

THE  
**Time**  
TRAVELLER

A Comic Opera in One Act

**LIBRETTO**

**Music by Bryan Kesselman**

**Lyrics by Philip Barnett**

**Additional lyrics by Bryan Kesselman**

### **Characters**

The Professor (tenor or high baritone)  
Lucy (soprano) *22 years old*  
Ebenezer Jones (baritone) *65 years old*

Piano

### **Original cast**

Philip Barnett  
Alexandra McPhee  
Bryan Kesselman

Chris Coote

### **Scenes**

Prologue: The Professor's laboratory

Scene 1: Somewhere - 2012

Scene 2: The same - 2112

Duration approx. 30 minutes

### **SUGGESTED PROPS** (assuming the piece is being set in an outdoor cafe)

**Professor:** Prologue Pestle and mortar, or other scientific equipment, lozenges.  
Scenes 1 & 2 Gladstone bag containing 2 pairs of dark glasses,  
DNA testing machine (something elaborate with cogs, perhaps)  
tablet computer, cotton buds in box, memory wiper, box of lozenges.

**Lucy:** Handbag, handkerchief.

**Ebenezer:** Knife, family tree showing just his name, photo of a baby.

**Scene 1:** Table and two chairs.  
Tablecloth, cutlery, cups, saucers, menu, glass containing serviettes and sugar.

**Scene 2:** Bare table and two chairs.

### **MAKE-UP**

Both Lucy and Ebenezer need a strawberry mark on one wrist.

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## PROLOGUE *[The Professor's Laboratory]*

### 1. PROLOGUE — THE PROFESSOR

Professor

'Tis done. I'm satisfied.  
*[humming]* Mm  
What a pity there is only me.  
*[spoken]* Nevertheless, how exciting!  
  
I've invented a lozenge,  
A lozenge sublime.  
It only takes one  
To travel in time.  
  
Into the future?  
Into the past?  
  
I don't know where I'm going,  
I'm not sure that I care,  
I'll explore the fourth dimension,  
But I don't know what to wear!

## SCENE ONE *[Somewhere, 2012]*

### 2. SONG — LUCY

Lucy

Men! Men! Men! Men!  
Men! Men! Men! Men! Men!  
On my own, once again,  
Back to the old status quo.  
Did I get it right?  
Did I get it wrong?  
Why did I tell him to go?  
  
*[The Professor enters and observes Lucy unseen.]*  
  
A busy lawyer, rather wealthy  
handsome and extremely healthy,  
Helps his friends, well that's no crime,  
Busy, busy constantly,  
and never, ever time for me,  
He always loses track of time.  
I said it's time now to commit-  
He wouldn't- that was it!  
  
On my own, since my birth,  
An orphan, now twenty two.  
With no friends, with no job,  
What on earth should I do? *[Lucy cries]*

### 3. RECITATIVE — THE PROFESSOR & LUCY

Professor            Is this two thousand and twelve?

Lucy                 It is.

Professor            The lozenge functions well.

Lucy                 Who are you?

Professor            I'm the Professor.

Lucy [*spoken*] What was that?

### 4. SONG — THE PROFESSOR (WITH LUCY)

Professor            The Professor am I,  
Just wandering by.  
I heard all your woes,  
life has highs and lows,  
You're well rid of your boyfriend,  
a lawyer, dear me,    [*Lucy cries again*]  
They contribute little  
then charge a high fee.  
There's no need to sob.  
Would you like a job?  
I've one vacancy.  
It's working for me.

Lucy                 Has the job a specification?  
Does it conform to legislation?  
Will I have an interview?  
Will I just report to you?  
What is it that you really do?

Professor            I travel in time,  
And always in rhyme,  
This lozenge sublime  
Manipulates time.  
And whether I go  
to the future or past  
The things that I see  
often leave me aghast.  
I need a first mate  
To help navigate,  
I hope if you're free  
You might come with me.

## 5. DUET — THE PROFESSOR & LUCY

Professor            We can go where we like, there is no set plan  
Meet Mozart and Shakespeare and Sullivan  
Future or past, just on a whim  
Free from life's fetters grim

Lucy                 *[aside]* Shall I go? Shall I stay? Should I be a-feared?  
This Professor seems rather weird  
*[to Prof]* I hope risk assessments are all in place  
For what we are likely to face

Professor            Please rest assured, I am far from dumb  
I've studied the space-time continuum  
I'm well regarded by all my peers  
And worked on my lozenge for years

Lucy                 I've travelled a bit, not extensively  
But never using confectionery  
Before agreeing to join your crew  
I need to think this thing through

Professor            We must leave right away my dear  
There's much to do and no time, I fear  
You have my offer, it's time to say  
There can be no more delay

Lucy                 I think I can trust you, it all makes sense  
You seem to have lots of experience

Professor            *[aside]* My log book showing the trips I've done  
Including this morning shows 'one'

Professor            Time to go,

Lucy                 Yes or no,

Professor            time to go,

Lucy                 yes or no,

Professor            You must say, you must say.

Lucy                 Must I say, must I say?

## 6. RECITATIVE — THE PROFESSOR & LUCY

Lucy                   By a strange coincidence,  
the like of which normally only occurs in comic operas,  
I studied history at university,  
But I would love to travel into the future.

Professor            Then it's settled.  
You're hired.  
Where would you like to go?

Both                   *[Both speaking at once.]*  
Shall we say a hundred years from now?  
Why not!

*[The scene darkens as a cloud covers the sun.]*

## 7. INCANTATION — THE PROFESSOR

The moment has come.  
It's time to depart.  
*[The Professor offers Lucy a lozenge from a box and indicates that she should place it in her mouth. She does so.]*

Listen to me...  
Listen to me...  
The lozenge is safe...  
There's no need to fear...

Lucy *[spoken]* I don't think this is such a good idea.

Professor            Listen to me...  
Shout 'Future' or 'Past!'  
Then finally say the number of years.

Lucy                   Future. One hundred years!

*[Lucy and the Professor travel to the future. CURTAIN]*

## 8. SCENE CHANGE

## SCENE TWO

*[The curtain opens. The scene has changed to show the passing of years.  
Ebenezer is discovered on stage studying his family tree.]*

### 9. SONG — EBENEZER

Ebenezer                   Sixty five years ago I was born,  
                                  An orphan with no ma' or pa',  
                                  I wasn't left on a doorstep, but found  
                                  Just inside a run-down cinema.  
                                  Raised by a cleaner called Hattie Jones,  
                                  Childless, and lived on her own,  
                                  She died last fall,  
                                  now I've no one at all;  
                                  I'm once again on my own.

*[Enter: Lucy. She observes Ebenezer unseen by him.]*

I have no friends, find people a bore,  
And I am quite miserly,  
Last week I retired, and now I would like  
To research my family tree.

*[Ebenezer shows his family tree. It has only one name.]*

So far I've one name, and that is my own,  
I really don't have a clue,  
I must confess  
that my life is a mess,  
Oh, what on earth should I do?

### 10. RECITATIVO DRAMATICO

Lucy *[spoken]* *[To herself]* I wonder what year it is.  
                                  *[To Ebenezer]* Excuse me, is this twenty one twelve?

Ebenezer *[spoken]*   *[Startled]* Yes, of course.

Lucy                       *[Offering her hand]* My name is Lucy. What's yours?

Ebenezer               Ebenezer Jones.

Lucy Poor fellow!  
*[spoken]* Is there any way I can help you?

*[Lucy freezes.]*

Ebenezer On the one hand, I am in need of a friend  
and having always found relationships difficult,  
despite reading all the self-help books  
on how to appear attractive to women,  
and how to get that first date  
and how to make small-talk,  
And despite having all the money that I need,  
I have always failed in that department,  
and am really lonely.

And on the other, she might have heard about my wealth  
and has decided to trick me into a loveless marriage  
during which she will live well at my expense  
and through some form of mental torture  
drive me to drink and an early grave,  
and spend the rest of her life living in luxury,

*[Enter: Professor carrying his bag. Lucy unfreezes.]*

Professor Now then, what's going on here?

Lucy *[indignantly]* Where have you been?

Professor Oh, sorry, lozenge malfunction.  
Who is this?

Lucy Ebenezer Jones.

Professor Poor fellow!

## 11. TRIO

Ebenezer *[spoken]* *[Sadly - drawing a knife.]* Enough of this!  
The time has come to end it all!  
This is far too much to bear.  
I cannot take this any longer... *[Ebenezer melodramatically pulls up a sleeve.]*

Lucy Hold! Is that a strawberry mark you wear?  
I've one too, let us compare.  
Yes, they look the same, dear Eb.

Ebenezer *[spoken]* They do!



Lucy                      This could be a tangled web.

Lucy & Ebenezer      I wonder if we share a gene.

Lucy                      *[To audience]* Oh, what a dramatic scene!

Professor                Now comes the clever bit, *[Producing various items from his bag.]*  
a D N A testing kit.

*[The Professor carries out a DNA test on Lucy and Ebenezer.]*

Lucy & Ebenezer      Waiting here with breath that's bated...  
to see by chance if we're related!

Professor *[spoken]*    The D N A results show...  
Hm... Ah... Ooh...  
That you are Ebenezer's grandmother.

Lucy *[spoken]**[Incredulous]* I'm a grandmother!  
*[Not too happy]* I'm a grandmother!

Ebenezer *[spoken]*    Granny!

*[The Professor and Ebenezer freeze.]*

## 12A. ARIETTA — LUCY

Lucy                      When a lass of twenty-two  
Becomes a grandmother,  
It's bound to be a shock  
I'm certain you'll agree -  
Like no other.

                              Year after year of growing up  
In usual stages -  
And now I find I'm old  
before my time.  
Oh, how one ages.

*[Lucy freezes, the Professor unfreezes.]*

## 12B. TRIO

Professor            If you wonder why it is that you're bad-tempered or quite placid,  
                          It's all written in your deoxyribonucleic acid.  
                          You can find it in the nucleus of every body cell,  
                          It makes up genes and chromosomes in every boy and gel,  
                          If you doubt that I am right, or don't believe in what I say,  
                          You will find it is confirmed if you should test your D N A.

*[The Professor freezes, Ebenezer unfreezes.]*

Ebenezer            I'm not a miser.  
                          I'm just careful with my money.  
                          So I hope that none of this will cost too much.  
                          Who is this mad professor, anyway?

*[Professor unfreezes]*

Professor            If you doubt that I am right, or don't believe in what I say,  
                          You will find it is confirmed if you should test your D N A.

Ebenezer            Does he work for Pfizer?

*[The trio continues as they intermingle their verses,  
freezing and unfreezing as the music demands.]*

*[All unfrozen to audience.]*

All                    Hail D N A that makes us tick,  
                          Discovered by Watson and Crick.  
                          Storeroom of our genetic ode,  
                          Glorified in this short ode.

*[The Professor hand Lucy a tablet computer from which she reads.]*

## 13. RECITATIVE

Lucy                   In twenty seventeen I your Grandfather will marry.  
                          And then we'll have a daughter, called Carrie.  
                          There is no record of another,  
                          And so I deduce that she is your mother!

Ebenezer            My mother!

Professor            *[Aside]* This quite momentous day of days  
                          From both of their memories I'll erase.

History must stay intact,  
What happened, happened- that's a fact.

*[Producing his memory-wiping gadget.]*

This memory-wiper has the knack-  
I bought it from a man in black.  
*[To Lucy]* To stay here, Lucy, would be wrong,  
The lozenge only lasts so long.

#### 14. DUET — LUCY & EBENEZER

Ebenezer           And now that I've found you I bid you good day,  
Perhaps in the future you'll come back this way.

Lucy                Your grandmother am I,  
For 'tis I and no other.

Ebenezer           I wish you farewell then,  
Good morrow Grandmother

Lucy & Ebenezer   I'll see you again, though perhaps not tomorrow,

Lucy                I beg you to show not a sign of your sorrow.

Ebenezer           Good morrow, Grandmother.  
Grandmother, good morrow.

Lucy & Ebenezer   The next time I see you a baby you'll/I'll be,

Ebenezer           I hope for my sake that you recognise me.

Lucy                The chances of that seem to me rather bleak.

Ebenezer           Then here is a picture of me aged one week.

Lucy & Ebenezer   Perhaps in the future together we'll be,

Lucy                If I should see you then I'm sure you'll see me.

Ebenezer           Good morrow, Grandmother.  
Grandmother, good morrow.

Lucy                Dear Grandson, good morrow.

## 15. FINALE

- Professor            All is well, very well as we all can see,  
But we must not play with history,  
Everything changes if we stay,  
We must be on our way.
- Lucy                 To meet a descendant is very strange,  
Funny how one's view of life can change,  
I'm not wed yet, but soon must be  
growing my family tree.
- Ebenezer            Since I was orphaned I searched because  
I had to find out just who I was,  
Meeting with you has ben good for me,  
Starting my family tree.
- Professor            *[To Lucy]* It is time, Lucy dear, to say goodbye.  
*[Aside]* (This is the part where I'm sure she'll cry.)  
*[To Lucy]* One flash of this: vision slightly burred,  
And he'll forget what occurred.
- [The Professor produces 2 pairs of dark glasses,  
one for himself, the other for Lucy.]*
- Lucy                 To leave Ebenezer will cause much pain  
Since we may never meet again,  
There'll be a man and a child for me,  
All on my family tree.
- Ebenezer            Now I can start to research my clan,  
I feel like I'm a brand new man.  
I will find more family  
To add to my family tree.
- All                    Family tree you and me/he,  
Family tree you and me/he,  
Family tree, family tree.
- [The Professor uses the memory wiper on Ebenezer  
who becomes his grumpy old self again.]*
- Lucy & Professor   *[Spoken together gleefully]* Past - Two hundred years!
- [The Professor and Lucy disappear (presumably off on another adventure.)]*

## FINAL CURTAIN