

History Lessons

A Musical Manifesto in Three Acts

by Peter Brunette

Act 1: The Workers' Revolution

Here's a little tip about the history
Of hitherto-existing society:
It's always been a struggle, for life has not come cheap
Since Adam left the garden and had to earn his keep.
Then all the wealth and power came to flow towards
The high and mighty princes and the feudal lords.
And while the bourgeois bosses were making history,
They held the toilers captive inside the factory.

But factory workers are history makers,
So, sisters and brothers, it's right up your line.
You fitters and joiners are movers and shakers,
Your hands on the fabric of Nature's design.
Your ancestors hunted on plains and savannas
And brought home their harvest to bless and to share.
With no priests or parsons, they sang their hosannas
To fire and water, to earth and to air.

Let the ruling classes tremble
When they see your time has come,
When they see your ranks assemble,
Marching to a different drum.
Now's the time to join the choir,
All you workers of the world,
Time to raise your voices higher,
Let your banners be unfurled.

There can be no substitution
For the hands that hold the key,
For the workers' revolution
Rising from the factory.
Tell it to your friend and neighbour:
Workers of the world, unite!
For the hands that do the labour
Have some history to write.

Act 2: The Women's Revolution

History you learn in your grammar school
Is like a story told by the village fool:
It's full of sound and fury but doesn't mean a lot.
It's all about dead white men and all the wars they fought.
And what about the women? Well, sister, can't you guess?
They're either whores and harlots or damsels in distress.
For while the knights in armour were making history,
They kept their wives sequestered inside the nursery.

But nursery workers are history makers,
So, mothers and daughters, it's right up your line.
You spinners and weavers are movers and shakers,
Your hands on the fabric of Nature's design.
Your ancestors gathered the seeds and the flowers
And brought home their harvest to bless and to share.
The blazes they kindled unlocked all the powers
Of fire and water, of earth and of air.

Let the ruling gender tremble
When they see your time has come,
When they see your ranks assemble,
Marching to a different drum.
Now's the time to join the choir,
All you women of the world,
Time to raise your voices higher,
Let your banners be unfurled.

There can be no substitution
For the hands that hold the key,
For the women's revolution
Rising from the nursery.
So put down the chowder ladle.
Women of the world, unite!
For the hands that rock the cradle
Have some history to write.

Act 3: The Peoples' Revolution

History was all about the famous men
Who sailed the seven seas with the sword and the pen.
They bristled with bravado, excelled in sex appeal.
They busted out all over with missionary zeal.
Well, half of all the natives they soon turned into slaves,
And most of those remaining they laid into their graves.
And while the brave explorers were making history,
They turned the natives' country into their granary.

But granary workers are history makers,
So, sisters and brothers, it's right up your line.
You farmers and millers are movers and shakers,
Your hands on the fabric of Nature's design.
Your ancestors followed the moon and the seasons
And brought home their harvest to bless and to share.
Their words, bright as daybreak, illumined the reasons
For fire and water, for earth and for air.

Let the ruling nations tremble
When they see your time has come,
When they see your ranks assemble,
Marching to a different drum.
Now's the time to join the choir,
All you peoples of the world,
Time to raise your voices higher,
Let your banners be unfurled.

There can be no substitution
For the hands that hold the key,
For the peoples' revolution
Rising from the granary.
You're the ones that see the farthest.
Peoples of the world, unite!
For the hands that reap the harvest
Have some history to write.