


## The Facts

## Once Upon A Time

<b>Rhythm</b>	4/4 but probably not a strong thematic element.
<b>Melody</b>	<p>Starts with an intro of descending notes, somewhat at odds with the lyric (“so happy”) although it does anticipate and set up the wistfulness of the chorus.</p> <p>Chorus:</p>  <p>Each stanza of the chorus is, unusually, three phrases long. The shape of the melody echoes well the sense of the lyric in each case. The first six bars set up the rising melody on the hopeful lyric (“said she loved me so”, “waiting for the dawn” and “how happy we were then”). The final four bars falling on “that was once upon a time”.</p> <p>Interlude: Starting at bar 31, the melody climbs inexorably to the ‘climax’(?) on “where” in bar 35.</p> <p>Tag: is a harmonic device with little discernible melody.</p> <p>The ‘hook’ in the melody is the little rising part at the beginning of each stanza. The high point is the F which is the 3<sup>rd</sup> of the chord and will need to be well sung to not appear flat. The 9<sup>th</sup>s (Eb) will also need to be spot on.</p> <p>The range is Db to F with one excursion to top G in the tag. This is within the capability of most singers although the G will need addressing to avoid tightness in production. The melody moves freely between the extremes of the range so the tessitura is average and shouldn’t be a problem.</p>
<b>Harmony</b>	<p>The harmony in each stanza of the chorus is relatively static being I-IV-V with substitutions to make it more interesting. The last chord of the first phrase always ends on a chinese 7<sup>th</sup> (e.g. “eyes”).</p> <p>The interlude is harmonically more interesting. The climax on “where” is a 7-9 chord which has a particular character that works well here.</p> <p>Bar 12: the first chord can be thought of as CØ7, a deliberate tension chord setting up the F7 on “was”. It is really an Ab9 that resolves to Ab7 on “but” which is why the harmony parts are supposed to hold on to their notes. However this is interpreted, the music suggests that this is not a place to stop.</p> <p>Bar 13: chinese 7<sup>th</sup> on “time”</p> <p>Bar 16: EbØ7 on “go” is a tension chord resolving to Ab7 at the end of the bar.</p> <p>Bar 23 &amp; 24: same as bars 11 &amp; 12</p> <p>Bar 25: chinese 7<sup>th</sup> on “time”</p> <p>Bar 28: lead move creates an FØ7 which is tension resolving to Bb7 at the end of the bar.</p> <p>Bar 35: The “where” chord is Eb9. Particularly appropriate flavour at the climax of the song.</p> <p>Bar 36: Final move to D7 is surprise.</p> <p>Bar 40: Final move to G7 is surprise</p> <p>Bar 46: High bass line will need good vocal skills</p> <p>Bar 49: The A7 chord is surprise</p>
<b>Structure / Form</b>	<p>Structure: Intro – Stanza 1 – Stanza 2 – Interlude – Stanza 3 – Tag</p> <p>Form: The form of each stanza is three sets of 4 bars, A – B – C (through composed) but the repetition of the stanzas relieves this and provides the unity. The interlude is 8 bars long (not 12!).</p> <p>This structure is quite unusual in a barbershop song and needs understanding to avoid getting lost.</p>
<b>Texture</b>	Predominantly homophonic but with several polyphonic embellishments e.g.

	<p>In the intro – bass/tenor duet on “was ours” and lead/tenor duet on “so happy”.                  Bars 15/16: Parts have different contributions to make here. Synch will be crucial.                  Bars 26/27: Ditto                  Bar 37b: Baritone echo. It would be easy for this to get lost.</p>
<b>Lyric</b>	<p>The lyric is poetic but quite explicit. The events described happened a long time ago (so long that the tree we sat under is no longer there). What we don’t know is what happened afterwards! As the notes suggest, we are singing about a time when we were young and ‘innocent’. Do we regret losing this girl (if we did in fact lose her) or are we just being old and remembering the past.</p> <p>The sense of the lyric is unusually well supported by the melody (see above) and further enhanced by the embellishments that the arranger has used to heighten the tension and key spots.</p>
<b>Comments</b>	<p>The song is familiar to barbershoppers and we will, therefore, have preconceptions about it. It may not be so familiar to audiences though. We should take ownership and try to be original and creative in our delivery of the song. Audiences will know if you are only paying lip service.</p> <p>The arrangement, though, may be fairly prescriptive in the way we choose to deliver it and we need to identify that prescription and use it.</p> <p>The primary theme is probably the lyric, well supported by the melody and decorated by harmonic devices that heighten the ebb and flow of the lyric sense (each phrase starting with a positive emotion, remembering good things) and ending with a the more negative sense of “but that was once upon a time”.</p>

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