

The Nightingale

A Family Opera

Adapted from Hans Christian Anderson's Fairy Tale

Music by John Young

Libretto by Alan Olejniczak

Dramaturgy by George Hemcher

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CHARACTERS

Roles for Adults (2):

NIGHTINGALE (Soprano)
EMPEROR (Baritone)

Roles for Young Singers (10):

KITCHEN GIRL (High Voice)
FISHERMAN (Treble or pants role) (Medium Voice)
CHAMBERLAIN (High Voice)
VICEROY (Medium Voice)
CHANCELLOR (High Voice)
COURTIER ONE (Low Voice)
COURTIER TWO (Medium Voice)
COURTIER THREE (High Voice)
MECHANICAL NIGHTINBIRD
WATCHMAKER

Children's Chorus (Mixed)

With ten individual spoken lines for choristers.

TIME AND PLACE

In a mythical time and place

SETTING

A lush garden with flowering trees and beautiful blooms.

SUMMARY:

Hans Christian Andersen wrote the widely-loved *Nattergalen* in 1843. In many ways, Andersen's fairytale was a commentary on The Industrial Age and our increasing detachment to the natural world. Andersen believed nature offered more beauty and power than man made one, and nature was worth preserving. This opera expands his idea further: In the modern world, which continually demands our time and attention, everyone should take time for themselves and connect to nature.

The opera opens with a children's chorus in the splendor of the Emperor's garden. A natural playground where the children "wonder, laugh and play." The Kitchen Girl, who is collecting fruit in the garden, encounters the Fisherman, and together they regale their enchanting encounters with the Nightingale. The Emperor and three of his

Courtiers enter and overhear their story. The Emperor, who demands the best of everything, calls his Viceroy and Chamberlain and commands this wonderful bird be brought before him. The Kitchen Girl and the Fisherman offer to take them to find the Nightingale.

Deep in the magical forest, the troop encounters the strange choruses of singing cows and frogs. Clearly, these were not the songs they were searching for. However, before they become discouraged, they hear the beautiful song of the Nightingale. She appears and agrees to sing for the Emperor. They all agree. “this nightingale’s songs are best of all.”

Back at the Emperor’s garden, everyone gathers to hear the Nightingale and are enchanted. The Emperor, moved to tears, orders the bird to live in the palace and sing for his pleasure. The bird is captured and placed in silver chains. The children are understandably distressed and wisely know this bird belongs in the forest. Together the children hatch a plan to free the Nightingale and release her back into the wild.

The Nightingale is so unhappy with her imprisonment that she is now unable to sing. Cruelly, the Courtiers mock her for her ungratefulness. They know the Emperor is upset with the silent bird, and they must now remedy the situation. The Chancellor and the Viceroy introduce the Emperor, the Nightinbird. A golden and jeweled mechanical bird that can sing for the Emperor at any time. The watchmaker winds up the Nightinbird and everyone is delighted with its singing. They all decided this mechanical bird was clearly better than the Nightingale. As the Court dances and sings to the mechanical bird’s song, the children take action and finally free the grateful Nightingale, who escapes into the forest.

With the passing of time, we find the Courtiers bored and complaining listlessly about the Nightinbird. It only sang one song. The Emperor enters sadly and the court attempts to cheer him up with the song of the Nighinbird. The toy is wound up and it sings but eventually breaks. The watchmaker is called and declares the Nighinbird unfixable. Perhaps it was for the best, even the Emperor was bored with it’s one tiresome song. The Emperor admits longing for the beautiful song of the Nightingale and regrets her mistreatment. He admits he foolishly overlooked the beauty found in nature. Moved by his words, the Nightingale returns to the palace to sing again for the Emperor. He knows the palace can never be the bird’s home and invites her to come and sing whenever she likes. The children and the court rejoice! With a lesson learned, the Emperor reminds everyone that “nature is a gift for us all! Go out and explore. Open your imagination and discover nature’s beauty.” The opera closes with everyone singing about the beauty of nature and the wonder of the Emperor’s garden.

OPENING:

[It's dawn, and the sun rises throughout the opening. The morning light brightens, revealing the splendor of a colorful and lush garden. Children play throughout the opening song.]

CHORUS:

This is our garden.
Our Emperor's garden.
From the palace to his garden,
through the forest - to the sea.
This is where...
We wonder, laugh, and play.

Creatures climb and birds aflight,
Clouds that chase across the sky
Fruits on trees and berries on the bush.
Through dappled sunlight,
And gentle rain.
This is where...
We wonder, laugh, and play.

Flowers to be picked,
Branches to be climbed,
Puddles to be jumped
Hills to be defended.
Friends to be made.

This is our garden.
Our Emperor's garden.
From the palace, to his garden,
through the forest - to the sea.
This is where...
We wonder, laugh, and play.
This is where...
We wonder, laugh, and play.

[The children's chorus makes their way on either side of the stage to the top of SCENE ONE.]

SCENE ONE

[The day begins. The KITCHEN GIRL enters the garden to gather fruit. The FISHERMAN also enters to bring his catch up to the palace.]

FISHERMAN:

Good morning.

KITCHEN GIRL:

Good morning.

KITCHEN GIRL and FISHERMAN:

Good morning.

KITCHEN GIRL: (spoken)

How are you?

FISHERMAN: (spoken)

I'm great!

Listen to this...

FISHERMAN:(sung)

Last evening before sunset,

By the river, I cast my net.

Throughout the forest,

When crickets chorused,

I heard an enchanting song

KITCHEN GIRL and FISHERMAN:

Twás the nightingale,

Twás the nightingale,

Twás the nightingale!

KITCHEN GIRL:

I've heard her songs before

On my visits by the shore.

When I return, it's often late

In the forest, I sometimes wait

Just to hear the nightingale sing.

To me, her songs are everything.

[The EMPEROR and the three COURTIERS enter the garden and overhear their story.]

KITCHEN GIRL and FISHERMAN:

Tw'as the nightingale,
Tw'as the nightingale,
Tw'as the nightingale!

KITCHEN GIRL and FISHERMAN:

When I hear the nightingale sing.
She comforts me and brings me cheer.
With a joyful heart, I shed a tear.
I love to hear the nightingale sing.
To me, her songs are everything.
To me, her songs are every...

[They both notice the EMPEROR and bow.]

EMPEROR:

I know of no nightingale!
What of her sweet call?

KITCHEN GIRL and FISHERMAN:

We say, the nightingale is best of all.

COURTIER ONE: (nervously)

Of everything in your empire,

COURTIER TWO: (nervously)

Her lovely songs do inspire.

COURTIER THREE: (nervously)

When poets come to write their sonnets,

ALL THREE COURTIERS:

Her songs, they sing their praises upon it.
Of all their poems that we recall.
They say this nightingale is best of...

COURTIER TWO: (Interrupting in an attempt to help matters)
When children come to play.

COURTIER ONE and THREE:
They hear her songs and want to stay.

ALL THREE COURTIERS, KITCHEN GIRL and FISHERMAN:
When we hear the nightingale sing.
She comforts us and brings us cheer.
With a joyful heart, we shed a tear.
We love to hear the nightingale sing.
To us, her songs are everything.

EMPEROR:
Where is my Viceroy?!
Where is my Chamberlain?!

[The CHAMBERLAIN and VICEROY rush on. They bow to the Emperor]

EMPEROR: (in wonderment and then with growing interest)
Can there be such a bird?
This nightingale, I have not heard.
In my garden, in my forest?
I demand she come and sing before us.

CHAMBERLAIN and VICEROY:
We'll find this bird and bring her here.

EMPEROR: (declamatory)
Tomorrow evening, she must appear.

CHAMBERLAIN and VICEROY:
Must appear!

EMPEROR:
She must sing to me and all my court.

CHAMBERLAIN and VICEROY:
All his court!

EMPEROR:

This is a command!

Do not fall short!

Do NOT fall short! [Starts to exit]

Do not fall short! (turning back and spoken)

[The EMPEROR exits. The CHAMBERLAIN and VICEROY address everyone.]

CHAMBERLAIN: (defeated)

We must find this bird, you all regale?

VICEROY: (defeated)

Where might we find this nightingale?

KITCHEN GIRL and FISHERMAN:

We will show you in the forest.

VICEROY: (with more hope)

You heard his Majesty!

This bird must sing before us.

ALL THREE COURTIERS:

May we also come along?

CHAMBERLAIN and VICEROY:

Everyone must hear her song.

ALL THREE COURTIERS, KITCHEN GIRL and FISHERMAN:

This bird's songs we all enthral.

CHAMBERLAIN and VICEROY:

Everyone must hear her song.

EVERYONE:

The nightingale's songs are best of all.

[They all enter and wind their way through the forest to find the Nightingale.]

SCENE TWO

CHAMBERLAIN:

Where is this bird, it's grown quite late?
This nightingale, we must locate.

VICEROY:

She seems neither here nor there.

CHAMBERLAIN and VICEROY:

Must we look for this bird everywhere?

FISHERMAN:

The nightingale has not gone missin'

KITCHEN GIRL:

She will be found, but you must listen.

CHAMBERLAIN and VICEROY:

We do not hear her trill, her twitter,
though the forest has brought us hither!
You've led us here, to no avail!

COURTIER ONE:

You've heard the Emperor.

COURTIER TWO:

We must prevail.

COURTIER THREE:

Wait! Wait!
(spoken)
I hear a clue.

CHORISTER 1: (loudly like a cow)

Moo...

[The CHAMBERLAIN, VICEROY, and COURTIERS look puzzled.]

CHAMBERLAIN:

Goodness! (Spoken)
Is that her song?

COURTIER THREE:

I dare say, I think you're wrong.

CHORISTER 2: (loudly like a cow)

Moo...

KITCHEN GIRL:

That's a cow.

VICEROY:

Are you sure?

CHAMBERLAIN:

Are you certain?

CHORUS:

Moo. Moo.
Moo. Moo.
Moo. Moo.

KITCHEN GIRL:

I am, and how!

FISHERMAN:

Let us move on
We must hit it.

COURTIER THREE:

What's that sound?

CHORISTER 3: (loudly like a frog)

Ribbit, Ribbit.

COURTIER ONE:

Unforgettable!

COURTIER THREE: (with awe)

Most Incredible!

CHORUS:

Ribbit. Ribbit,
Ribbit. Ribbit,
Ribbit. Ribbit,
Ribbit. Ribbit,
Ribbit. Ribbit,

CHAMBERLAIN:

Sounds like church bells ringing.

VICEROY:

That's just bullfrogs singing.

CHORUS:

Ribbit, Ribbit.
Ribbit, Ribbit.
Ribbit, Ribbit.

CHORUS:

Moo. Moo.
Moo. Moo.
Moo. Moo.

CHAMBERLAIN:

What kind of forest has cows?

VICEROY:

And frogs?

[The COURTIERS all shrug with confusion.]

NIGHTINGALE:

(sings a few measures of her song.)

FISHERMAN:

Wait! Wait! I heard her song.
Is that the Nightingale?

KITCHEN GIRL:

Yes, Indeed.
Come along.

[They are all drawn to the Nightingale's song.]

NIGHTINGALE:

(sings a few more measures of her song.)

CHAMBERLAIN:

This plain bird, so gray, so ordinary.
What a surprise,

CHAMBERLAIN: and VICEROY:

She sings so merry.

VICEROY:

She is everything I'm told.

ALL THREE COURTIERS:

Her voice is lovely.
We are sold.

THE COURTIERS, CHAMBERLAIN, and VICEROY:

Her songs are every bit delightful
Seems, praise is only rightful
Your songs, we love them thus,
Will you come and sing for us?

VICEROY:

Our Emperor will be delighted.

CHAMBERLAIN:

At the palace, you are invited.

[The Nightingale nods her head happily in agreement.]

COURTIERS, VICEROY and CHAMBERLAIN:

Hooray! Hooray! Hooray!
Her songs are every bit delightful.
Seems, praise is only rightful.
Together let us all adjourn,
To the palace, we must return.
Now let us leave this place
The Emperor's garden, we must grace.

COURTIERS, VICEROY, CHAMBERLAIN, KITCHEN GIRL, and FISHERMAN:

This bird's songs we all enthral.
We agree. We all agree.
This nightingale's songs are best of all.

[They all exit to the palace.]

SCENE THREE

[In the middle of the garden, The EMPEROR sits on his throne with his court and officials in attendance. The CHORUS has gathered too. The CHAMBERLAIN stands before them all.]

CHANCELLOR: *(pompously)*

Your Royal Majesty!
Nobles of the Court!
Children of the city!
It gives me great pleasure,
To introduce this treasure.
Her songs most beautiful
Her talent, irrefutable.
With great acclaim,
She's earned her fame.

EMPEROR: *(scolding)*

Oh, get on with it!

CHANCELLOR:

Of course Your Majesty.
Together, let us hail!
I present the Nightingale!

NIGHTINGALE:

(ARIA: Sounds chosen by John)

[All clap, except the EMPEROR who is weeping. He stands, everyone stops.]

EMPEROR:

My spirit is renewed.
I am filled with gratitude.
Your songs bring me to tears.
A joy I've not felt in years.

NIGHTINGALE:

(She happily sings a refrain of her aria and everyone joins her in song.)

[The EMPEROR is thrilled.]

EMPEROR:

Sweet Nightingale,
You have warmed my heart.
You must stay, we'll never part.
You will sing for me every day,
In the palace, you must stay.

CHANCELLOR and VICEROY:

The highest honor we afford,
We bestow on you this reward.

[Two courtiers unexpectedly rush up and lock silver cuffs on the NIGHTINGALE'S legs.]

CHAMBERLAIN:

Your songs are for the Emperor's pleasure.

VICEROY:

It's your voice, he'll most treasure.

[The COURT seems thrilled, while the bird is understandably distressed. FISHERMAN and the KITCHEN GIRL make an appeal to the CHORUS]

ENSEMBLE Call and Response.

FISHERMAN and KITCHEN GIRL:

Did you see? Did you see?
They've captured the Nightingale!

CHORISTER 4: (spoken)

But what can we do?!

KITCHEN GIRL:

Can you help us?

CHORISTER 5: (spoken)

She belongs to the emperor now!

FISHERMAN:

The Nightingale is confined.

KITCHEN GIRL:

A royal treatment so unkind.

FISHERMAN and KITCHEN GIRL:

This is simply unbearable!

A situation made most terrible!

CHORISTER 6: (spoken)

Our poor Nightingale.

CHORISTER 7: (spoken)

A prisoner of the palace.

CHORUS:

What will happen to our poor bird?

The forest is where she sings her songs.

The forest is where the nightingale belongs.

CHORISTER 8: (spoken)

Let's all think!

CHORISTER 9: (spoken)

Let's make a plan!

CHORISTER 10: (spoken)

I have an idea!

[The CHORUS gathers briefly to discuss.] A bit of music

CHORUS:

Together. Together, we'll fix her plight.
Together. Together, we'll do what's right.
Together. Together, we'll save this bird.

SCENE FOUR

[The Nightingale, upset by her capture, is now too unhappy to sing. She misses her freedom and longs for her home in the forest. The three courtiers circle and taunt the poor bird.]

TRIO

COURTIER ONE:

What's all this fuss?

COURTIER THREE:

Will you not sing for us?

COURTIER TWO:

Whatever could be wrong?!

ALL THREE COURTIERS: *(imploring)*

That's enough!
Sing your song?

[The NIGHTINGALE attempts to sing, but cannot.]

COURTIER ONE:

You are selfish and ungrateful!

[The FISHERMAN and the KITCHEN GIRL approach.]

COURTIER TWO:

Uncaring and unfaithful!

COURTIER THREE:

This bird is truly hateful!

FISHERMAN:

Why no kindness for this poor bird?

KITCHEN GIRL:

She will not sing.
You've not heard?

FISHERMAN and KITCHEN GIRL:

Nightingales, we may impart
Cannot sing with a broken heart.

[The EMPEROR enters and joins them.]

ALL THREE COURTIERS: *(indignantly)*

Excuse me!
We beg your pardon!
It's an honor to sing in the Emperor's Garden.

EMPEROR: *(with annoyance)*

It is, indeed!
You will sing!
I'm the Emperor.
It's been decreed.

FISHERMAN:

Your Majesty.
Nightingales, we may impart

FISHERMAN and KITCHEN GIRL:

Cannot sing with a broken heart.
The forest is where she sings her songs.
The forest is where the Nightingale belongs.

EMPEROR:

Nonsense!

EMPEROR: *(to the NIGHTINGALE)*

You will sing as I demand.

It's not a wish, but a royal command.

[The VICEROY and the CHANCELLOR rush on and approach the EMPEROR.]

CHANCELLOR and VICEROY:

Your Majesty, Your Majesty.

I found a solution to our bind.

That sad bird, well never mind.

You see, I have just the thing.

This Nightinbird will always sing.

[The CHAMBERLAIN and the COURTIERS help roll the MECHANICAL NIGHTINBIRD into place. The EMPEROR and the three COURTIERS are easily impressed.]

CHAMBERLAIN:

This bird is neither plain nor gray.

That other bird can go away.

CHANCELLOR and VICEROY:

This one is gold, inset with jewels

ALL THREE COURTIERS:

This nightinbird is better,

We're no fools.

EMPEROR:

Yes! Yes!

But how's its song?

ALL THREE COURTIERS:

Beautiful music is what we long.

CHAMBERLAIN:

Her songs, I must declare.

CHANCELLOR:

Delightful.

VICEROY:

Wonderful.

CHAMBERLAIN, CHANCELLOR, and VICEROY:

Beyond compare!

EMPEROR:

Wind it up. Turn on this thing.

I'm excited to hear it sing.

[The CHAMBERLAIN winds up the MECHANICAL NIGHTINBIRD and stands back. All wait as the MECHANICAL NIGHTINBIRD turns and does a small dance. They all wait with bated breath for her song.]

MECHANICAL NIGHTINBIRD: *(A tuneful waltz that's repeated like a music box)*

Golden bird.

I am the golden bird.

Watch me dance. Hear me sing.

I am the golden bird.

Golden bird.

[The EMPEROR is suitably impressed and the Court is thrilled.]

CHANCELLOR:

Your Majesty,

There, you can see.

If it's a song that you desire

This bird is all that you require.

EMPEROR:

It's magnificent!

[The MECHANICAL NIGHTINBIRD turns and repeats her small dance.]

MECHANICAL NIGHTINBIRD:

Golden bird.

I am the golden bird.

Watch me dance. Hear me sing.

I am the golden bird.

Golden bird.

*[MECHANICAL NIGHTINBIRD dances and sings the song again, exactly as before.]
The COURT becomes so excited they all join in with the MECHANICAL
NIGHTINGBIRD for an ensemble piece. They waltz and sing variations of its song.]*

Feel free to play with this

MECHANICAL NIGHTINBIRD:

Golden bird.
I am the golden bird.
Watch me dance. Hear me sing.
I am the golden bird.
Golden bird.

ENSEMBLE:

Golden bird. Golden bird.
She is the golden bird.
Watch her dance. Hear her sing.
The golden bird's song is everything
She is our golden bird.
Our golden bird.

*[While everyone is distracted, the FISHERMAN and KITCHEN GIRL alerts the
CHORUS and several members seize the opportunity to free the NIGHTINGALE from
her silver cuffs. The children wish the bird well. The royal court never notices when the
NIGHTINGALE escapes and returns to the forest.]*

SCENE FIVE

*[Weeks later, the COURTIERS are lounging listlessly in the garden, while the
MECHANICAL NIGHTINBIRD stands motionless. KITCHEN GIRL enters to gather fruit.]*

KITCHEN GIRL:

Look at you three.
Why just lie about?

ALL THREE COURTIERS:

Life is dull, without a doubt

KITCHEN GIRL:

Look around. Take in the scenery.
The trees, the flowers - the vivid greenery.

ALL THREE COURTIERS:

It all begins to look the same.
We're all bored and not to blame.

[Spontaneously, the MECHANICAL NIGHTINBIRD, does its little dance and sings.]

MECHANICAL NIGHTINBIRD:

Golden bird.
I am the golden bird.
Watch me dance. Hear me sing.
I am the golden bird.
Golden bird.

[Everyone sighs with boredom or frustration.]

COURTIER ONE:

You might have guessed,

COURTIER TWO:

We're not impressed.

COURTIER THREE:

It only sang one song.

ALL THREE COURTIERS:

Now we've grown tired of it.
That's what's wrong!

[The VICEROY, CHANCELLOR, and CHAMBERLAIN enter looking worried and then annoyed.]

VICEROY:

Must I treat all with scorn!
The emperor is sad and feels forlorn.

CHANCELLOR:

He shut himself in his royal suite

CHAMBERLAIN:

He will not sleep.

VICEROY and CHANCELLOR:

He will not eat.

VICEROY, CHANCELLOR, and CHAMBERLAIN:

Get up! Get up!

He'll soon be here!

It's our duty to bring him cheer.

[The FISHERMAN enters and joins them.]

CHAMBERLAIN:

This golden bird brought him joy.

ALL THREE COURTIERS:

Are you sure? It does annoy.

COURTIER ONE:

Whatever happened to that other bird?

COURTIER TWO:

She's flown away and not been heard.

[The EMPEROR enters sadly and approaches. They all bow.]

VICEROY:

Your Majesty.

ALL:

Your Majesty.

CHANCELLOR:

How are you? Feeling well?

EMPEROR: (with annoyance)

I'm unhappy! Can't you tell?

CHAMBERLAIN:

I know! I know!
I have just the thing!
Happy music is what I bring
I'll wind it up and let it play.
Let it chase your blues away.

[The EMPEROR shrugs, while the CHAMBERLAIN winds up MECHANICAL NIGHTINBIRD. It does a little dance.]

MECHANICAL NIGHTINBIRD:

Golden bird.
I am the golden bird.
Watch me dance. (like a broken record)
Hear me. Hear me...
Hear me... (slowly)

[Whir-r-r, all the wheels run down and the music stops. The MECHANICAL NIGHTINBIRD slumps over - broken. Everyone leans in (musical pause) and the EMPEROR sighs deeply.]

VICEROY and CHANCELLOR:

Oh, Dear! Oh, Dear!
Perhaps, it's broken.

EMPEROR:

Sing! Sing!
This bird must sing!

CHAMBERLAIN:

I know, I know
I've just the thing!

[The CHAMBERLAIN doesn't. Everyone leans in] a musical pause

CHANCELLOR: *(in a loud whisper to the CHAMBERLAIN)*

Call the Watchmaker!

CHAMBERLAIN: (spoken)

Excuse me?

VICEROY: *(in a louder whisper to the CHAMBERLAIN)*

Call the Watchmaker!

CHAMBERLAIN:

Oh yes! *(loudly spoken)*

I'll call the Watchmaker!

[The WATCHMAKER enters quickly and is directed towards the MECHANICAL NIGHTINBIRD.] The Watchmaker is like a nervous nutty professor - if that makes sense.

CHAMBERLAIN:

Come! Come!

Our golden bird will not sing.

It does not dance or anything.

WATCHMAKER: *(flustered)*

I'll open it back and inspect.

COURTIERS: *(with irony)*

Let us hope it's not wrecked.

WATCHMAKER:

All things that are made,

Can be broken, I'm afraid.

[The WATCHMAKER opens up the back panel of the MECHANICAL NIGHTINGALE. Everyone leans in to watch.] A bit of music - the sound of tinkering.

WATCHMAKER:

It seems I am ill-equipped.

The motor died and gears were stripped.

Not all things can be mended.

No matter how fine.

No matter how splendid.

[The WATCHMAKER exits with the *MECHANICAL NIGHTINBIRD*.]

EMPEROR: *Aria*

I am not sad for what befell
It's finally gone and just as well.
Distracted by what was new.
The Mechanical Bird, I bid adieu.
I missed the beauty nature gave.
Birdsongs are what I most crave.
The woodpecker, the thrush's call,
The nightingale's most of all
Nature's glory, not easily measured,
I traded away what I treasured.

KITCHEN GIRL:

One cannot change what is wild.

CHAMBERLAIN:

Listen to you, you're just a child.

EMPEROR:

No, she's right!
We captured what was meant to be free.

KITCHEN GIRL and FISHERMAN

The forest is where the Nightingale should be.

ALL THREE COURTIERS:

You're right, You're right.
We treated the Nightingale with unkindness.
We've been cruel.
We see our blindness.

VICEROY, CHANCELLOR, and CHAMBERLAIN:

Nightingales cannot be tamed.
For this, we are ashamed.

NIGHTINGALE: (from offstage)

Sings several measures of the song.

[The NIGHTINGALE enters happily.]

CHORUS:

That's her! That's her!
The Nightingale has returned.
Nature's music is what we've yearned.

NIGHTINGALE:

Sings several measures of the song.

EMPEROR:

Sweet bird, We're all sorry.
We've overlooked nature's glory
Treated you poorly, but you've returned.
Forgiveness is a lesson learned.
You're a bird, meant to be free
Stay if you like and sing for me.

[The NIGHTINGALE shakes her head and politely declines.]

FISHERMAN and KITCHEN GIRL:

The forest is where she sings her songs.
The forest is where Nightingale belongs.

[The NIGHTINGALE nods her head in agreement.]

EMPEROR:

You're right!
You're right! I finally see!
Some things cannot be possessed - I agree!

ENSEMBLE and CHORUS:

When you're sad and need a lift
Return to the forest for nature's gift.
There we'll wait for nature's call.
The nightingale songs are best of all.

EMPEROR: (spoken to audience) *declamatory*

Remember! Nature is a gift for us all! Take time for yourself and enjoy the living world!
Go out and explore. Open your imagination and discover nature's beauty.

[Everyone gathers on stage for the final ensemble.]

ENSEMBLE and CHORUS: (*reprise*)

This is our garden.
Our Emperor's garden.
From the palace, to his garden,
through the forest - to the sea.
Creatures climb and birds aflight,
Clouds that chase across the sky
Fruits on trees and berries on the bush.
Through dappled sunlight,
And gentle rain.
This is where...
We wonder, laugh, and play.
We wonder, laugh, and play.
Wonder, laugh and play.

[End of Opera]