

THE *Lotte Lenya* COMPETITION SONGBOOK

“Killin’ Time” from *Washington Square*

Music and lyrics by Ben Wexler

SHOW SYNOPSIS

Washington Square Park. 1985-87. New York City is between a period of recession and resurgence. The park, in the midst of an already-gentrifying Greenwich Village, is the last hold-out of a freer and rougher New York: the improvisatory modern dancer shares space with the crack cocaine user who shares space with the middle-aged man in a dress. During this time, Ben Wexler’s father took photographic portraits and collected audio testimony from the park’s regular patrons. Through their stories, we see the deep need the park fills for each of them: to connect, to feel at home, to feed an addiction, to escape, or to live without conforming. These people — real people — come alive onstage and remind us of a New York that no longer is.

SONG CONTEXT AND SCENE DESCRIPTION

We are meeting Lui Direnzo for the first time. He’s wearing a short cut dress, kitten heels, and bright red lipstick. Perhaps a tourist has just stared at him. Perhaps he’s addressing an unseen interviewer. He’s sitting in Washington Square Park, hoping to strike up a conversation with whoever crosses his path.

CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

Lui Direnzo is a colorful, larger-than-life sewing machine salesman who shows up at Washington Square Park wearing a dress. He comes from a traditional Italian family — loud, boisterous, but not accepting of any gender non-conformance. Lui can be played by an actor who reads 25 or older. Regardless of age, he has “lived” a life. Should be played by an actor with contagious energy, comedic timing, immense likability, and an inner vulnerability that spills through when he reveals what’s truly going on with his health.

Vocal range: C3 to F4; for a baritone or tenor

PERFORMANCE NOTES

This song is all about the storytelling. Don’t feel the need to oversing — lean into the text and the character. Also, don’t forecast Lui’s sadness about his sickness; lean into the joy of the song until you are no longer able to.