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“Hobson’s choice” as a term: In mid 17th century England lived a man named Thomas Hobson who ran a livery stable. It was his requirement that customers take either the horse nearest the stable door or none at all. This type of choice came to be known as a “Hobson’s choice”.

S Y N O P S I S

ACT I

Scene: Mid-morning at Hobson’s Boot Shop, Market Street, Philadelphia, 1880

Henry Hobson has spent the previous evening, as usual, drinking with friends at nearby Moonraker’s Inn. His three daughters are readying the shop for business, and worrying about what his mood will be when he finally wakes up. Maggie, the eldest, deftly handles her father’s difficult moods and keeps the shop running and profitable. Alice and Vicky concern themselves primarily with courting. Hobson finally makes his appearance, and begins lecturing to the three of them. He causes Alice and Vicky to leave in tears when he announces that he, and he alone will choose husbands for them. As for Maggie, he tells her she’s well beyond the marrying age, and now “On the shelf” as he puts it. He begins to leave, but Mrs. Conway, a wealthy and influential customer enters, wanting to know who had made the boots she recently purchased there. It comes out that the shy and awkward bootsmith, Willy Mossop, is responsible. She instructs Hobson that Willy is to make all of her family’s boots from then on, and praises the workman to his face, calling him a “treasure”, and commenting that he is probably underpaid. She departs, and later Hobson departs in a rage, stating that women are the bane of his existence. Maggie, realizing that with her brains and Willy’s talent, they could build a business and life of their own, and proposes to him on the spot. Learning of this, Vicky and Alice pounce on Maggie, certain that this will push their father over the edge, and they will never marry. True to form, Hobson angrily refuses Maggie’s plan, confronts Willy, and in a rage, strikes him with a leather strap, thus setting into motion the onset of new lives for his entire family. Regretful, yet proud, Hobson throws the two into the street, and is left alone in his shop.

ACT II

Scene: Evening at Maggie & Will’s Boot Shop, Chestnut Street, three weeks later

It’s the evening of Maggie and Will’s wedding day. Vicky with her Freddy, and Alice with her Albert have been invited. In this tiny cellar, converted into a bootshop and a home, they all drink toasts to the new couple. There comes a surprise knock at the door. Maggie is sure it’s her father seeking advice, since she herself has arranged for

Freddy's business to bring a law suit against him for having fallen down into their cellar from the street; drunk. She quickly instructs everyone but Will to hide in the bedroom as she answers the door. It is Hobson, who's come to show them a "Warrant for Trespass". After Hobson cries to Heaven for an honest lawyer, Maggie calls Albert, who happens to be a lawyer, and the others from the bedroom. Albert and Hobson discuss a settlement when Maggie takes over and sets the price. Hobson gives his word, but protests that such a large sum should not be leaving the family, Maggie reveals that it will not leave the family. In fact, it will be divided between Vicky and Alice for their upcoming weddings. Realizing the whole thing had been set up, he leaves in a rage, vowing to run his shop with nothing but men from then on. Upon his exit, the two couples break out in joyous celebration, realizing that now they are free to marry. In an space all her own, Mrs. Conway re-appears, taking satisfaction in her decision to help Maggie and Will to start out on their own. After the guests leave, and bedtime approaches, Maggie makes her way to the bedroom, inviting Will to join her when he finishes his lessons. When she realizes he's too timid to come in on his own, she re-enters, and gently leads him in the right direction.

ACT III

Scene: Morning at Hobson's Boot Shop, a year later

Hobson's faithful bootsmith, Toby, enters and tells us that not only has the business fallen apart since Maggie left, but that Hobson himself is very ill from drinking, and on the verge of death. Maggie arrives and sends Toby to the druggist for Hobson's medication, and asks him to fetch her husband.. Hobson admits that he needs someone to look after him, and asks her to come back. Maggie is not eager to return, and as Vicky and Alice arrive, it becomes clear that neither of them would even consider coming back, with Vicky now pregnant, and Alice moving in higher circles. Will then arrives, only to see Hobson chasing his two daughters out of the house. In a desperate attempt to entice them back, Hobson offers Will his old job, and his old salary. Astonished, and unwilling to agree to such a proposal, the two turn, and make way for the door. Hobson stops them, and at that moment, Will decides to make his own proposal. In the following argument, Will, fully confident and determined, states his final position. In a moment of transition in their relationship, Maggie agrees with Will. Confronted with the decision of either becoming a silent partner in his own business or drinking himself to death, he chooses the former. As Hobson acknowledges he's been defeated by his own behavior, Maggie and Will go to Albert's law office to have the new partnership drawn up. Toby returns and asks: "Are they comin' back, sir?" With a sense of both regret and relief, Hobson replies: "Yes, they're comin' back."

Hobson's Choice

Book by Harold Brighouse

OVERTURE

JOHN BIGGS
a.s.c.a.p.

Leggiero $\text{♩} = 76$

The musical score is written for piano and bass. It begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 3/8 time signature. The tempo is marked 'Leggiero' with a quarter note equal to 76 beats per minute. The dynamics range from *mf* (mezzo-forte) to *ff* (fortissimo) and *p* (piano). The score is divided into systems, with measure numbers 11, 21, 31, 41, and 50 indicated at the start of each system. The music features a variety of rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. There are also some dynamic markings like *ff* and *p* throughout the piece.

59

Musical score for measures 59-68. The piece is in G major (one sharp) and 3/4 time. The right hand features a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes, while the left hand provides a rhythmic accompaniment with chords and moving lines.

69

Musical score for measures 69-78. The right hand continues with a melodic line, and the left hand features a steady accompaniment of chords.

79

poco rit.

Musical score for measures 79-88. The tempo marking "poco rit." is present. The right hand has a melodic line with some chromaticism, and the left hand has a steady accompaniment.

89

come prima

pp mf ff mf

Musical score for measures 89-100. The tempo marking "come prima" is present. The right hand has a melodic line with some chromaticism, and the left hand has a steady accompaniment. Dynamic markings include pp, mf, ff, and mf.

101

Musical score for measures 101-111. The right hand has a melodic line with some chromaticism, and the left hand has a steady accompaniment.

112

ff p

Musical score for measures 112-122. The right hand has a melodic line with some chromaticism, and the left hand has a steady accompaniment. Dynamic markings include ff and p.

122

ACT I

CURTAIN UP

Andante ♩ = 92 (Alice is tidying things up)

(Enter Maggie)

7

ALC Oh, it's you. I had thought it was fa-ther go-ing out.

MAG Well it is - n't.

13

ALC He's late a gain this morn-ing.

MAG He got up late a-gain.

19

ALC Has he had break - fast yet?

MAG Break - fast! With a Ma - sons meet-ing last night?

25

VIC

ALC

He'll need re - viv - ing. Then I wish he'd do it.

31

MAG

ALC

Are you ex - pect - ing some - one, Alice? You know ve - ry well I am.

35

VIC

And I'll thank you both to leave when he comes. You know I can't leave the

39

(Enter Albert)

ALB

count - er 'til fa - ther goes out Good morn - ing miss

44

ALC

Al - ice. Good morn - ing mis - ter Pros - ser. Fa - ther's not gone yet. He's late.

48

ALB

A lo stesso tempo (♩ = 92)

MAG

ALB

Oh!

lo stesso tempo (♩ = 92)

What can we do for you, mis-ter Pros- ser?

Well,

52

MAG

I can't say I came to buy an-y-thing, miss Hob-son.

This is a shop you know. We're not here to let

56

ALB

peo- ple go with- out buy- ing some- thing.

Well, then,

I'll have a pair of boot- la- ces please.

59

MAG

What size do you take mis-ter Pros- ser

ALB

Eights.

I've got small feet.

(Pushing him into the chair)

63 (ALB) MAG

Does that mat - ter to the la - ces? It does to the boots, mis ter Pros - ser Sit

67 *piu mosso* $\text{♩} = 112$

ALC (aghast) VIC ALB V & A ²

Mag gie! Mag gie! Yes, but - Mag - gie!

down! It's time you had a new

piu mosso $\text{♩} = 112$

MAG

72

pair mis - ter Pros - ser. Time you had a new pair. The ones you have are dis - grace - ful for a pro

77

- fes sion al man to wear! Num ber eights from the third rack, Vick y, please. mis - ter

ALC ²

83

MAG

Pros-ser did-n't come in to buy boots, Mag-gie, he did-n't come in to buy boots. Then why does he come so

88

ALB (hesitating)

of - ten? Oh. Oh. I'm ter-rib-ly fond of la - ces, yes, ter-rib-ly fond in

95

MAG

deed. Well now you have a pair of boots to go with the la - ces Mis-ter Pros - ser. Now,

101

freely

ALB

MAG

how does that feel? Ve-ry com-for-ta-ble. Let's try it stand-ing up, shall we?

108 (MAG)

ALB

MAG

ALB

They seem to fit al-right Good! I'll put the oth-er one on. Oh,

114

B a tempo (♩ = 112)

ALC

MAG

Mag-gie!

no! I did - n't real - ly want to buy them. Sit down, mis - ter

a tempo (♩ = 112)

117

VIC

rit. -----

Mag-gie!

Pros - ser!

You can't go in-to the streets in odd boots.

rit. -----

124

freely

ALB

MAG

ALB

MAG

What's the price of these boots, Miss Hob-son? Three dol-lars. Three dol-lars! They're ve-ry fine

129 *ALB* $\text{♩} = 92$ *MAG freely*

boots, Mis-ter Pros-ser. Oh, I'm sure they are. Now, you'd bet-ter have this old pair

133 *ALB*

mend-ed. I'll send them home to you with a bill. Well, if an-y one had told me I'd be com-ing here to spend three

136 *MAG* *ALB*

dol-lars, I'd have called him cra-zy. You'll not re-gret it mis-ter Pros-ser. Good morn-ing. Good

139 *Exit Albert* *agitato* $\text{♩} = 80$ *VIC* *ALC*

Mag-gie! How em-bar-rass-ing!

Mag-gie! How em-

morn-ing Miss Hob-son.

legato

143

(VIC) How could you be so push - y? Push - y, push - y, push - y. Press - ing a sale a - gainst his

(ALC) bar - ras - sing! How could you be so push - y? Push - y, push - y, push - y. Press - ing a sale a - gainst his

147

will! Push - y, push - y, push - y.

will! Push - y, push - y, push - y.

MAG Well, I'm sor - ry. We did sell a pair of boots and la - ces, did we

151

But how em - bar - ras - sing for

not? Tell me, did we not?

153

A - lice. Don't you see? To say the least!

I was crushed! It was em - bar - rass - ing to say the least.

It's a -

156

God

bout time both of your men came thru with a lit - tle pay ment now and then.

160

gra - cious, does that mean you would treat my Fred - dy in the same way as Al - bert?

163 (VIC)

(ALC)

Push-y, push-y sis-ter. Push-ing a sale a-gainst his will.

Push-y, push-y, push-y. Push-ing a sale a-gainst his will.

MAG

It's

167 **C**

Sheep-eyes!

Sheep-eyes!

high time they put a lit-tle mon-ey where their sheep-eyes have been.

171

ALC

That's all ver-y well for an

Com-ing here to see you both, and nev-er spend-ing a dime.

174

Yes, an old maid.
 old maid like you to say, Mag-gie. But you know ve-ry well,

177

Fath-er won't al-low us to go court-ing. And court-ing must come first. And
 Fath-er won't al-low us to go court-ing. And court-ing must come

181

court-ing must come first.
 first. It must come first. **MAG**
 Not ne-ces-sa-ri-ly my las sies. Not ne-ces-sa-ri-ly at all. Take a

185

(MAG)

look at this slip - per. See the fan - cy buck - le?

189

VIC

ALC

MAG

What does a buck-le have to do with court-ing? What are you get-ting at Mag-gie? This fan - cy buck-le is

194

all glit-ter, and no use to an - y-one. And the same thing goes for court - ing.

198

VIC

ALC

(MAG)

Court - ing? All glit-ter! That's ut - ter - ly ab-surd! That's
Court - ing? All glit-ter! That's ut - ter - ly ab-surd!
No it is - n't.

201

ut - ter - ly ab - surd! That's ut - ter - ly ab - surd, ab - surd, ab -

That's ut - ter - ly ab - surd, ab - surd. There is no

I tell you no it is - n't. Lis - ten to me. I tell you no it

203

sured. It's ut - ter - ly ab - surd!

doubt, it's ut - ter - ly ab - surd!

is - n't. No it's not!

HOB What _____ is all this ruck-us a-

207

D andante $\text{♩} = 76$

(VIC) No-thing fath - er.

(ALC) No-thing fath-er.

(MAG) No thing fath-er.

(HOB) ,
bout? What were you

andante $\text{♩} = 76$

211

No thing fath-er.

No thing fath-er.

No-thing fath-er. The girls and I were just chat-ting.

talk-ing a - bout?

214

We ap-po-lo-gize im-mense ly fa-ther.
 We ap-po-lo-gize im-mense ly fa-ther.
 We ap-po-lo-gize im-mense ly fa-ther.

Chat-ting! Huh! It sound-ed more like a freight train go-in' thru the house.

217

Yes, fa-ther.
 Yes, fa-ther. Yes, fa-ther.
 Yes, fa-ther. Yes, fa-ther.

Well, I think we've had e-nough chat-ter-ing for a-while, don't you think?

221

Yes, fa-ther. Don't be late for din-ner.

Mag-gie, I'l be go-in' out for a lit-tle while. It's a whole hour to

224 (MAG)

So if you stay more than an hour_ at Moon - rak - er's Inn, you'll be

(HOB)

din - ner - time Mag - gie.

227

late for it.

VIC/ALC *freely* (all three)

And if your din - ner's ru - ined, it -'ll be your

Who said I was go - in' to Moon - rak - er's Inn?

231 *allegro* ♩ = 132

own fault. Don't swear, fa - ther.

For God's sake!

risoluto (stesso tempo)

Now you lis - ten to me, you

allegro ♩ = 132

risoluto (stesso tempo)

237

wom - en. I've come to some de - ci - sions on the three of you, and I won't have it do you hear? I won't

241

have it! In-ter-fer-ing with my com-ings and my go - ings. I've a mind to take meas-ures with the

246

MAG What about Moonraker's, father?

lot of you! Moon - rak - er's can wait. It's been

250

com-in' a- long that I should talk to you three. The re - bel - lious wom - en in my

254

house - hold. Now it's my turn to talk, and your turn to

259

lis - ten if you please. rit. molto - - - - -

(Sits them down one by one. First Vicky, then Alice, then Maggie.)

rit. molto - - - - -

263 **E** strutting $\text{♩} = 72$

HOB Pro-vi-dence has de-creed that you should lack a moth-er's hand at a time when girls grow bump-tious, and

266

VIC
Is it

need some-one to rule. But I will tell you this: you'll none rule me!

269 **piu mosso** $\text{♩} = 88$

I who am bump-tious, fa-ther? I'm sure I'm not bump-tious.

Oh yes you are. You're

piu mosso $\text{♩} = 88$

legato

272

ALC
But if

pret-ty but you're bump-tious. And I hate bump-tious-ness. I hate it like I hate a law-yer.