

SYNCOPE

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Syncopation by Robert DeCamp Leland

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ROBERT DECAMP LELAND

SYNCOPIATION

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LELAND



UNIV OF
CALIFORNIA

BOSTON

THE POETRY-DRAMA COMPANY

1919

TO VERA
ABSOLUTELY

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SYNCOPE

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SYNCOPIATION

There by the river that first fair day of Spring
 Or in the vague romance of a city night
 Always your face before me.
 What was the night? I remember you,
 The blue of your eyes,
 The wistfulness of your flesh
 Somewhere in the city
 Looking down upon the park
 Moonlight and the monotone of people in the streets
 Or over a café table on a Sabbath afternoon;
 August, a secret room beside the sea
 Far off the throb of 'cellos and the lilt of lithe violins
 Cinematic, transitory. . . memories of glamored days,
 Flashes from romanced nights
 Sagan's at Christmas . . . and heard your voice again
 A damask room, lights dim
 And tearing the silks and laces
 That half-concealed your beauty . . . Traffic
 And the drone of plodding men below
 Fools, fools they were, but naught could tell them so . . .
 May-flower road, a car, what was the year?
 Citylight palloring your frail, wanton face
 Your eager flesh that sobbed with quick desire . . .
 A song to Eros . . . a dance to Syncopa . . . our
 symphony of life vivacious . . .

Autumn... the rush of crowds... the caress of color.
Obligato to our youth . . .
I touched your hand and you swayed
There is pleasure
Catch it, snatch it
Through a snowfall arm in arm
Don't worry, dear, there is no harm
Hold me that way,
Ardent!

The vagrant loves are all that live . . .
Climbing apartment stairs eagerly
Opening doors into soft, cerise bedrooms
Lovers of mine
Breathing their perfume, sensing their lure
Here we'll be happy . . . the world pauses
Transient, inconsequent
Cherishing only the illusions of the here-and-now . . .
April, a Colonial inn, the town historic,
Staid in the legends and landmarks of antiquity;
Why did I first possess you there?
Pagans of the contemporary in the land of the
Puritans.

The ironic verve of it had a thrill to eternally
dramatize the night, the month, the year
Flesh and spirit . . . the old hymns yielding to a
madder syncopation.

Looking out that night upon the relict square
Ethia, beloved. . . beauty at last
The radiant flower of passion triumphant over the
fetid garbage of the Puritanage;

Historic, dear?
Our night of passion made it so . . .
September again . . . cadenza . . . youth silks by.
Turnpike, camisole, café chartreuse
Through the park and up the river
Staccato whispering, your voice all fire and desire.
Sudden . . . swaying . . . soft buff through pastel pink
Quick continuity
Life is so short; can you capture it.
Furious, curious, insatiate
Why do you always want to kiss me in public.
Stop, they're looking. You're darling. You order.
 It's cute here, isn't it. All stucco.
Now your hand at a matinée
We hug our secret.
Here's a Florentine inn
Sit in this alcove and I'll tell you why the whimsical
 is never art.
Hush, dear,
Tis better you're illiterate of all but love;
The more the pretension, the less the charm.
Snap out that light and climb in —
I love that chemise
As delicate and restiff as your arms;
Kiss me like that again,
I'll make an artist of you yet . . .
Let's take the canoe and paddle down the river;
Sorbet, nougat and the latest records; and if you're
 good
We'll snug in at Jansen's for a canter and a cognac.

Yes, the river's historic
But don't throw that bottle overboard
They've passed laws against it.
Let's paddle over to the shade and lie in close.
This day will soon be over.
There's the 5.26 on the bridge
The clock watchers' special from the hive of industry,
As the dailies say.
You know, Fran, I'd rather be an idler here
Than the greatest schwab that ever cleaned a Street;
We'll tarry the carry at Jacot's, and check out.
I've got the roadster there . . . a little whirl to
Sorncroft.
Now give me your hand, dear; there's a mirror.
It'll make a hundred an' ten; five gears forward;
some bus . . .
What a pretty town . . . slow down a bit.
Yes, the white old-Colonial somehow thrills . . .
A Wayside inn . . . now there's tradition—
I'd like to take over the place, put a live revue in
there,
Get Art to write some sway songs,
A cute chorus of twelve, three principals,
And speed the intimate all over the room;
Open up the taproom, dust out the chambers,
And stock the buffet with some rare Margaux—
Wouldn't old Longfellow turn over once or twice;
Twould be a new thrill anyway, and that's what
counts . . .
Spring in Phillistia,