

Sheet Music Once Upon A December

ONCE UPON A DECEMBER
from the Broadway Musical ANASTASIA

Words and Music by LYNN AHRENS
and STEPHEN FLAHERTY

Misterioso (♩ = 134)

Bm *8va* *mp like a music box* *With pedal* *F#7sus/C#*

(8va) *F#7* *F#7sus/C#* *F#7* *Bm* *F#7/C#*

ANYA:
Danc - ing bears,
paint - ed wings, things I al - most re - mem -
ber. And a song some - one sings,

B7/D# *Em* *Em/G* *Bm/F#* *Em/G*
Bm/F# *F#7(no3)* *Bm* *F#7/C#* *B7/D#* *E*

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Sheet music Once Upon a December is a cherished piece that has transcended generations, capturing the hearts of audiences through its haunting melody and evocative lyrics. Emerging from the animated film "Anastasia," this song has become emblematic of nostalgia, memory, and the passage of time. Composed by Stephen Flaherty with lyrics by Lynn Ahrens, "Once Upon a December" serves as a poignant reminder of lost childhood and the yearning for a time long gone. This article delves into the origins of the song, its musical structure, the emotional impact it has on listeners, and its significance in the context of the film and beyond.

Origins of "Once Upon a December"

Creation and Composition

The song "Once Upon a December" was composed by Stephen Flaherty in 1997 for the animated film "Anastasia," which was produced by 20th Century Fox. The film, set in the backdrop of the Russian Revolution, tells the story of Anastasia, the youngest daughter of the last Tsar of Russia, who is believed to have been killed. The song comes at a pivotal moment in the film when the protagonist, Anya, begins to recall fragmented memories of her past.

- Composer: Stephen Flaherty
- Lyricist: Lynn Ahrens
- Film Release: 1997
- Context in Film: Anya's memories of her childhood

The collaboration between Flaherty and Ahrens resulted in a score that combines classical influences with contemporary musical styles, making it both timeless and accessible.

Musical Influences

The music of "Once Upon a December" draws upon various influences:

- Classical Elements: The song exhibits a classical structure, reminiscent of traditional Russian melodies and folk songs.
- Lyrical Poetics: The lyrics combine imagery and emotion, creating a sense of longing and nostalgia.
- Orchestration: The arrangement features lush strings and gentle woodwinds, enhancing the ethereal quality of the melody.

These elements work together to create a sound that feels both grand and intimate, allowing listeners to connect deeply with Anya's journey.

Musical Structure

Melody and Harmony

The melody of "Once Upon a December" is characterized by its sweeping lines and poignant intervals. The song typically follows a simple yet effective structure, which can be broken down as follows:

1. Introductory Phrase: The song begins with a delicate introduction that sets the mood.
2. Verse Structure: The verses employ a rising and falling motif that evokes a sense of yearning.
3. Chorus: The chorus presents a climax with a more powerful and memorable melody, emphasizing the emotional weight of the lyrics.

The harmonic structure often uses common chord progressions, creating a sense of familiarity while allowing the melody to shine.

Sheet Music and Arrangements

"Once Upon a December" is widely available in various sheet music formats, catering to different skill levels and instruments. It can be performed on:

- Piano: The piano arrangement captures the essence of the orchestration and allows for expressive performance.
- Vocal Arrangements: Many vocal arrangements exist, providing options for soloists or choirs.
- String Ensembles: For those interested in classical music, string arrangements bring a new depth to the song.

When purchasing or downloading sheet music, it is essential to consider the following:

- Skill Level: Ensure the arrangement matches the performer's skill level.
- Instrumentation: Choose the right version for the desired instruments.
- Publisher: Opt for reputable publishers for accurate notation.

Emotional Impact

Thematic Elements

The themes of "Once Upon a December" resonate on multiple levels, making it a powerful piece for both performers and listeners:

- Nostalgia: The song evokes feelings of nostalgia, reminding listeners of their own past experiences and memories.
- Loss and Longing: The lyrics reflect a sense of loss, embodying Anya's search for identity and belonging.
- Hope: Despite the melancholic undertones, there is an underlying hopefulness, suggesting that memories, even painful ones, can lead to healing and discovery.

Audience Reception

Upon its release, "Once Upon a December" quickly became a fan favorite. Its emotional depth and melodic beauty have led to various interpretations and performances, including:

- Covers: Numerous artists have released cover versions, each bringing their unique style to the song.
- Stage Adaptations: The song has been featured in stage adaptations of "Anastasia," further solidifying its place in musical theater.
- Cultural Impact: "Once Upon a December" has been used in various cultural contexts, from concerts to memorials, showcasing its universal appeal.

Significance in "Anastasia"

Character Development

In the film, "Once Upon a December" serves as a crucial moment for character development. Anya's journey of self-discovery is intricately tied to the themes expressed in the song. As she recalls her past, viewers witness her transformation from an uncertain orphan to a young woman reclaiming her heritage.

- Memory as Identity: The song highlights the importance of memory in shaping identity, a central theme of the film.
- Connection to Family: The lyrics emphasize the bond between Anya and her family, even in their absence.

Cultural Representation

"Once Upon a December" also features cultural representation, reflecting the rich history and traditions of Russia. The song's orchestration and lyrical imagery evoke the grandeur of Russian folklore, bridging the gap between animation and cultural heritage.

- Folkloric Elements: The melody and themes draw inspiration from Russian folklore, enriching the narrative.
- Historical Context: The song connects the fictional story of Anya to the real historical events surrounding the fall of the Romanov dynasty, making it resonate with audiences familiar with the history.

Conclusion

In summary, the sheet music "Once Upon a December" is more than just a collection of notes; it is a vehicle for storytelling, emotion, and connection. From its origins in the animated film "Anastasia" to its wide-ranging cultural impact, the song continues to touch the hearts of many. Its ability to convey nostalgia, loss, and hope makes it a timeless piece that resonates across generations. Whether performed on stage, in a living room, or as part of a larger orchestral setting, "Once Upon a December" remains a beloved masterpiece in the world of music, inviting listeners to reflect on their own memories and experiences.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the origin of 'Once Upon a December' sheet music?

'Once Upon a December' is a song from the animated film 'Anastasia,' which was released by Fox Animation Studios in 1997. The music was composed by Stephen Flaherty, with lyrics by Lynn Ahrens.

Is 'Once Upon a December' available for different instruments?

Yes, 'Once Upon a December' sheet music is available for various instruments, including piano, violin, flute, and voice, catering to different skill levels and arrangements.

Where can I find 'Once Upon a December' sheet music for free?

You can find free versions of 'Once Upon a December' sheet music on websites like IMSLP, MuseScore, or by searching for public domain arrangements, although availability may vary.

What are the key themes explored in 'Once Upon a December'?

The song evokes themes of nostalgia, memory, and longing, reflecting the protagonist's connection to her past and the lost world of her childhood.

What is the time signature of 'Once Upon a December'?

'Once Upon a December' is primarily in 4/4 time signature, which contributes to its waltz-like, flowing quality.

Are there any popular covers of 'Once Upon a December'?

Yes, many artists and choirs have covered 'Once Upon a December,' including Liz Callaway, who originally performed it in the film, and various YouTube musicians who have put their unique spin on the song.

Is 'Once Upon a December' suitable for beginners to play?

Yes, there are simplified arrangements of 'Once Upon a December' that are suitable for beginners, making it accessible for novice musicians.

What other songs are similar in style to 'Once Upon a December'?

Songs like 'A Whole New World' from 'Aladdin' and 'Somewhere Only We Know' by Keane share similar themes of nostalgia and a whimsical, fairy-tale-like quality.

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