

## SYNOPSIS

Set in the world of New York Society in the 1890s during The Gilded Age, LILY tells the story of a young socialite (Lily Bart) who struggles to maintain her position in high society while fighting the impulse to follow her heart.

Using the structure of an ancient Greek Tragedy, this one-act chamber opera incorporates the setting, sounds and trends of the opulent American era, tracing Lily Bart (the tragic hero)'s descent from her position within high society to situational poverty in five key scenes or Portraits. The Society (Greek chorus) is made up of individuals from Lily's world that also play integral parts in her story.

PROLOGUE. Members of The Society share their opinion of Lily Bart with one another. Lily is one of them – they helped mold and create her into a beautiful socialite. However, they are afraid for her future. Lily is in danger of becoming a spinster if she does not marry well – and soon. She does not have any family or income to speak of and so, in order to remain in society, her prospective husband must be a wealthy man with the right background and connections.

PORTRAIT ONE. Lily awakens in her guest room at Bellomont, the Hudson Valley summer “cottage” of friends Judy and Gus Trenor. Lily receives a summons from Judy to help her with some household tasks. This is one of Lily's obligations as a single unwed female living on the generosity of her wealthy friends. While Lily's maid helps her get dressed for the day, Lily faces her financial and social situation and determines once and for all that it is time for her to follow through and finish what she has often begun – to marry a rich man.

CHORAL ODE ONE. The Society discuss the kind of husband they think Lily should acquire.

PORTRAIT TWO. On a walk in the gardens of Bellomont, Lawrence Selden approaches Lily. Selden is a lawyer and bachelor who travels in the same social circle as Lily. While there is a mutual attraction between them, both acknowledge that Selden is not rich enough to be a husband for Lily. After an engaging and heated conversation, they leave one another resolved but discontent.

CHORAL ODE TWO. The Society lament the tediousness of the New York social season and the downturn of the economy which has put a strain on their pocket books. They begin to reach out of their inner circle to the nouveau riche who, though not of the “class” they wish to associate with, do have the money to keep the festivities alive. Carry Fisher, a divorcee and social bridge between the two wealthy classes, extends an invitation to a party including a Tableaux Vivants (a series of living portraits) featuring the physical talents of the female socialites and prominently displaying the assets of Lily Bart.

PORTRAIT THREE. While the women are scandalized by Lily's portrayal of the scantily clad “Mrs. Lloyd” by Joshua Reynolds, the men are titillated. Selden recognizes that Lily's beauty extends far beyond her physical appearance and once again acknowledges that as much as he may desire it, they will never be able to have a future together. Lily cannot allow it.

CHORAL ODE THREE. The men and women each gossip about the rumors spreading in the tabloids about Lily – that she carries on with married men and that she is considering marriage to Simon Rosedale (one of the nouveau riche). Judy Trenor decides she needs to have a talk with Lily and invites her to her New York home for that purpose.

PORTRAIT FOUR. Lily arrives at the Trenor's and is greeted by Gus. Judy, it turns out, has returned to the country and instead of giving Lily the message that she cannot keep their appointment, Gus takes advantage of the opportunity for the two of them to be alone. Lily is horrified to discover that she is in debt to Gus. Thinking he had invested money for her, Lily spent the money she received from Gus. The truth is, Gus never made a single investment, and instead, made her gifts of money. Lily rejects his physical advances as he tries to receive "payment-in-kind." Finally, Gus throws a bewildered and shamed Lily out of his house.

CHORAL ODE FOUR. Rumors spread like wildfire and Lily's status declines at an alarming rate. She is cast aside by Judy and Bertha because of claims that Lily is pursuing their husbands. Lily agrees to marry Rosedale although he no longer wants her with a tarnished reputation. Without any support or source of income, Lily is flung into poverty. However, she is determined to be self-sufficient and pay off all of her debts.

PORTRAIT FIVE. Lily, a shadow of her former self, visits Selden at his apartment. She apologizes for the way they last parted and says she can resign herself to her new life of labor if she knows he doesn't think poorly of her. She bids him farewell, while Selden, confused, is unable to declare his love for her.

EPILOGUE. As an exhausted Lily enters her room at the boarding house where she now lives, The Society recall her as a distant memory, severing their association with her and absolving themselves of any wrong doing. Lily seeks rest and, with the aid of a large dose of chloral, sinks into her final slumber.