

Martin Halpern, *The Scaffolding: Chamber Opera in Two Acts*

Freely based on Henrik Ibsen's play *The Master Builder*

(See Program Notes for Cast and Setting)

Act One

(Lights come up slowly on the front room of Solness's house and the area just outside the front door.
Ragnar, wearing a green eyeshade, sits at a drawing table working with slide rule and pencil.)

Larghetto $\bullet = 52$

Piano

pp *p*

(Hilde enters outside, wearing hiking clothes and a knapsack and carrying an alpenstock.
She moves slowly toward the front door, then stops and gazes at the house.)

poco piu mosso $\bullet = 56$

Piano

mp *mf* *f*

11

Hilde

mp *mf*

At last! At last!

11

Piano

ff *mf* *f*

meno mosso $\bullet = 48$

13

Hilde

The home of Mas - ter Buil - der Sol - ness! The Mas - ter Buil - der Sol - ness!

13

Piano

mp

(She gazes a moment longer, then knocks on the door.)

piu mosso ♩ = 66

15

Hilde

At last!

Piano

f *ff* *mp*

(Ragnar stops working, rises, crosses to the door and opens it.)

(She knocks again.)

Just a mi - nute!

19

Ragnar

8

Just a mi - nute!

Piano

mf *ff* *mf* *f* *ff*

poco meno mosso ♩ = 60

Hel - lo!

Who are you?

I asked first.

Who are you?

22

Hilde

Hel - lo! Who are you? I asked first.

Ragnar

8

Who are you?

Piano

mf

24

Hilde

You're not... his son?

Ragnar

Whose son?

Piano

meno mosso $\bullet = 48$

26

Hilde

Mas - ter Buil - der Sol - ness! Oh.

Ragnar

God no! I on - ly work for him.

Piano

f *mp*

(She walks in past him and drops the alpenstock
and knapsack on the floor.)

28

Hilde

Well would you kind - ly tell him that Hil - de Vun - gel has come.

Piano

30

Hilde

He's ex - pec - ting me. — And please pro - nouce it care - ful - ly.

Piano

32 *poco meno mosso* ♩ = 44

Hilde

Hil - - - de Vun - gel, from Ly - san - ger.

Piano

33

Hilde

(Mimicking her) That's right. Well,

Ragnar

8 Hil - de Vun - gel, from Ly - san - ger.

Piano

mf

35 *piu mosso* ♩ = 60 *rit.* ----- ♩ = 48

Hilde
are - n't you go - ing to tell him? He is - n't?

Ragnar
I might if he were here.

Piano
f *mp*

37

Hilde
When will he be?

Ragnar
Not yet. (Gesturing out the window) The

Piano
mf *mp*

39

Ragnar
sun's al - most down. Can't do much in - spec - ting in the dark.

Piano
f

41

Hilde

In - spec - ting?

Ragnar

8

The new tow - er.

Piano

mf *f* *mf* *f*

43

Hilde

ff

He's built a new to - wer?

Ragnar

8

De - signed it. Work - men built it.

Piano

ff *mf*

45

Hilde

mf

Is it o - ver a church? Oh.

Ragnar

8

No, just a house. A

Piano

p *mf*

47

Hilde Him - self? Of

Ragnar new house, — for him - self. And Mr - s. Sol - ness.

Piano

49 rit. ----- ♩ = 42

Hilde course. And the chil - dren.

Ragnar (Looking at her quizzically) Are you sure he's ex - pec - ting you?

Piano *f* *mp* *mf*

51 piu mosso ♩ = 56 rit. ----- ♩ = 48

Hilde Why do you ask?

Ragnar You don't seem to know much a - bout him.

Piano *f* *mp* *f*

53
 Ragnar
 There are no chil - dren, sons or daugh - ters.

Piano
 mp f

54
 Hilde
 Oh. Well it's been a while since... When will the tow - er be fin - ished?

Piano
 mp f mf

56
 Hilde
 Ah!

Ragnar
 It is fin - ished. If it pas - ses this in - spec - tion,

Piano
 mp mf

58 *ff*

Hilde To - mor - row? What per - fect ti - ming!

Ragnar 58
8 the scaf - fol - ding comes down to - mor - row.

Piano 58
ff *mf*

60 *mf*

Hilde Will there be a ce - re - mo - ny?

Ragnar 60
8 Of course. Half the town will be there.

Piano 60

62

Hilde To watch him climb that scaf - folding and lay a wreath on top of the to - wer!

Piano 62

64

Hilde

What does that mean?

Ragnar

Oh hard - ly!

Piano

f

65

Ragnar

You real - ly don't know much_ a - bout him.

Piano

mp

66

Ragnar

The man is ter - ri - fied_ of heights.

Piano

f *ff*

67

Hilde

Who says so?

Ragnar

8

I say so. Won't e-ven go out on the roof-top here

Piano

f *mf*

69

Hilde

Well that's just non-sense!

Ragnar

8

for fear of fal-ling

Piano

ff

piu mosso ♩ = 60

71

Hilde

And I'll bet a-ny-thing he'll climb that scaf-fol-ding to-mor-ow!

Piano

(Sitting back down)

73

Ragnar

8

Fine. We'll see a-bout that. And now if you'll ex-cuse me,

Piano

mf mp mf

(Gesturing at a chair by the window)

(Hilde sits on the edge of the chair and watches him as he resumes working)

75

Ragnar

8

I have work to do. Have a seat if you'd like.

Piano

p mp

poco piu mosso ♩ = 66

79

Hilde

What kind of work?

Ragnar

8

I don't think it would in-terest you.

Piano

mf

poco meno mosso ♩ = 60

82 *(Ragnar takes off his eyeshade and looks at her bemusedly.)*

Hilde

An - y - thing an - y - one does for him in - terests me.

Piano

84 *rit.* ----- ♩ = 48

Ragnar

All right then, Hil - de Vun - gel from Ly - san - ger,

Piano

86

Ragnar

I'll tell you _____ what I do.

Piano

88

Ragnar

What - e - ver he can't do, or won't, be - cause it's be - neath him.

Piano

poco piu mosso $\bullet = 52$

Ragnar $\frac{12}{8}$
8
Draf - ting, cal - cu - la - ting strains and stres - ses,

Piano $\frac{12}{8}$
mf

Ragnar $\frac{12}{8}$
8
costs of ma - te - ri - als, that kind of thing. He, you see, is the art - tist here;

Piano $\frac{12}{8}$
f
mf

Ragnar $\frac{12}{8}$
8
I'm mere - ly the tech - ni - cian, and some - times the er - rand boy.

Piano $\frac{12}{8}$
f

Ragnar $\frac{12}{8}$
8
So he needs me, and I need him,

Piano $\frac{12}{8}$
mf
f

96

Hilde

You sound bit - ter.

Ragnar

8 for the sa - lar - y.

Piano

97

Ragnar

Do I? Well may - be that's be - cause I have it in me to be an ar - tist too,

Piano

p *mp* *mf* *f*

99

Ragnar

8 and a good one.

Piano

100
8

Ragnar

But no one gets to de - sign a - round here

Piano

101
8

Ragnar

with - out his re - com - men - da - tion.

Piano

102
8

Ragnar

And he won't give me one be - cause he needs me here,

Piano

103

Hilde

Scared of you?

Ragnar

and is as scared of me as he is of heights.

Piano

ff *mf*

poco meno mosso ♩ = 48

105

Ragnar

Of an-y com-pe-ti-tion, es-pe-cial-ly from the young-er gen-e-ra-tion he en-vies,

Piano

f

poco piu mosso ♩ = 52

107

Hilde

That is not the Mas-ter Bul-der Sol-ness I know!

Ragnar

and wants to keep down.

Piano

ff *mf* *ff*

(Solness, wearing a light jacket and carrying a portfolio, enters outside, crosses to the front door and pull it open. Both jump to their feet.)

109
8

Ragnar

If you real - ly know him.

109

Solness

Well! Rag - nar!

109

Piano

mf *ff*

111

Ragnar

No sir. Of yours.

111

Solness

A friend of yours?

111

Piano

mf

113

Hilde

You don't re - cog - nize me.

113

Ragnar

She says you're ex - pec - ting her. *(Peers at her as he hangs his jacket on the coatrack)*

113

Solness

Am I?

113

Piano

115 *meno mosso* ♩ = 48

Hilde

115 *(Mimicking her again)*

Ragnar

Hi - lde Vun - gel from Ly - san - ger. *(Crossing to the drawing table and laying down the portfolio)*

115

Solness

Ly - san - ger. Yes,

115

Piano

mp

117

Hilde

You cer-tain-ly did. A ve-ry high and beau-ti-ful to-wer.

Solness

117

I built a tow-er there, once.

Piano

120

Hilde

Our lar-gest church. But is that all you re-mem-ber?

Solness

120

On top of a church.

Piano

mf *mp*

122 *poco meno mosso* ♩ = 44

Hilde

Ten years to be e-xact. And

Solness

122

Well it was some time a-go.

Piano

124

Hilde

now *he* tells me you've built a tow - er here, which you've just in - spec - ted.

Solness

124

Yes.

Piano

124

mf *f* *tr*

126

Solness

The scaf - fol - ding comes down _____ to - mor - row.

Piano

126

tr

127

Hilde

Hoor - ay! Is it as high as the one in Ly - san - ger?

Ragnar

127

(Flatly)

8

Con - gra - tu - la - tions.

Piano

127

ff *mf*

poco piu mosso $\bullet = 48$

129

Hilde

Real - ly?

129

Solness

A bit high - er. But tell me, Miss Vun - gel,

129

Piano

f *mp*

131

Hilde

My own two legs. I've

131

Solness

what, e - xac - tly, has brought you here?

131

Piano

133

Hilde

walked all the way. It's most - ly down - hill, so don't think I'm ti - red.

Ragnar

133

ff

All the way?

Solness

133

ff

All the way?

Piano

133

mf *f* *mp* *mf*

135

Hilde

Just thir - sty, some - what hung - ry, and much in need of a bath.

Piano

135

137

Hilde

I asked.

Solness

137

How did you know where I lived?

Piano

137

139

Hilde *mf*
Ev - ery - one knows where you live.

Solness *mf*
Have you a place to stay to-night?

Piano

141 *piu mosso* ♩ = 60

Hilde
Not yet.

Ragnar
Yes?

Solness
Rag - nar. Please ask Mr - s. Sol - ness

Piano *f* *mp*

143

Solness
to step in here for a mi-nute. And please bring Miss Vun - gel

Piano *mf*

145

Ragnar

8

Yes sir.

145

Solness

a large glass of wa-ter.

145

Piano

f

148

Solness

meno mosso ♩ = 44

So what is all this a-bout? Why did you tell him I was ex-pec-ting you?

148

Piano

mf

150

Hilde

You should have been. How much do your re-mem-ber

150

Solness

What does that mean?

150

Piano

f *ff* *mp*

152

Hilde of that day in Ly - san - ger? Then let me re - fresh your me - mo - ry.

Solness Not ve - ry much, I con - fess.

Piano

155 *piu mosso* ♩ = 52

Hilde No thank you.

Solness 155 (Gestures for her to sit)
Please do. Well if you don't mind, I will sit. For

Piano *mf*

158 *rit.* ----- ♩ = 44

Solness I am ti - red.

Piano *mp* *p*

(He sits in the chair by the window.)

161

Hilde

There was a grand cel-e-bra-tion that mor-ning. A band played in the church-yard.

Piano

mf *f*

163

Hilde

Hun-dreds were there from town and coun-try-side to see the fa-mous Mas-ter Buil-der Sol-ness

Piano

mf *mp*

165

Hilde

climb the scaf-fol-ding step af-ter step, and lay a wreath on top of the tow-er.

Piano

167

Hilde

poco meno mosso ♩ = 40

I was one of them,

Piano

f *mp*

169

Hilde

thir - teen years old, in a white dress. And when you looked down,, I

Piano

mf

171

Hilde

waved a lit - tle flag I was car - ry - ing, and shout - ed, with the o - thers, "Hoo -

Piano

mf *f* *ff*

173

Hilde

ray for Mas - ter Buil - der Sol - ness!"

Solness

That was... you.

Piano

mp

piu mosso ♩ = 48

175

Hilde

Then you do re - mem - ber!

Solness

175

That much

Piano

f *mf* *mp*

(Unseen by him, Ragnar re-enters with a large glass of water.)

177

Solness

comes back to me now. It made me quite diz - zy,

Piano

mf *f*

179

Hilde

What? You, diz - zy?

Solness

179

the way you kept wa - ving that flag.

Piano

mp *mf* *f* rit. -----

181 $\bullet = 44$

Solness

I had to turn a - way, to keep from fal - ling.

Piano

mf *f*

182

Solness

But some - how I man - aged to get back to earth.

Piano

mp *mf*

183

Solness

And I have ne - ver climbed a scaf - fol - ding since.

Piano

f

poco meno mosso ♩ = 40 I-31

Ragnar *f* *(She turns to him.)* *(He hands her the glass.)*
 And there you have it, Miss Vun-gel. Your glass of wat-er, I mean.

Piano *mf*

(She quickly drinks down the water.)

Hilde Thank you.

Ragnar *To Solness*
 May I go now?

Solness Yes. But in the mor-ning, please get the wreath at the flor-ist's

Piano *f*

Ragnar Yes sir. Till then, Miss Vun-gel.

Solness and bring it here by ten o'-clock.

Piano

(He exits out the front door. Hilde plunks down the glass and turns to Solness.)

piu mosso ♩ = 52

Hilde

190

So: af - ter you came down to earth a - gain,

Piano

190

mp

Hilde

192

do you re - mem - ber what hap - pened next? Yes!

Solness

192

Some kind of a re - cep - tion, I think.

Piano

192

mf

rit. ----- ♩ = 48

Hilde

194

In my fa - ther's home! Hen - rik Vun - gel, the ma - yor of Ly - san - ger.

Solness

194

Your fa - ther's...?

Piano

194

200

Hilde

Hel - lo.

(Politely but tonelessly)

Mrs. S.

How do you do.

200

Solness

She's come to pay our town a vi - sit.

200

Piano

mf *mp*

202

Mrs. S.

Oh.

202

Solness

Could an - o - ther place be laid for din - ner?

202

Piano

3

203

Mrs. S. *If you wish it, Hal - vard.*

Solness *And pos - sib - ly,*

Piano

204

Mrs. S. *If you wish.*

Solness *a bath pre - pared for her?*

Piano

205 *poco meno mosso* ♩ = 44

Solness *And per - haps she can sleep in the nur - se - ry to - night.*

Piano

206

Hilde

The nur - se - ry? I thought there were no...!

Piano

mf

207

Mrs. S.

There were, for a time.

Solness

207

We still call it that,

Piano

f

208

Hilde

Oh.

Mrs. S.

208

Have you lug - gage, Miss Vun - gel?

Solness

208

out of ha - bit.

Piano

mp

(Gesturing at the knapsack on the floor)

209

Hilde

On - - - ly what's in there.

Mrs. S.

209

Well then, if you'll ex - cuse me,

Piano

210

Mrs. S.

I'll see a - bout your bath, and din - ner.

Piano

211

Hilde

Thank you.

Mrs. S.

211

And the nur - se - ry.

Solness

211

(She exits quickly into the house.)

Thank you.

Piano

mf *f* *ff*

(Hilde turns away, shivering)

213 *f*
 Hilde B - rrr! I feel... chilled to the bone.

213
 Solness What is it?

213
 Piano

215
 Solness You mus-n't take it per - so - nal - ly.

215 *mp*
 Piano

217 *meno mosso* ♩ = 48 *meno mosso* ♩ = 36
 Hilde I can see that.

217
 Solness She has suf-fered, great - ly.

217
 Piano

219

Solness

We were, for man - y years, child - less. Then,

Piano

221

Solness

se - ven years a - go, it seemed mi - ra - cu - lous

Piano

222

Solness

when twin boys were born. Her whole be - ing

Piano

mf

224 *rit.* -----

Solness sang with the joy of mother-hood.

Piano *mp* *p*

226 ♩ = 32

Solness When both of them died, five months later,

Piano *mp*

227

Solness it was as if she too died. She has dressed in black ever since;

Piano *mf* *mp*

229

Solness

and be-hind those clothes some o - ther per - son goes through the mo - tions of liv - ing

Piano

mf

231

Hilde

Poor wo - man!

Solness

as if that per - son were she. Yes.

Piano

mp *f* *mf* *mp*

233

Hilde

And you? How have you...? Of course!

Solness

I've had my work to sus - tain me.

Piano

f *mf*

piu mosso ♩ = 52 *ff* rit. -----

235 $\bullet = 44$

Hilde

Solness

Piano

Part of the rea - son I've built the new house is to help her for - get, if pos - si - ble.

237 *piu mosso* $\bullet = 52$

Hilde

Solness

Piano

Part of the rea - son?

I con - fess

239 *poco meno mosso* $\bullet = 48$

Solness

Piano

there was an - o - ther, stran - ger rea - son. A cra - ving came o - ver me

mp

241

Hilde

Ah! Ah!

Solness

to build an - o - ther tow - er... E - ven with - out a com - mis - sion.

Piano

243

Hilde

Ah! Are there rooms in this to - wer?

Solness

E - ven with - out a church be - neath it.

Piano

f *mf*

245

Solness

One guest room, near the top, with bal - co - nies — all a - round,

Piano

247

Hilde

Solness

Piano

Ly - san - ger?

and a view as far as... In one di - rec - tion.

f *mp*

249

Hilde

Solness

Piano

A room where a prin - cess might dwell!

I sup - pose so.

f

poco meno mosso ♩ = 44

251

Hilde

Solness

Piano

Mas - ter Buil - der Sol - ness!

Is it pos - si - ble you can't re - call

f *mp* *mf* *mp*

253

Hilde

an - y - thing that hap - pened at that re - ce - ption?

253

Solness

I'm sure there was a lot to eat,

253

Piano

mf *mp* *mf*

255

Hilde

You don't re - mem - ber

255

Solness

and drink.

255

Piano

f *mp*

256

Hilde

slip - ping a - way to look a - round the house?

256

Solness

I'm al - ways in - teres - ted in

256

Piano

258

Hilde

And mee-ting me _____ com-ing out of my room? _____ And

Solness

how a house is de-signed. Mee-ting you? _____ Your room? _____

Piano

260

Hilde

tel-ling me how love-ly I looked in my white dress? _____ Like a prin-cess. _____

Solness

I'm sure you must have. _____

Piano

poco meno mosso ♩ = 44

262

Hilde

And you asked me, _____ when I grew up...

Solness

Is that what I said? _____ Yes?

Piano

mf

264

Hilde

If I'd be your prin - cess. — You did.

Solness

264

Asked you...? I did?

Piano

f *mp*

266

Hilde

I asked how long that would take.

Solness

266

And what did you an - swer? How _

Piano

mf

poco meno mosso ♩ = 40

268

Hilde

And you said that in ten years, — you'd come back and car - ry me off. —

Solness

268

long? Ten years? — Car - ry you

Piano

270

Hilde
to a cas - tle you'd build for me. And then you took me in your arms, _____

Solness
off? A cas - tle? My

Piano

272

Hilde
you_ and kissed me. My lips. Three long kis - ses, _____

Solness
arms? On your cheek? Fore-head? No!

Piano
f *mp*

274

Hilde
three_on my lips. Then you turned and went back to the re-cep-tion.

Solness
No! And then? Thank

Piano
ff *f* *mf*

piu mosso ♩ = 48

276

Hilde

The ten years are up, Mas-ter Buil-der,

Solness

hea-ven.

Piano

mp

278

Hilde

and you have - n't come for me. So I've come here,

Solness

Did you real - ly ex - pect me to?

Piano

mf

280

Hilde

times_ to claim my cas - tle.

Solness

But what does that mean?

Piano

f *mf*

281 *(Mrs. Solness re-enters.)*

Hilde Don't you?

Solness I don't build cas - tles.

Piano *f* *mp*

283

Hilde Thank you. Thank you.

Mrs. S. Your bath is rea - dy, Miss Vun - gel. As is the nur - se - ry.

Piano *mf* *mp*

285

Mrs. S. Have you had... good con - ver - sa - tion?

Solness Miss Vun - gel re - mem - bers things which

Piano

287 *rit.* ----- ♩ = 40

Mrs. S. Well, you're bet-ter at for-get-ting than I am.

Solness I had ut-ter-ly for-got-ten.

Piano *mf mp f*

289

Mrs. S. The ta-ble is set for din-ner, with a place for you, Miss Vun-gel.

Piano *mp*

(Mrs. Solness exits.) *rit.* ----- *piu mosso* ♩ = 52 *ff*

Hilde Thank you, Mr-s. Sol-ness. Oh God!

Solness Thank you, A-line. What is it?

Piano *mf f ff*

293

Hilde

May - be I should - n't have come. If I'd known a - bout her,

Solness

Why?

Piano

mf

295

Hilde

and the chil - dren...

Solness

mf Miss Vun - gel! *f* Hil - de!

Piano

f *mp* *mf*

poco meno mosso ♩ = 48

297

Solness

What - e - ver your pur - pose in com - ing, you are wel - come here!—

Piano

299

Solness

You've brought light in - to a house hea - vy with gloom.

Piano

301

Solness

A wife in per - pe - tu - al mour - ning; an as - sis - tant who I know de - spi - ses me;

Piano

f *mf* *mp*

303

Solness

and this dread of that knock on the door when the youn - ger gen - e - ra - tion shouts:

Piano

305

Solness

"Make way, Mas - ter Buil - der Sol - ness! It's our turn now!"

Piano

f *ff*

307

Hilde

f *ff*

Oh how un - wor - thy of you!

Solness

You're done for!"

Piano

f *ff*

piu mosso ♩ = 60

309

Hilde

How un - wor - thy of you! I'm of that gen - e - ra - tion,

Piano

f

311

Hilde

I've come knock-ing at that door, and yet you've wel-come*d* me!

Piano

313

Hilde

meno mosso ♩ = 52

Why not them as well? You'd see pret-ty soon

Piano

mf

315

Hilde

that — none of them, not Rag-nar or a-ny-one else,

Piano

f

Hilde

could e - ver take your place! There is, and can be,

Piano

Hilde

on - ly one Mas - ter Buil - der Sol - ness!

Piano

Hilde

So what have you got to fear from giv - ing them their chance?

Piano

(Solness, strongly affected by this, moves to her and takes her hands in his.)

Piano

p

326

Solness

Oh Hil-de! Hil-de! Can it be that with-out my know-ing it,

Piano

mf

330

Hilde

(Drawing back her hands and turning from him)

No, you did-n't.

Solness

I built that to-wer for you?

Piano

f *mp*

332

Hilde

I'm not a prin-cess ei-ther.

Solness

Be-cause it's not a cas-tle?

Piano

mf

poco piu mosso ♩ = 52

(Turning back to him) ♩ = ♩

Hilde

335 You built it for her, and for your-self. To prove you're still the man

Piano

f *mp*

Hilde

339 who built that to - wer in Ly - san - ger and hung a wreath at the top!

Piano

341 meno mosso ♩ = 44

Solness

341 The man who, ha - ving made it

Piano

f *mp*

Solness

342 back to earth a - - - - you three times on the lips,

Piano

342

344

Solness

and made you a pro-mise he's bro-ken?

Piano

f *mp*

346

Hilde

A pro - mise that still could be kept.

Solness

But how?

Piano

348

Hilde

There are cas - tles, and there are cas - tles. You may to -

Solness

I don't un - der - stand.

Piano

(She turns from him again, picks up her alpenstock and knapsack. and quickly exits into the house. Solness stares after her, perplexed.)

350 *piu mosso* ♩ = 60

Hilde
mor - row.____ To - mor - row.____

Solness
To - mor - row? To - mor - row?

Piano
f

353

Piano
ff *fff*

(Blackout)

End of Act One