

Commissioned and first performed by Texas State University,
Dr. Samuel Mungo, Opera Director

Lady Bird

First Lady of the Land

an Opera in One Act

Libretto by Sheldon Harnick

Music by Henry Mollicone

Duration: 60:00

Cast (Principle Roles)

Lady Bird Johnson Soprano
Young Lady Bird Soprano (younger)
Luci Baines Johnson (daughter) Soprano
Lynda Bird Johnson (daughter) Mezzo-Soprano
Young Lyndon Johnson Tenor
President Lyndon Johnson Baritone
SATB Chorus of at least 24 voices

Smaller Roles (may be cast from the Chorus)

3 Advisors to LBJ Tenor, Baritone and Bass (or Baritone)
Announcer on Train (local politicians) Baritone
Three Rednecks Tenor, 2 Baritones
(should NOT have trained voices, and sing in a "Hillbilly" style with a "mountain" accent.)
Young man Need not be a professional voice
(black if possible for the "Civil Rights" number)
Judge Sarah Hughes (middle aged woman) Speaking Role
a Steward Speaking Role
Justice Earl Warren Speaking Role
Jackie Kennedy Female Supernumerary (non-speaking)

Available Editions

Piano/Vocal Score, 8506
Choral Part, 8506A
Additional Orchestra Score, 8507
Additional Chamber Ensemble Score, 8508
Full Scores and Instrumental Parts, Rental

Synopsis

It is November 22, 1963. John F. Kennedy has been assassinated. On Airforce One, Lyndon Baines Johnson is being sworn in as the new president. A small group, including Lady Bird Johnson and Jacqueline Kennedy, witnesses the ceremony. In an internal monologue, Lady Bird reminisces; as long as she has known him, LBJ has always wanted to be president. She remembers the breakfast she shared with him thirty years earlier in Dallas. We see this breakfast acted out by a young LBJ and a young Lady Bird. Although this was their very first date, to her astonishment and amusement, it ended with LBJ proposing to her, and we learn that, improbably, within two months of that meeting, she and LBJ were married.

We see a series of projections reminding us of the way black activists struggled to win civil rights for their people. This is accompanied by the chorus singing a semi-gospel song: *A Long Time Coming*. This culminates in a projection telling us that LBJ has managed to persuade Congress to pass a Civil Rights Bill.

Now we witness a meeting between LBJ and his political advisors. Having just become president in 1963, LBJ finds that he must already begin to campaign for the presidential election in 1964. His advisors remind him that the Civil Rights Bill has in all probability cost him the South. They convince him that he must find some well-liked Southerner who can campaign for him in the Southern states.

The scene shifts to the Johnson home. In a scene with Lady Bird and the Johnson daughters, Lynda, and Luci, LBJ asks for their opinions: should he run again? Lady Bird, Lynda and Luci all enthusiastically agree that he should. But, when LBJ asks Lady Bird to campaign for him in the South, she demurs. She tells him that she is too shy and inexperienced to do as he asks. As an inducement, LBJ tells her that if he is re-elected, he will pass a bill to beautify the country, and he will put her in charge.

Alone, Lady Bird considers LBJ's request. A suppressed memory rises to the surface of her mind. She recalls a horrific incident she witnessed as a young woman. This memory is then acted out: several drunken rednecks murder a black man. This appalling memory convinces her that she must overcome her fears and campaign for her husband.

What follows are three scenes in which Lady Bird campaigns for LBJ in the South. She travels on the Ladybird Express and addresses crowds from the rear platform of the train. On the second of the stops, Lynda and Luci do some campaigning themselves. We see that the further south they go, the angrier and more resentful the crowds are about LBJ's promulgation of the Civil Rights Bill. An FBI man tells Lady Bird to cancel the rest of the tour because there is a possibility that a bomb has been planted on the train. Lady Bird is firm in her decision to continue the tour. During the three campaign stops, we see the dignity, intelligence, and bravery with which Lady Bird handles the obstreperous crowds.

A new projection tells us that LBJ has won the presidency in a landslide. In the final scene of the opera, once again LBJ is being sworn in, and once again we hear Lady Bird's internal thoughts as she looks forward to her new role as the person who will "beautify this blessed land." As Lady Bird sings, our chorus joins her in a grand choral finale, while we see projections of field after field of beautiful flowers.

Sheldon Harnick (b. 1924)

For biographical information visit:
www.masterworksbroadway.com/artist/sheldon-harnick

Henry Mollicone (b. 1946)

For biographical information visit:
www.henrymollicone.com

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Henry Mollicone (BMI)

Prelude

Allegro non troppo ♩ = 120

Piano

f

(lower octave optional)

mf cresc.

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ritard. Andante ♩ = 96

12 *f* *espr.* *mf*

14 *cresc.* *f*

18 *mf dim.*

[PROJECTION: Newspaper "JFK Assassinated!"]

poco rit. Subito meno mosso ♩ = 69

21 *mp* *ff*

24

27 *ritard.*

dim. *f dim.* *mf dim.* *p* (*pp*)

Scene 1

[Projection: The Seal of the President of the United States]

LIGHTS UP slowly on the interior of a plane. Clustered together are a small group of people including LYNDON JOHNSON, LADY BIRD JOHNSON, JACKIE KENNEDY (in a blood-stained dress), Judge SARAH HUGHES (a middle-aged woman) and a STEWARD.*

Meno mosso ♩ = 69

p stately

JUDGE HUGHES (spoken):
Steward, is there a bible on this airplane?

STEWARD: I'll get it, your Honor.
He does so.

HUGHES: Mr. Vice-President, place your hands on the bible.
Repeat after me: (speaking slowly) I do solemnly swear...

HUGHES:
...that I will faithfully execute the office...

LBJ: I do solemnly swear...

* One of the characters should carry a Bible concealed on their person. When the STEWARD pretends to retrieve it, the actor holding it will pass the Bible to him surreptitiously.

Their voices gradually fade as the LIGHTS dim slowly on all but LADY BIRD.

HUGHES: ...of President of the United States...

LBJ continues to speak in pantomime.

LBJ: ...that I will faithfully execute the office...

LBJ: ...of President of the United States...

15

LADY BIRD (looking at LBJ)

20

Lady Bird

p 3 3 3

Pres - i - dent... of the U - nit - ed States... That's what he al - ways

24

Lady Bird

mf *poco più mosso* *p* *poco rit.* *mf*

want - ed. But — not this way! Dear God, not this way!

mf *p* *mf*

poco più mosso *poco rit.*

28

Lady Bird

f *a tempo* (♩ = 69) *mf*

Oh Jack - ie... how gha - st - ly... How dread - ful! How ver - y, ver - y

f *a tempo* (♩ = 69) *mf*

31 *f* *>* *dim.* *>* *p* *>*

Lady Bird

dread - ful! — A night - mare... Poor Jack - ie...

34 **Poco meno mosso** ♩ = 60 *p* *looking back at LBJ*

Lady Bird

She shakes her head and shudders. Pres - i - dent... A dream come true! The

Poco meno mosso ♩ = 60 *p tranquillo*

37 *mf* *>*

Lady Bird

first — time — we met, some - how you knew. But how? —

mf

40 *f* *>* *3*

Lady Bird

But how? — How could you know all those

f

She smiles and shakes her head.

43

Lady Bird

years a - go? It was a dream, but it came true.

46

Lady Bird

Some-how you knew.

p *3*

8va *loco*

49

poco rit.

8va *pp*

Scene 2

[Projection: The Driscoll Hotel, a restaurant, Austin, August, 1934]

A platform glides on to Stage Right. YOUNG LYNDON JOHNSON is nervously standing next to a round table. As he sees YOUNG LADY BIRD, he raises both arms and waves to get her attention.

Moderato ♩ = 126

loco

p elegante

7 She comes to the table,
shakes his hand, and they sit. YOUNG LBJ *p*

Young LBJ

Miss Tay - lor, thank you for

12 meet - ing me this morn - ing. Your friend Gene told me so

17 *He smiles* *mp*
much a - bout you. And it's good... all good! Miss

22 YOUNG LADY BIRD
She raises her hand, stopping him. *p*

Young Bird

Ev - 'ry - one calls me La - dy Bird.

Young LBJ

Tay - lor—

26 YOUNG LBJ

Young LBJ

Yes, so I've heard. Charm - ing name.

30

Young LBJ

Why do they call you La - dy Bird? Tell me.

34 YOUNG LADY BIRD

Young Bird

When I was a ba - by, Moth - er was sick - ly,

2 1

Leg. *Leg.* *simile*

38 *a fond memory*

Young Bird

so I had a nurse - maid. Al - ice, Al - ice Tit - tle.

42 *rit.* *dolce*

Young Bird One day dear _ Al - ice said to my moth - er: "This

espr. *rit.*

Più adagio ♩ = 92

46

Young Bird child is pur - dy as a La - dy Bird,"

Young LBJ *He smiles*

"Pur - dy as a La - dy Bird." _

Più adagio ♩ = 92 *dolce*

49 *poco rit.* *a tempo* (♩ = 92)

Young Bird *She shrugs*

And it stuck!

Young LBJ *correcting himself*

Well, it suits you, Miss Tay - lor—

poco rit. *a tempo* (♩ = 92)

52 *rit.* **Moderato** ♩ = 126

Young Bird

Thank you, Mis - ter

Young LBJ

La - dy Bird suits you — to a “T!”

rit. **Moderato** ♩ = 126

55

Young Bird

John - son. Lyn - don. Thank you,

Young LBJ

Lyn - don,

59 *a bit embarrassed, she changes the subject*

Young Bird

Lyn - don. How gal - lant you are. What brings you to

63

Young Bird

Aus - tin?

Young LBJ

Some Bus' - ness for my boss. I work for Con - gress - man

a bit boastfully

68

Young Bird

Con - gress - man Kley - berg! Oh, how im -

Young LBJ

Kley - berg, you know.

mp

72

Young Bird

press - ive!

Young LBJ

Right now I'm his as - sis - tant. But _____

mp *mf*

poco rit.

Moderato ♩ = 11476 (*mf*) proudly

Young LBJ

One day, I'm bound to be a con-gress-man my-self! Pol-i-tics is in my

Moderato ♩ = 114*mf* march-like

Young LBJ

blood! One of my grand-dad's kin was a con-gress-man... Yup, a

Young LBJ

con-gress-man from Ken-tuck-y. And one of them was a

Young LBJ

con-gress-man from Ten-nes-see! And my Dad-dy, Mis-ter

88

Young LBJ

Sam Ea-ly John - son served in the State House here in Tex - as! Yup!

91

Young LBJ

Soon - er or lat - er I'll hold some kind of of - fice! As I said,

94

Young LBJ

pol - i - tics is in my blood! Pol - i - tics is in my

97

Young LBJ

blood! *mp* My Moth - er, my saint - ed moth - er is ab - so - lute - ly

101

Young LBJ

cer - tain, Yes, ab - so - lute - ly cer - tain that one fine day I'll be

rit. *poco riten.* *p*

rit. *poco riten.* *p*

105

Lady Bird

Pres - i - dent! And, frank - ly, I think so too!

mf

Moderato ♩ = 114 *rit.* *LADY BIRD smiling mf*

Oh,

Moderato ♩ = 114 *rit.*

108

Lady Bird

Lyn - don, dear-est Lyn - don, I will nev - er for - get that break - fast! You were im -

Allegretto ♩ = 80

Allegretto ♩ = 80

mf

112 YOUNG LADY BIRD *mf*

Young Bird: Will he nev - er stop boast - ing?! This young man is

Lady Bird: pos - si - ble! Im - pos - si - ble!

114 *cresc.*

Young Bird: ver - y scar - y! Ver - y scar - y! And ver - y

Lady Bird: *mf* And ver - y

116 *f*

Young Bird: bor - ing! Bor - ing! A sales - man...

Lady Bird: bor - ing! A sales - man... Ex - ult - ing in your pros - pects!

119 *dim.*

Young Bird
Ex - ult - ing in your pros - pects. No won - der that I found you ut - ter - ly re -

Lady Bird
dim.
Bor - ing! No won - der that I found you ut - ter - ly, ut - ter - ly re -

dim.

122 *p* **Andante** ♩ = 58

Young Bird
pul - sive, through and through!

Lady Bird
p (p)
pul - sive, through and through! But, sweet - heart, what I thought at first turned

Andante ♩ = 58

p *f* *p* *colla voce*

125 *poco rit.* **Moderato** ♩ = 100

Lady Bird
out to be un - true. La - ter on that day, I saw a dif - f'rent you.

poco rit. **Moderato** ♩ = 100

mf

128 YOUNG LBJ *mp*

Young LBJ

When I first came to Wash - ing - ton, ten mil - lion peo - ple were un - em -

131 *mf*

Young LBJ

played. Teen - age girls in sweat-shops in Con - nec - ti-cut earned

134

Young LBJ

one or two cents an hour for fif - ty - five hour - weeks!

poco rit.

137 *f*

Young LBJ

One or two cents an hour! Peo - ple ev - 'ry - where were

poco rit.

cresc.

f

Poco meno mosso ♩ = 84

Poco meno mosso ♩ = 84

140

Young LBJ

starv - ing, scour - ing gar - bage cans for a bite to

142

Young LBJ

eat. But a new day is dawn - ing. Yes, a

144

Young LBJ

new day is dawn - ing! For those of us in Wash - ing - ton are turn - ing things a -

147

Young LBJ

round. peo - ple look to us for help and turn to us for hope! They

rit.
mf

Andante ♩ = 92
p with great energy

rit.
mf

Andante ♩ = 92
p

cresc.

cresc.

mp *mf*

mp *mf*

150

Young LBJ

He takes a sip of water
to relax a bit

look to us to keep them safe and sound, safe and sound!

153

Young LBJ

f passionately

Is it a - ny won - der that I love what I do? —

156

YOUNG LADY BIRD

f

mf

I can see why you would love what you do. What a

158

Young Bird

with a gentle enthusiasm

splen - did way to live one's life! Oh, how I en - vy you for be - ing where you are, — and

161
Young Bird

do - ing what you do! Peo - ple look to you for strength, for

163
Young Bird

hope, and for com - pas - sion. Oh, how I en - vy you for do - ing what you do!

166
Young LBJ

rit. YOUNG LBJ *mp*

rit. I have

168
Young LBJ

Meno mosso ♩ = 80

had my share of pov - er - ty. I know it well! A life of dep - ri - va - tion is

Meno mosso ♩ = 80

mp

rit. *mf* *ritenuto* *Andante* ♩ = 92 *f*

171
Young LBJ
like a liv - ing hell! If I ev - er have the pow - er, the

rit. *mf* *colla voce* *ritenuto* *Andante* ♩ = 92 *f*

173
Young LBJ
means to get things done, - I'll wage a war on pov - er - ty un - til that war is won!

176 YOUNG LADY BIRD *mf* *f*

Young Bird
Oh, how I en - vy you for what you plan to do!

Young LBJ *mf*
Don't

She looks down awkwardly, drinking her water. LBJ just stares into her eyes.

179 *mf* *mp*

Young LBJ

en - vy me. Why not join me...

182 *poco rit.* *Adagio* ♩ = 72

185 *p tenderly*

Young LBJ

La - dy Bird, we have - n't known each oth - er long and yet al - rea - dy I can

p gently

188 *cresc.*

Young LBJ

see: You and I share a bond.

cresc.

191 *poco ritenuto*

Young LBJ *f* *mf*

La - dy Bird, I gaze at you and I'm a - mazed

poco ritenuto

f *mf*

194 *Più mosso* ♩ = 88 *p* *mp*

Young LBJ that in so ver - y short a time I could grow so fond of

Più mosso ♩ = 88 *p* *mp*

197 *mf*

Young LBJ you! Though we on - ly met to - day,

mf

200 *rit.* *a tempo* (♩ = 88) *p*

Young LBJ 8 I have nev - er — felt this way!

rit. *a tempo* (♩ = 88) *p*

dim.

202 **Poco più mosso** *mf* more passionately

Young LBJ 8 La - dy Bird, with you by my side, I could do mo - men - tous

Poco più mosso *mf*

205

Young LBJ 8 things! La - dy Bird, you could give me wings! — And

208 *ritenuto* *f*

Young LBJ 8 that is why I need you, I need you — in my

ritenuto *f* *cresc.* *dim.*

211 **Poco meno mosso** *mp* *ritenuto* *p*

Young LBJ

life. La - dy Bird, will you be my

Poco meno mosso *mp dim.* *ritenuto* *p*

214 **LADY BIRD** *mf smiling* **Allegretto** ♩ = 80

(to Young LBJ)

Lady Bird

Oh, Lyn - don... dear - est Lyn - don... I could hard - ly keep from

Young LBJ

wife?

Allegretto ♩ = 80 *mf*

218 *p* *mp*

Lady Bird

laugh - ing! How se - ri - ous you looked! How ear - nest - ly you spoke!

p *mp*

221 *mf*

Lady Bird

E - ven so, I thought: "He must be jok - ing!"

mf

LADY BIRD shakes her head, then slowly walks toward YOUNG LADY BIRD, remembering her diplomatic refusal of YOUNG LBJ's proposal. Now, having collected her thoughts, YOUNG LADY BIRD slowly turns towards LBJ, takes his hands, gazes at him for a moment and then sings.

224 *f*

rit.

molto rit.

228 *p warmly*

YOUNG LADY BIRD

Lyn - don, since I just met you to - day, talk of

molto rit.

Adagio ♩ = 69

dim.

p

232 *mp*

Young Bird

mar - riage seems fool - ish at best. Still it's true, I'm drawn to you and

mp

235 *p* *poco rit.* *a tempo*

Young Bird find the work you do quite lau - da - ble and I'm im - pressed. Since you

poco rit. *a tempo*

dim. *p*

238

Young Bird real - ly don't know me at all and I know al - most noth - ing of

241 *mp* *p*

Young Bird you, let us try to find out who we are! There is,

mp

244 *pp* *mp*

Young Bird oh, so much we need to know! And in time, if what we feel is

pp *mp*