

Libretto

Music by Sam Mullooly  
Libretto by Tom Mullooly

# **American Spring**

# Characters

Spring (*soprano*)

Varina Davis (*soprano*)

Betsy (*soprano*)

Joshua Chamberlain (*tenor*)

Christopher Melody (*baritone*)

Mary Todd Lincoln (*mezzo*)

## Chorus

Richmond Women

Soldiers of the 20th Maine

Messenger

Act I	
Scene 1 - Overture/"A Very Good Year".....	5
All Chorus	
Scene 2 - "With This Spring".....	5
Spring, Varina, Betsy, Joshua, Christopher, Male Chorus	
Scene 3 - "An Elegant Belle".....	8
Spring	
Scene 4 - "The Richmond Women".....	9
Varina, Female Chorus	
Scene 5 - "Why Do They Fight".....	12
Varina	
Scene 6 - "I'm Runnin'".....	14
Christopher, Varina, Betsy, All Chorus	
Scene 7 - "I Would Follow That Man".....	18
Joshua, Christopher	
Act II	
Scene 1 - "Victory".....	20
Mary Todd	
Scene 2 - "The Salute".....	21
Joshua, Male Chorus	
Scene 3 - "The Burning of Richmond".....	22
Varina	
Scene 4 - "Back To Washington".....	23
Joshua, Male Chorus	
Scene 5 - "Lamentations".....	25
Mary Todd, Joshua, Varina, All Chorus	
Scene 6 - "They Knew".....	27
Mary Todd	
Scene 7 - "Song Of Spring".....	28
Spring	
Scene 8 - "Mercies".....	29
Varina, Christopher, All Chorus	
Scene 9 - Instrumental.....	33



## Act I

### Scene 1 - A Very Good Year

#### CHORUS

Oh this year is a very good year,  
a very good year indeed.

Change is in the air,  
with those recent elections  
and the directions of the troubles  
overseas.

We might win the war  
and crush stubborn resistance  
to restore military and moral  
prestige.

Our team's in first place  
and over all could triumph  
through defiance if we all could just  
believe.

We all go to work  
adding value to a chain  
caring or not for human  
well being.

What can we acquire?  
By buying and selling we pave  
our way cradle to grave thinking we  
achieve.

Oh this year is a very good year,  
a very good year indeed.

### Scene 2 - With This Spring

#### SPRING

A very good year. How does that happen?  
Can our decisions bring about these conditions?  
Religion, politics, economics?  
They do not always lead where we would like.  
Is America still  
that shining city on a hill —

a beacon for what humanity  
can achieve?  
Think of 1865. It is springtime in Richmond.  
The Virginia air is filled with smells:  
gunpowder, and decomposition.  
The bright future that once beckoned  
American patriots  
from the time of the Revolution  
has led them strangely to this.  
April the cruel month,  
lilacs and the dead,  
boots and rain.  
April 1865,  
most American Spring  
Crushing Southern rebellion,  
celebration,  
bitter hope for a new nation,  
wetting the earth with blood and water.  
Tender shoots and terrible shot.  
In this American Springtime  
of 1865,  
in the White House,  
the First Lady is deep in thought.

VARINA  
My dress, please.

BETSY  
This Keckley dress from Washington, before the war? You need a new one.

VARINA  
Oh Betsy, there's not a new dress in Richmond.

BETSY  
You need to look your best, you are First Lady.

VARINA  
First Lady of not much left Betsy. Yankees to the North, Yankees to east, even  
Yankees to the South.

BETSY

Well I don't know much about that, but I do know that new patch here at your back won't hold the old patches together.

VARINA

With this Spring the end seems so much nearer now.  
With this Spring the Cause that so compelled us seems disheartening.  
With this Spring the armies will be marching soon.  
Our gamble will pay off or be lost.

SPRING

In this American Springtime  
of 1865,  
headquarters  
of the Army of the Potomac.  
Colonel Joshua Chamberlain  
prepares for another fight.

JOSHUA

Lee cannot last another summer boys,  
I feel the end must be at hand.  
With this Spring the roads are gonna harden boys.  
With this Spring we're going on to Richmond boys.  
With this Spring we'll end this rebellion boys.  
We'll sleep in old Jeff Davis's bed.

SPRING

In this American Springtime  
of 1865,  
In the White House,  
of the Confederacy,  
Betsy knows not what to do.

BETSY

What's coming next, Tom,  
She aint mean. But the federals are close.  
I'm scared.

With this Spring the roads are gonna harden Tom.  
With this Spring the federals are so close now.  
With this Spring Miss Varina's getting meaner now.  
Don't know what's coming next Tom.

#### SPRING

Four years of battle, no one has won.  
New Yorkers and Bostonians  
Slay Georgians and Virginians,  
Cannon and muskets,  
knives and bayonets,  
dysentery and disease.

#### CHRISTOPHER

Waking from sleep at daylight only this morning,  
men wrapped in blankets on a frosty ground.  
The coughing of seventy thousand men  
drowning bugles and beating drums.  
There's war that must be done.

#### SPRING

In this American Springtime  
of 1865,  
in the Capitol Richmond,  
desperation begins to set in,  
almost encircled,  
Robert E. Lee's line cannot hold,  
It is the end.

#### JOSHUA and CHORUS

With this Spring the roads are gonna harden boys.  
With this Spring we're going on to Richmond boys.  
With this Spring we'll end this rebellion boys.  
We'll sleep in old Jeff Davis's bed.

#### Scene 3 - An Elegant Belle

#### SPRING

Mississippi plantations provide a wonderful education,

Languages. Literature. History. Music.  
Mississippi plantations provide a lesson in subjugation,  
Silence. Obedience. Slavery. Submission.  
Varina was a charmer, an elegant belle.  
Duty to God and husband was her mother's rule.  
Granddaughter of the Governor  
of the State of New Jersey,  
who had fought with George Washington  
in the first rebellion.  
Schooled in Philadelphia for over a year,  
northern friendships held ever dear.  
Back South at nineteen, engaged to older Jeff Davis  
of the Hurricane Plantation; owner of slaves.  
Jeff elected to the Senate, and Washington DC.  
Varina now a lady of the highest society.  
One officer told another, she shines like Venus,  
brightest of all ladies, witty but gracious.  
A magnificent lady to grace any table  
Of Congressmen and Secretaries Of War and Navy  
Crude but honest, a leading companion.  
She did not like the news of war arriving.  
When the South succeeded  
the leaders chose their voice.  
Jeff Davis would lead ably,  
with Varina as First Lady.  
She knew from the start  
that her family would be at the heart  
of a great storm.

#### Scene 4 - The Richmond Women

VARINA

(reading letter)

“My dear Mary,  
congratulations to you and Abraham.  
Being the President's wife  
must be a horrible burden.  
We do not wish to cause trouble.  
But Jeff can no longer abide

a Federal government working  
its tyrannical will upon the people.  
You've heard him talk.  
Nobody gets the best of Jeff.  
He is convinced, and trusts in God.  
He would die for this cause.  
Let's hope it doesn't come to that."  
What a misery business  
this has since become.  
Can you hear  
those women of Richmond?  
Even in death and destruction  
they remain the same—  
chatter and patter and clatter...  
blind but full of airs.

#### CHORUS A

She is too prideful,  
this Yankee daughter.  
Our Richmond knows its blood ties

#### CHORUS B

She's Richmond's mother  
of revolution  
'76 alive again.  
With Varina the social life of Washington came to Richmond.  
Clever women gravitate around her.  
Her sense of the ridiculous is perfectly riotous,  
a woman of warm heart and impetuous tongue,  
witty and caustic,  
with a sensitive nature underlying all;  
a devoted wife and mother, and  
most gracious mistress of a salon.

#### CHORUS A

Mrs. Davis is, I hear, a Philadelphia woman!  
That accounts for her white nurse.  
I fear she is not worthy of her husband,  
for I learned that she is neither neat or Ladylike in her dress,

travels in old finery with bare arms covered with bracelets.  
Would that our President, God bless him,  
had a truehearted Southern woman for a wife.

#### CHORUS B

No wittier talk was ever bandied  
over the teacups in any land  
she lifts our spirits from war and horrors of hospital work.  
I went to her alone in the Mansion. No one else would listen.  
My slaves had run. My children sick and starving. I was alone.  
My husband left the army to rescue his family  
But was arrested for desertion.  
God bless Mrs. Davis, who smiled upon my woe,  
Left me in the parlor  
And parlayed for his pardon.  
Returning, with my husband's freedom grant for me.  
Oh those ladies slay her but she trusts them!

#### CHORUS A

And she growing very fine  
I do not like the signs  
If Spartan austerity would win our independence  
we are a lost nation.

#### CHORUS B

Did you know she saved a slave boy?  
His master was beating him in the street.  
Varina intervened, and led the boy away.

#### CHORUS A

She is too prideful,  
this Yankee daughter  
Our Richmond knows its blood ties

#### CHORUS B

She's Richmond's mother  
of revolution  
'76 alive again.

ALL CHORUS

Our Confederacy is writhing  
in the throes of mighty agony.  
Can we live with fear but without flour?  
She is First Lady, Queen Varina,  
Imperfect aching heart of the South.

Scene 5 - Why Do They Fight

VARINA

Those women call me Queen Varina,  
but they do not know my heart.  
They do not know my mind.  
Did they know of the child I carried?  
Did they hold the child I buried?  
This war we fight will kill them.  
Whose idea this war?  
It seemed so important.  
The North could not see reason,  
Elected Mr. Lincoln  
Against justice, blind to grievance.  
George Washington was right  
but now are we?  
Why do they fight?  
It's just a border.  
Why do they fight?  
Leave us alone.  
Why do they fight?  
They don't control us.  
Why do they fight?  
We're on our own.  
That flag. How could we fight that flag?  
Could not our oppressors see our fear?  
Whose idea this war?  
Stop talking and start marching.  
Start shooting and stop living.  
These sons and husbands dying for some cause.  
What cause? What cause this horror?  
Patriots give blood and treasure

to maintain freedom, equality and independence.  
But have we made  
earnest effort at self-examination?  
Is history spent ever repeating itself?  
Another life spent choosing between evils.  
Have not religion, education, science and art  
lessened the brutality of men?  
For every argument  
a justification.  
Every claim  
we meet with facts.  
Slavery is wrong  
they say it is simple.  
Let them practice what they preach  
in their own lands.  
Our only desire is peace, and to be left alone.  
But Lincoln, vile wretch,  
will only allow peace if we  
swear allegiance to him  
and his proclamation,  
becoming slaves to our own negroes.  
Could we be wrong?  
We joined the Union.  
Could we be wrong?  
Why can't we leave?  
Could we be wrong?  
This Union no longer helps us to be free.  
This was a choice  
to leave the Union.  
This was his choice,  
my husband Jeff.  
This was our choice  
for fear of black men.  
This was my choice,  
will God forgive?  
My husband seems so righteous;  
He leads us where men's honor  
gives birth to war  
as I stand by his side and carry on.

Scene 6 - I'm Runnin'

CHRISTOPHER

How I wish you could hear the music  
of my encampment tonight.  
Stand in the open air and listen,  
The companies are singing,

CHORUS

I'm going home to die no more.

CHRISTOPHER

Watchfires of a hundred circling camps  
and all seems happy.  
Yet thoughts of loved ones left at home  
temper the scene and rise with the moon.

CHORUS

Come sing to me of heaven.

CHRISTOPHER

Content to do our duty,  
let come what may.  
Content to bear our part  
in this terrible war,  
and sing sad thoughts away.

VARINA

Betsy, this war is killing us all. I can't imagine that this is what those abolitionists  
prayed for. They should have known this was coming.  
They had no idea how well all got along here.  
Do you remember living down at Hurricane? Plantation life was so good to us.  
Jeff had an unaffected sympathy for the slaves sorrow. To a man they loved him  
and were willing to bear any little impatience on his part. The corn-crib was never  
locked, and they all fed their chickens and sold them to us at the market price.  
Now what will they have?  
Can't Mr.Lincoln see,  
slaves will be worse off

than they were before.  
One step from jungle origins.  
Too trifling to work without a boss.  
They work and rest and they know they'll be fed.  
Slaves have nothing terrible to worry about  
if they act right.

BETSY

Yes, that's the way it is.  
Devils and good people walking in the road  
at the same time,  
and nobody can tell one from the other.

VARINA

Never before has the race of Central Africa  
attained a condition so civilized  
and so physically and morally improved.  
Free them, and without work they'll die.  
Of course there are mean slave owners,  
but meanness will not be erased.  
I know in my heart I am good.  
My husband is a good man.  
I know in my heart  
I am endeared to my slaves.  
I provide for them.  
Who would take my place?

Did not father Abraham own slaves?  
Was not the marble  
of the Parthenon  
cleansed by slaves?  
It is order. It is justice.  
It regulates the freedom of society.  
Who would provide for my Betsy better than I?

BETSY

It's bad to belong to folks that own you,  
soul and body.  
That can tie you up to a tree.

They take a long curling whip  
and cut the blood every lick.

#### VARINA

This proclamation of Lincoln  
seeks at a single dash of the pen  
to annihilate four hundred billions  
of our property,  
and to pour over the country a flood of evils.  
Would that we had silenced  
those pharisaical agitators.  
and their strange obsession  
with other men's sin.  
Who decides slavery is sin?  
Not the Constitution —  
which protects property.  
Not the Bible —  
which justifies it.  
Not the good of society —  
for our society recognizes it as good.  
Is it the good of mankind?  
Does that justify diminished resources,  
diminished comforts of the world?  
Not one particle of good  
has been done to any man  
of any color  
by this abolitionist agitation and war.  
Only the destruction  
of our old Union.

#### BETSY

Lord you can take anything  
No matter how good you treat it  
it wants to be free.  
You can treat it good and feed it,  
give it everything it seems to want —  
but if you leave that cage open . . .  
The federals are near to us.  
Slaves talk about running away.

Running away to freedom.  
I think of some home joyment,  
Miss Varina is mighty fine,  
and I don't know what to do,  
but I'm running.

#### CHORUS

Run Betsy, run  
The Patroller gonna get you!  
Run, Betsy, run  
The Patroller come!  
Watch Betsy watch  
The Patroller gonna trick you!  
He got a big gun!

#### BETSY

This slavery is hell.  
Babies snatched from their mother's breast  
and sold to speculators.  
Children separated from sisters and brothers  
and never see each other again.  
Last week ten slaves run away.  
The next day we hear nothing.  
So I says to myself  
the patrollers don't catch em.  
I makes up my mind to go.  
I'm running!

#### CHORUS

Run Betsy, run  
The Patroller gonna get you!  
Run, Betsy, run  
The Patroller come!  
Watch Betsy watch  
The Patroller gonna trick you!  
He got a big gun!

#### BETSY

I'll keep my eyes open

watching for the patrollers.  
The Yanks camped near  
and that's where I'm going.

#### CHORUS

Run Betsy, run  
The Patroller gonna get you!  
Run, Betsy, run  
The Patroller come!

#### BETSY

I'll leave the children by the fire  
and Miss Varina's bed all turned out.  
I am stepping out out of this life.  
Today I'm running.

#### Scene 7 - I Would Follow That Man

#### JOSHUA

There was one night,  
it must have been the most beautiful  
of this whole war.  
We had marched  
one of the hardest marches —  
our bodies ached just to lay on the ground.  
But the moon lit a magical light  
of thousands of small tents  
shining whitely.  
At intervals campfires colored  
company tents with patches of orange glow.  
Whippoorwills sung  
and I did not want to sleep.

#### CHRISTOPHER

We have Richmond almost in hand,  
could be this very night,  
with General Lee's rebel line  
stretched so thin  
the end must be in sight.

But I think instead of that time  
when our peril was at peak:  
second day, Gettysburg,  
on the Union left.  
Of heroism I speak.  
The Fifteenth Alabama  
fought our Twentieth Maine  
led by one brave man  
Joshua Chamberlain.  
This the regiment,  
this the colonel,  
the fight at Little Round Top.  
History coming to rest one day  
upon a man and his ordinary men.  
At the left of our line, attacking,  
the rebel regiment would turn our flank.  
It had happened before, and cost us.  
Rebels triumphing over Yanks.  
Desperate grappling, back and forth,  
with Southerners fierce as hornets,  
Chamberlain gives the order,  
“Men of Maine: Fix Bayonets”.  
And swept down like a hinged blade,  
shocking with glinting steel.  
Chamberlain wins the day  
Keeping our army on the field.  
I would follow that man.  
Watch him give off his command.  
And, on his surviving horse,  
ride astride the battalion,  
leading free men over green fields.  
I would follow that man.  
It is skill, it is persistency, it is bravery, it is fight.  
It is Chamberlain, our captain,  
my commander, our knight.

Intermission

## Act II

### Scene 1 - Victory

MARY TODD

(reading letter)

“My dear Varina

Thank you kindly for your thoughtful note.

Of course, your burden is much heavier than mine.

Surely Jeff should know

his cause is lost.

Washington is full of soldiers,

more arrive every day.

You must ask yourself, Varina,

where your duty and loyalty lies.

Your vows as a wife,

as a citizen,

as a mother.

Please give up.

You know I'll not.”

They tell me Richmond is burning.

My husband's armies have conquered.

The rebel Capital has fallen.

Serves them right.

Rebels to their own flag.

Fighting their own countrymen.

Victory.

It is said to be sweet.

I just want to move on.

The President at home,

with malice toward none,

having served justice on all.

Surely the work of peace

and reconciliation

should begin.

Most women see their husbands off to war.

Goodbye, they say,

and suffer alone.

Not the President's wife.

My soldier bears the battles at home.  
He bleeds not. But suffers.  
What does a man know of war?  
He cannot create life,  
he destroys.  
Wives become widows.  
Farms become barren.  
Life loses to death.  
My husband tells me  
The people are free.  
It seems to me  
they come very dear.  
But since it is over  
we tally not the cost,  
rejoicing in victory.

## Scene 2 - The Salute

JOSHUA

This spring  
the April winds evoked  
a strangely moving mood  
of sadness and gusty optimism.  
Lee must be expelled from his tunnels and breastworks.  
Expelled into fields,  
To abandon his capitol of Richmond  
and flee.  
Battle  
at the Five Forks crossroads.  
We delivered a blow  
that finally shattered Lee's long siege line.  
But first overmatched, we faced a furious charge.  
"Once more! Try the steel!  
Hell for ten minutes and we are out of it!"  
Triumph.  
Rising  
a hill there burst upon  
our view a mighty scene.  
Encompassed by Blue cordon of steel crowning

heights a mile from crest to crest, at valley's bottom,  
lay Lee's army corps,  
far-famed foe in our momentous history —  
Captured.  
White flags  
come out as we bury  
the final fight's final  
victim. Two armies now slept side by side  
without fear. Men breathe as fires dim, soft April rain  
falling on their tents.  
Who will protect us from becoming too fond  
of war?  
Honor  
is due our vanquished foe.  
Muskets rise gleaming in simultaneous  
salute.

#### CHORUS

We won, we won, we won the battle fight  
We beat Bobby Lee, the slaves are free  
and God has said we're right.

#### Scene 3 - The Burning of Richmond

#### VARINA

Richmond burned on Sunday.  
War's wrath came to betray  
all I held dear.  
Eating but rice and peas,  
knowing death and disease,  
Richmond never believed  
The end was near.  
Sabbath sun sweetly bright.  
Trees in bud, wrens in flight.  
Prayer at St. Paul's.  
The Lord we do entreat  
until news from the street  
that Lee's force must retreat  
as the night falls.

Agonized embraces set  
Wretched men in motion.  
Secrete the silver.  
Conceal the coins.  
Streets fill. A fugitive mass  
of knapsacks, wagons,  
seeking escape.  
Humanity in turmoil  
took hiatus of law  
as license for looting  
and anarchy.  
Swiftly now darkness closed  
as clerks burned papers  
and set warehouses aflame.  
Burning warehouses lift  
towering flames and smoke,  
with showers of fire points  
sparkling like blazing stars.  
Huge eddies draw great blazes  
into one vast livid flame  
licking its red tongue,  
to Main, consuming the core  
of Richmond, every bank,  
every office, and storehouse  
mills, factories, foundries,  
drawing the life of thousands.  
Negro troops then rode in  
grinning like Seraphim.  
Southern pride spurned.  
They raise the Stars and Stripes  
and their anthem delights  
their dancing to the pipes.  
And Richmond burned.

#### Scene 4 - Back to Washington

JOSHUA

Men, we're marching now back to Washington  
like the victorious legions

returning to Caesar's Rome.  
Keep your discipline, and stay to your duty.  
The rebellion is crushed,  
and they are fellow countrymen now.  
They were raised from a small age  
to dominate and abuse.  
Custom and comfort are no small things.  
To surrender your means of living,  
even where evil, comes easy to none.  
Remember men that you are heroes.  
Ask yourselves, why did we risk  
the shock and clash,  
the waves of blood surging beneath waves of flame,  
the fever above the mangled slain?  
Freedom, home, love, and joy.  
You have bravely risked death  
to ensure these precious ends,  
not for yourself, but for others.  
Ours is not a country restored,  
but a country reborn.  
And broader yet,  
the struggle was for mankind,  
to mark a tide in human History  
and an Epoch in Time.  
In Washington, we'll have a parade  
they'll remember for ages.

MESSENGER

I beg your pardon. I have an urgent message for Colonel Chamberlain.

CHORUS

Who's this? Who's this?

JOSHUA

Let him through. The war is over, what message do you bring?

MESSENGER

I'd rather not not say.

JOSHUA

Give it here. (begins to read it) Why news from Ford's Theater?

Scene 5 - Lamentations

CHORUS

The President has been shot!

We wait. In vigil.

We wait.

MARY TODD

Killed before my eyes,

Killed before my eyes.

Every vile charge

They brought against my husband,  
who did the great work of this war.

And finally they have killed him.

No chance now to thank him  
for lifelong devotion to me and mine.

No chance now, to ask forgiveness,  
for any pain

I may have caused him.

Why?

Why?

Why?

JOSHUA

(reading speech)

“Four years ago, all thoughts  
were anxiously directed to an impending civil war.

All dreaded it, all sought to avert it.”

Our beloved Lincoln said this  
but a mere few weeks ago.

“But one party would make war  
rather than let the nation survive.

The other would accept war  
rather than let it perish.

And the war came.

Each looked for an easier triumph.

Both read the same Bible  
and pray to the same God.  
The prayers of both  
could not be answered.  
With malice toward none,  
with charity for all,  
with firmness in the right  
as God gives us to see the right,  
let us strive on,  
to achieve  
a lasting peace among ourselves  
and all nations.  
We have borne the battle, Boys,  
And now Abraham has too.  
We are the most powerful army on Earth,  
but we could not protect our President.  
Dead, as many of our brothers.

#### VARINA

No longer architects of a country,  
by this failure we are now criminals.  
I and my husband are the now cause  
of misery, and destruction.  
The grief of this war  
has drowned even my grief  
for my young son.  
My flesh my blood my Joseph,  
died falling from the railing.  
What cause for God to take him?  
These men who die in battle  
think God has plans to save them.  
Would God want for us this glory?  
To maim and break boys' bodies?  
The child that grew within me,  
more fodder for the cannons.

#### JOSHUA

I read revenge in your eyes, Boys.

CHORUS

If we had just one, damn, reb  
in our sights,  
we'd teach him a lesson in malice.

JOSHUA

My God, my God,  
are they savages?  
To destroy peace  
without hope of victory?  
My blood boils.  
Insane acts  
of violence without honor.  
Not rebels but devils.

VARINA

That horrible Lincoln  
walked through my own home.  
Ran his bony hands  
over my Joseph's railing.  
He was the cause.  
He would not let us be free.  
We had good reasons to fight.  
Why shouldn't God  
and the opinion of judicious men  
be on our side?  
Oh God, I've lost my son.  
I've lost my city.  
The horrible gore, the pain.  
Can this terrible Spring,  
tell me again,  
why this war?

Scene 6 - They Knew

MARY TODD

When they took up arms,  
When they loaded their guns,  
When they made their rebellious government,

They knew.  
Jefferson Davis, may he burn in hell  
Like own city.  
He rots in jail, but lives and breathes.  
Blood on his hands, his face, and knees,  
Blood his bath.  
Six hundred thousand dead for his cause,  
dead for his honor.  
No further would he be pushed,  
my honor will not permit.  
But he knew. She knew.  
What kind of conscience  
Risks blood and threatens peace?  
Why persist? Why persist?  
When you know others will die?  
Beware such a man,  
who is willing to die for a cause,  
he will cause the deaths of thousands.  
They knew what people want.  
People ask only for peace,  
the freedom to love,  
and nothing more.  
In grief, words are poor consolation  
silence and agonizing tears  
are all that is left the sufferer.

### Scene 7 - Song of Spring

SPRING  
April the cruel month  
lilacs and the dead  
boots and rain.  
Was this a very good year indeed?  
Ah Spring,  
did we need the pain  
did we need the blood  
did we need to keep  
beating each other in the head?  
Are we ready to admit

that our deeply held beliefs  
may be wrong?  
May be evil?  
These are good people  
who have done bad things.  
The shout of a mind  
unclouded by doubt  
will lead you astray.  
These are bad people  
deluding themselves  
that they are good.  
Greed driving men  
to don the cloak  
of pride and honor,  
to lift the umbrella  
of God's holy blessing.  
Over six hundred thousand men,  
once living, now dead.  
Is this our spring of American renewal?  
We told ourselves we were better than this.  
Justification  
will arise for any cause.  
And the first shot  
is always fired too soon.  
We choose the stories  
we tell of war.  
Men are so good at using words  
to sanctify and justify their gory deaths,  
but not good enough with words  
to avoid going to battle.  
You know how this ends.  
The men who win the war  
Write the history  
of glory, not death.

### Scene 8 - Mercies

VARINA

Sir, I bring provision for my husband.

CHRISTOPHER

Lady, I tell you again  
No contraband for this prisoner.

VARINA

Why is he allowed to freeze?  
Please. Just warm clothes, this blanket?

CHRISTOPHER

My lady,  
since the death of Mr. Lincoln,  
my government is not  
kindly disposed to Mr. Davis.

VARINA

I tell you again he nears  
death in these conditions.  
He cares not if he lives.  
Sir, you have the one kind face  
in this cold wicked fortress.  
Is there nothing you can do?

CHRISTOPHER

I have my orders.  
But I also have questions.  
Perhaps you can answer.

VARINA

I will answer your questions  
if you will grant these mercies  
to my husband.

CHRISTOPHER

Ma'am, I have been fighting you  
for four years. Left my home.  
Seen my friends die.  
Done things I cannot forget.  
Now here you are.

Do you hate me?

VARINA

What is your name, private?

CHRISTOPHER

Melody, Ma'am. Christopher Melody.

VARINA

Private Melody,  
In truth I do not hate you.

CHRISTOPHER

Well I believed I hated you.  
You caused an awful lot of trouble.

VARINA

I used to wish sometimes  
That my husband was a clerk.  
Then we'd dine in peace.

CHRISTOPHER

Respectfully, Ma'am,  
there were other ways  
that we could have all had peace.

VARINA

It is not as if  
I am responsible.

CHRISTOPHER

Are we so blind?  
We are all Americans,  
both you that wanted slaves  
and me that fought for Abe.  
Do we choose you leaders  
who talk us into hate and fear?

VARINA

We did not want it.  
But in this dark prison,  
I will not defend the war.  
At first, it is all just words.  
Glowing, fiery, political words.  
You drink the intoxicating lyrics  
of a cause bigger than yourself.  
Then you are elected.  
You become prominent.  
Your cause  
becomes the vital thing.  
Not service. Not people.  
And in the end, not peace.

CHRISTOPHER

Ma'am, you may deliver your mercies.  
I will not add to your misery.

VARINA

Thank you Private Melody.  
May you find your way home soon.

CHRISTOPHER

Let us go home and leave this battle,  
turn our backs on hatred's game.  
Let's find that hill, we'll climb it still,  
Our shining city, ours to claim.

CHRISTOPHER and CHORUS

We face the truth, in these dark ashes,  
greed and pride that's in our heart.  
But still we sing, this song of Spring.  
A single nation, torn apart.

ALL

Let us go home and leave this battle,  
turn our backs on hatred's game.  
Let's find that hill, we'll climb it still,  
Our shining city, ours to claim.

## Scene 9 - Instrumental

(Characters solemnly leave the one by one until MARY TODD and VARINA are the last two remaining. They embrace each other, then slowly exit together.)

