

# THE *Lotte Senya* COMPETITION SONGBOOK

## “Put Me to Work” from *Bread and Roses*

*Music by Brad Alexander, Lyrics by Jill Abramovitz*

### SHOW SYNOPSIS

Inspired by true events, *Bread and Roses* is the story of 25-year old Maya, who makes it across the U.S. border from Mexico with the help of her sister Rosa in Los Angeles. Maya wants desperately to work alongside Rosa as a janitor in upscale Office Building 646 but Rosa tells her it's impossible. Maya ultimately pushes her way in, colliding with corrupt supervisor Mr. Perez and discovering abusive conditions for the janitors in the building.

Furious and inspired, Maya joins forces with a union organizer in an attempt to unionize. Rosa wants nothing to do with this effort, as her husband is sick and she can't jeopardize her job and her family's only income. After Maya leads the workers in several acts of peaceful but raucous disobedience, a mole turns them in, the workers are all fired, and an aspiring student named Ruben loses his ability to pay his deposit for college.

Desperate to make it right, Maya robs a gas station and gets Ruben the money he needs to enroll. In the final sequence of the show, the fired janitors join with workers, community organizers and supporters from all over LA. They triumphantly gain the right to unionize, but in the midst of celebration Maya is arrested for the gas station robbery. She is tragically deported but not before she gets to see how she has changed the lives of the workers, and her sister, forever.

### SONG CONTEXT AND SCENE DESCRIPTION

After an arduous and terrifying journey from Mexico, Maya reunites with her sister Rosa in Los Angeles. Desperate to earn back the money for Rosa's husband's medical emergency that she lost, Maya begs Rosa to get her a job alongside her as a janitor in downtown LA's upscale Building 646. The janitors there report to corrupt Mr. Perez, who bullies, blackmails, and belittles his workers. Of course, Maya knows nothing of these conditions and is desperate to work there. Rosa says it's impossible - she can't get Maya a job. But Maya is insistent.

### CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

Maya, 25, mezzo/belter, range: low A to high D. No shrinking violet, Maya is driven, passionate, and idealistic, often leading with her heart instead of her head. Maya is the ultimate little sister to Rosa's practical, guarded energy. She leads with a deep sense of right and wrong, and she's fearless enough to act on that sense. Her sister may think she's foolhardy, but Maya's always following a strict ethical inner compass.

## **PERFORMANCE NOTES**

In going after her goal in this song, Maya uses different tactics – her sense of whimsy, her logic, her toughness, and her heart. So don't be afraid to use humor, for example, in the second chorus, but then to turn on a dime and share the most vulnerable parts of her soul. It's all in service of convincing her sister. The singing should feel contemporary. It doesn't necessarily need to be fully belted, but there should be a very strong mix-belt quality. Almost none of the song should feel like it's in a head voice.

The vocal quality used in the first 12 measures should be speech-like. Maya is making a sincere appeal to her big sister. The chorus beginning in m. 18 should feel percussive and powerful – this is her manifesto! The second verse can be sung out a little more than the first verse and become celebratory – it's like she's dancing through the building in her head. The bridge beginning in m. 52 can have a more legato feel, then grow until you reach “sky,” which should be huge! Find honesty and quiet truth in measures 62-68, then build the intensity to the big, climactic final note.