premiere: New York, Heckscher Theater, 18 February 1947

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Just before leaving for a trip, Ben wants to ask his beloved Lucy to marry him and goes to her house with a gift. She is delighted to receive the gift but immediately interrupts their conversation to answer the phone: it is her friend Margaret, and the two of them talk about this and that, and the latest gossip. Once Lucy puts the phone down, Ben resumes his speech, but once again she is distracted by the phone; this time someone has called the wrong number. Ben has less and less time to make his proposal; he tries to pick up where he left off but struggles to get to the point and the phone rings again. This time it's George, another friend of Lucy's with whom the girl has a brief and lively argument which upsets her considerably. Ben tries to calm her down, but Lucy is in tears and goes off to get a handkerchief. Ben is now so exasperated he starts hurling abuse at the diabolical device and wants to disconnect it. Lucy comes back and surprises Ben; she defends the phone as if it were her child and scolds her boyfriend, also because she wants to call her friend Pamela straight away and tell her about the argument she had with George. Ben begs her to listen to him for a moment, but in vain. While Lucy is letting off steam with Pamela, Ben has a brilliant idea: he leaves the house and finds a telephone booth. Only thanks to the phone, the much-hated monster is he able to make himself heard: Lucy agrees to marry him, begging him, when he is away, not to forget the most important thing: her phone number.



Trouble in Tahiti

one-act opera in seven scenes

libretto and composer di Leonard Bernstein

world premiere: Massachusetts, Waltham, Brandeis University, 12 June 1952

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Prelude – A jazz trio introduces the action by recounting the marvellous lifestyle enjoyed by the inhabitants of Suburbia, a town that embodies the glories of the American Dream in the fifties. *Scene 1*– Sam and Dinah, a married couple, have a harsh exchange over breakfast: she accuses him of cheating on her with his secretary, which he denies. When she asks him to be present, that afternoon at the school play of his son, Junior, he says that he will be busy in a tournament; he then leaves the house and goes straight to the office. *Scene 2* – At work, Sam is a brilliant and successful professional; he confidently manages his affairs and offers to lend a friend money, while the jazz trio comments with great admiration on his *savoir faire*. *Scene 3* – Dinah is at her analyst's and tells him that she dreamed of an abandoned, uncultivated garden, where a voice was calling her, promising a mysterious place of peace and harmony. In her dream, Dinah tried to follow the voice but was unable to reach it. Meanwhile, Sam is about to leave for lunch. *Scene 4* – On the street Sam and Dinah meet by chance but make excuses not to have lunch together. Once they have gone their separate ways, they both wonder how their relationship could have deteriorated to such an extent, torn between the nostalgia of their early days together and the deep frustration of their present. *Interlude* – The jazz trio returns to praise the wonders of life in Suburbia and the many luxuries available to the bourgeoisie. *Scene 5* - In the gym, Sam wins his tournament. His professional success and physical prestige make him feel invincible, so much so that he believes he belongs to the category of “winning people”, those who succeed in everything and that “the losers” will never be able to match. *Scene 6* – During the afternoon, Dinah goes to the cinema to see a movie called *Trouble in Tahiti*, a romantic comedy that has just come out. Once home, the woman remembers the soundtrack and indulges in exotic fantasies, but soon she has to come to her senses and prepare dinner. Sam is on his way home; the enthusiasm of the afternoon gone and he is bitterly reflecting on how even ‘the winners’ must pay a price for their success: for him the price is his unhappy marriage. *Scene 7* – The jazz trio rages: how delightful the home life of the people of Suburbia is. Sam and Dinah are back together at home. They realise that they both missed Junior's show, they know they finally have to discuss their problems but, unable to deal with the situation, they decide to go together to see a movie: *Trouble in Tahiti*.

