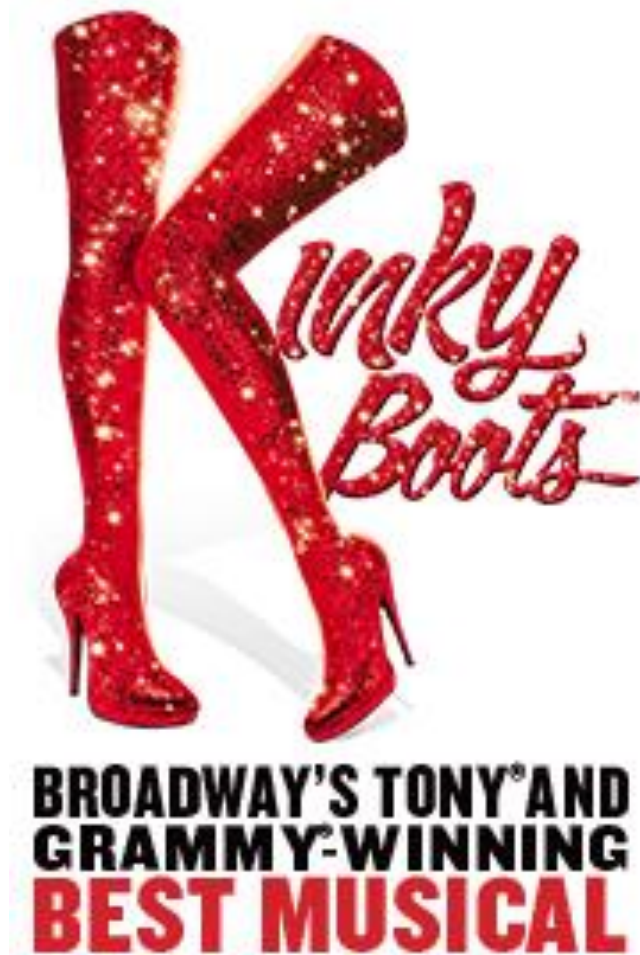


# Translating *Kinky Boots*



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## Abstract

This thesis strives to translate five songs from the Broadway musical *Kinky Boots* into Dutch, as if they would be performed on stage. The first chapter explores the literature that has been written on translating song lyrics, and more specifically musical theater. This forms the theoretical basis for the translations, and emphasizes on Peter Low's pentathlon approach for translating songs. The second chapter provides an analysis of the songs that were selected, based on Christiane Nord's four translation problem categories. The third to seventh chapters are the individual translations of the songs: each prefaced by a short introduction outlining the exact content and context of the song, and discussing some text-specific problems. Sheet music for the translated songs is attached.

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## Introduction

Musicals have been a part of Dutch show business since 1960, when Alan Jay Lerner's *My Fair Lady* became the first professionally produced musical ever to appear in the Netherlands (Bezembinder 13). This originally American musical was translated by Seth Gaaikema when he was only 21 years old and would find great success, soon leading to other musical productions. Of the first eleven musical productions in the Netherlands, ten were translated works (Bezembinder 17). With *Cats* (1987) and *Les Misérables* (1991) the way was paved for the Dutch musical as we know it today: American works with translated lyrics, with the same decor, costumes and grandeur as the original show.

I have loved musicals since I was a child, and grew up watching productions that Martine Bijl translated: *Beauty and the Beast*, *Tarzan*, *Wicked* and more. My love for musical theatre extended outside the boundaries of the Netherlands, and I started listening to soundtracks of American and British productions, and when I went to London in 2016, I saw a production of *Kinky Boots*. I was blown away by the energy and the quality of this production, so when I had to pick a topic for my bachelor's thesis, I decided I would try my hand at musical translation. I chose *Kinky Boots* as the subject; the music in this production varies in genre and content, which makes it interesting to translate.

*Kinky Boots* tells the story of Charlie Price, who is the son of a shoe factory owner. His father would love for him to take over the family business, but Charlie does not want to make shoes; he and his fiancée leave for London to leave that world behind. But then, Charlie's father passes away, and the factory workers turn to him to lead the factory. He finds out the factory is in dire financial need, and Charlie tries to figure out how to save the factory. He encounters a drag queen, Lola, who tells him that the heels of her boots always break, so Charlie decides to start manufacturing boots specifically for drag queens.

This musical deals with themes that are relevant in the Netherlands today. Research from the Social and Cultural Plan Bureau shows that lgbt<sup>1</sup>-people are still more likely to be harassed on the street, deal with psychological problems and attempt suicide than heterosexuals, despite the generally accepting image of the Netherlands. Drag queens were not considered in this report, but are often considered to belong to the lgbt-community (Covington). The research found that the Dutch youth mostly accepts gay people when they at least behave manly, and lesbians when they behave feminine (ed. Keuzenkamp 22). Drag queens of course do not fit this norm: dressing up as a woman is not traditionally considered a masculine thing to do. There are reports of violence against drag queens (Janssen), even though the drag scene is fairly small in the Netherlands.

*Kinky Boots'* central theme is acceptance. As it is said in the final song: "Accept yourself and you'll accept others too!" ("Raise You Up/Just Be"). The two main characters, Charlie and Lola, are both dealing with the expectations their fathers had for them, and how they are viewed by the people around them. I believe that if this musical were performed in the Netherlands, it would have a positive impact on the way drag queens (and perhaps gay people) are viewed in this country. That is why I translated a number of songs from this musical, as if they would be performed on stage in the Netherlands.

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<sup>1</sup> Acronym that stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual.

# The Theory of Translating Musicals

Little research has been done on the topic of translating lyrics in general, and even less on the translation of musicals. Peter Low is one of the only researchers who has written extensively on the subject. His pentathlon approach to translating singable texts has been the basis for most other works of literature on the subject; this approach is a good foundation for both the act of translating songs, and discussing existing translations.

What does the Low pentathlon approach entail? There are five main issues to consider: singability, sense, naturalness, rhythm, and rhyme. When translating a song, one should try to score highly on all of these criteria, but never at the expense of the translation as a whole. Therefore, it is sometimes better to get a lower score on a certain element, so that the rest of the translation will be better. This approach gives translators the freedom to emphasize a certain aspect, for example if they want to make a perfectly rhyming translation, or convey the exact content of a song. I will discuss these criteria in detail below.

## Singability

Besides rhythm, naturalness and rhyme, which are all discussed separately but also contribute to the singability of a text, this aspect deals with phonology. Low describes singability as “relative ease of articulation” (81). To really understand the demands of this criterion, one has to know some things about singing: how often does one need to breathe, and at which points in the song is there room to do it; what notes can or cannot be sung on certain notes. “The ideal translation, according to one singer, will have the same mouth-feel as the original: there will be matching of long vowels to long vowels, short vowels to short, single consonants to single consonants,” (Low 81-82). The perfect singable translation would be a “homophonic translation, in which a source text is translated not for its sense (as in interlingual translation) but for its sound. The sound qualities are transmuted into their sonorous equivalents within the target text” (Hilson 95). This kind of translation is of course not suitable for the musical stage, since sense does need to be

conveyed as well. However, the sonorous elements cannot be neglected either. Martine Bijl gives a great example of how this aspect can influence a translation: “Simone Kleinsma may sing like a nightingale, but if I make her sing the word *bewolkt* on a high, long endnote, she’ll never want to talk to me again,”<sup>2</sup> (3). She is probably correct; the word *bewolkt* (clouded) has a cluster of three consonants as its coda, and the vowel is short and closed. Both of these aspects make it very difficult to sing at the end of a line, which prefers long open vowels and no or a short coda. As Low mentions, some people interpret this as meaning that all long open vowels from a source text must always be kept, but he disagrees; restrictive rules only damage the translation as a whole (81).

Singability is perhaps more important with musicals than with some other genres of music. Performers on stage do not have the luxury of doing additional takes if they stumble over a certain line; everything can only be sung once, and the meaning must be made clear from that one take. If the lyrics are too hard to sing, the song (and therefore perhaps the entire show) could never be successful.

### Sense

Sense denotes the semantic matters that are so important in literary translating: meaning, content and intent (Low 87). It may be necessary at times to change the meaning of lyrics. “In making singable translations, you need to widen your notion of a synonym, and you may choose not a normal dictionary but a more accommodating word-list such as a thesaurus,” (Low 87). In the field of musical translation, the importance of this aspect cannot be understated. In musicals, every song conveys important information; the plot is moved forward by the songs, and omitting any would hurt the narrative. Not even operas place as much importance on individual songs; many arias are sung not to convey important information, but to showcase the vocal capacities of the singer (Herman and Apter 13). These songs are often very repetitive, and don’t add anything to the story; the singer

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<sup>2</sup> “Simone Kleinsma zingt als een leeuwerik, maar als ik haar op een hoge, lange eindnoot het woord *bewolkt* laat zingen, dan wil Simone Kleinsma mij nooit meer zien.”

expresses a single emotion, and after the aria the story moves on. In musicals, this lack of narrative content is never the case. Even though some songs could theoretically be cut, these songs often provide background information or character development, which make a story more realistic. An example is “That’s Rich” in *Newsies*; this is a cabaret-style song, sung by a minor character who barely appears in the show and has little relevance to the plot. However, the song does ground the narrative in the time period in which it is set, and serves as a peaceful transition between hectic scenes.

Because sense is so vital in musical translation, it is important to emphasize that sense is not merely meaning. If one were to translate a song as literally as possible, not only would that result in a (most likely) unsingable, non-rhyming, arrhythmic text, but some of the inherent meaning could get lost in the process as well. Different characters use different idioms, and if one person calls something a dog and the other calls it a hound, these word choices are significant. The same goes for intent. However, the context of certain lines can change with time. Take for example this line from *Into the Heights*: “Donald Trump and I on the links and he’s my caddy!” (“96.000”). This musical came out in 2008 and is set in New York, where Donald Trump was known as a wealthy businessman. The character who raps this line is describing what he would do if he won the lottery, and jokes about the stereotype of black men serving as caddies for white billionaires. However, in 2017, the association most people have with Donald Trump has changed drastically, something that needs to be considered. It might not be problematic to use Mr. Trump’s name, but the response will not be the same as the original audience had.

### Naturalness

Naturalness means that the target text seems as if it could have been created spontaneously in the target language. “Translations which sound translated – sometimes called overt translations – do not work properly in performance,” (Low 88). Therefore one should try to write a text that fits the norms of the target language. This does not only mean writing correct Dutch, but also avoiding



archaic words, or words that do not fit in a character's dialect. In some cases, this effort might even result in using incorrect Dutch, to signal something about the character who sings these words. If Billy Elliot (the title character of the musical of the same name), a working class boy from north-eastern England, spoke flawless AN (general Dutch), that would not make any sense for his character.

The issue of domestication or foreignization can also be covered under this heading. Names, place names and culture-specific elements are often mentioned in lyrics, and the translator has to make a decision: either to change such elements to increase the understanding of the audience, or to keep them as they are (Holmes 185). There is no literal translation for 'boot boys' ('Merry Christmas Maggie Thatcher', *Billy Elliot*), so how does one handle this term? Would it be more natural to find a term that a Dutch audience would understand, or to keep this word that matches the idiolect of the characters in *Billy Elliot*? James S. Holmes envisioned two axes to consider: domestication vs foreignization, and historicization vs modernization (to keep outdated elements or to bring the story to the present) (186). Every translational choice falls somewhere on this grid. Usually, these kinds of choices cannot be made for an entire musical, and cases will have to be considered individually. An extra challenge can be found in the fact that musicals are performed, and of course the theater in which they are performed is located somewhere as well. Take for example the musical *Hamilton*, which premiered at the off-Broadway Public Theater in New York, before moving to a bigger stage on Broadway. In the show, there is a line that goes as follows: "Ladies and gentlemen! You could have been anywhere in the world tonight, but you're here with us in New York City. Are you ready for a cabinet meeting?" ("Cabinet Battle #1", *Hamilton*) These lines are spoken by a character standing front center stage. He both addresses the characters, who are in New York City at the moment in the play, but also the audience. There are several features of these lines that indicate that this is indeed a fourth wall break: there were most likely no women at a cabinet meeting in 1789 (so he would not need to address them), and it would be strange to tell his fellow cabinet members they could have been anywhere, when it was their job to be there at that time. If one were to translate this song, the

duality of this line would get lost; the target text would always lose either New York City, the location of the characters, or the location of the theater in which it is performed.

### Rhythm

Rhythm in this case does not mean the natural rhythm of speech, but rather musical rhythm: the rhythm of the existing music, fitted in measures and beats (Low 95). Music can be set to match the meter of the lyrics, but this is rarely the case in musical theater. Take for example the following line from *Kinky Boots*: “Charlie, honestly,” (“The History of Wrong Guys”). This line contains 5 syllables, but is spread over 13 musical notes. Being aware of the musical rhythm eases the job of the translator: knowing that a syllable can be split since it is sung over multiple notes, or that a rest can be omitted to make room for an extra note, is valuable information. It is also important to be distinct between stressed and unstressed syllables: usually, the melody of a song is matched to the natural stress pattern of the language in which the song is sung. When translating, “[e]ven when a line of the [target text] has the same syllable count as the [source text], its accents often fall on inappropriate words, such as articles or short prepositions,” (Low 96). This means that some syllables can get either too much or too little stress, which makes a line sound very unnatural. As Johan Franzon states: “In general, the longer the musical lines, the easier it may be for translators to accommodate the syntax of their particular language, perhaps allowing a fairly close translation by moving a few words around,” (387). This has proven true in my experience.

As opera translators Herman and Apter mention, the musical phrasing and the verbal phrasing do not always match, which poses an extra challenge (198). Furthermore, a rhythm can change, or be inconsistent for comedic purposes. However, despite the difficulties it poses, it is unwise to deviate far from the original rhythm of a song. The rhythm is the foundation on which everything is built, so if one starts taking it apart, the song will crumble.

## Rhyme

Rhyme, out of Low's five criteria, is probably the least important. A translated song with perfect scores on all the other aspects will still be a good song, even if it does not rhyme at all. However, rhyme does have an added value. Stephen Sondheim said of Lin-Manuel Miranda (a much younger playwright-composer): "He respects and understands the value of good rhyming, without which the lines tend to flatten out. Jokes don't land the way they should. Even emotional lines don't land the way they should,". Rhyme is not necessary, but adds something to sung words that bring them to life. However, rhyme is not easily translated, since few words that rhyme in one language also rhyme in another. On top of that is masculine rhyme the norm, which requires the last syllable to be stressed; this becomes clear when considering ballads or aria's, in which many endnotes are long, extended notes that have to be stressed.

Low plainly states that "song translations do not always need as much rhyme as the [source text]," (104). He suggests to focus on the most important rhymes, i.e. the ones on the mentioned long stressed notes, and work backwards from there. If a source text has an ABAB rhyme scheme, this does not need to be reproduced in the target text; the translator could choose AABB, ABCB, or BAAB instead. He also notes that rhymes don't have to be perfect; the constraint of only wanting to use perfect rhymes is very limiting, since it leaves many words with but a handful of often overplayed rhymes. Consider the word 'love': it has been connected with 'dove' and 'glove' so often, that to use these options in a new (or translated) lyric would not be considered good songwriting.

## A sixth criterion

As both Low and Herman & Apter mention, this pentathlon approach falls a bit short when considering musicals and operas. These genres tell a story, and the ones singing are not real people: they are characters in an environment, (sometimes) with objects around them. When Eliza Hamilton sings "I'm burning the memories, burning the letters, that might have redeemed you," ("Burn", *Hamilton*), she is not being metaphorical; she actually burns the letters on stage. If the theater in

which your translation will be performed does not allow fire on stage, an alternative might have to be considered which will need to be reflected in the lyrics. This 'stage-friendliness' can be a challenge in many different ways, but is ultimately essential. If your musical or opera does not work on a stage, it does not work at all.

## Source text analysis

On the topic of translational problems, Christiane Nord distinguishes four categories: pragmatic, culture-specific, language-pair specific and text-specific problems (147). I will discuss each individually below.

### Pragmatic problems

Pragmatic translation problems arise when there is a difference between the expected general knowledge of the new audience and the original one. For example, in the 1950's, segregation shaped day-to-day life in America. If a writer wrote about the world around him, he would not think about how this segregation influenced his life or that of others, because it was just a fact of life; the same would be true for his audience. Nowadays, this segregation would stand out in his work, and some terms might not be familiar to a contemporary audience. This knowledge divide can also be seen across cultures: most Dutch people might know who Gerard Joling is, but if one were to ask an American who he was he would be lost.

There are few, if any pragmatic translation problems in the five songs I have translated. There are two literary allusions that might qualify; one is the use of the word 'albatross' ("Not My Father's Son"), which is a reference to Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, and the other is the use of the term star-crossed lovers ("The History of Wrong Guys"), which was coined in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. Though these are English characters referring to English writers, I doubt these would be considered pragmatic problems; not knowing where these phrases come from does not harm the understanding of the text. There is also no time-period divide; *Kinky Boots* first appeared in 2012, and common knowledge from five years ago is still most likely understood today.

### Culture-specific problems

The next kind of problems are culture-specific. These include such aspects of a culture like measuring units, courtesy conventions and what holidays are celebrated. These problems can be

found quite easily when translating American texts; America does not use the metric system, and the English language lacks the distinction between a formal and informal 'you'. However, in *Kinky Boots*, this does not raise any problems. There are some dialogues, especially in the opening number, where the choice between the formal 'u' and informal 'jij' needs to be made. However, these dialogues are always between people whose relationship makes it very clear which word needs to be used: a father and his son, a man and his fiancée, a father and his son again. No one would doubt which translation of 'you' needs to be used here. The only slightly ambiguous instance is the jingle at the very start of the musical, where 'you' and 'your' are said multiple times. However, the tone, word-choice and archaic sound of the music points towards 'u'. Another potential problem were the shoe brands in "Sex is in the Heel": Jimmy Choo, Manolo (Blahnik), and Prada. However, none of these are originally American, and Dutch fashion-enthusiasts will be just as familiar with these names as an American.

#### Language pair-specific problems

The third kind of problems is language pair-specific translation problems. These are found in the grammar and structure of a language. This is the kind of problem that is abundant in *Kinky Boots*. The rhythmical constraints of lyrics means that problems arise when words like the following are used:

- World (wereld)
- Beautiful (mooi)
- Shoes (schoenen)
- Honestly (eerlijk, eerlijk gezegd)
- I'm (ik ben) (and any other contractions)

All of these words are used multiple times, and they are all either longer or shorter than their Dutch equivalents. Most often the latter is the case, which can force a translator to add syllables or completely change the structure of the sentence. In the case of 'the most beautiful thing in the world', which is repeated numerous times in the first song, the literal Dutch 'het mooiste ding in de wereld' is a syllable short, sounds unnatural, and completely disrupts the rhythm of the line. To

match the stress on the last syllable, I decided to use the slightly archaic and poetic word 'aard'. This word does not fit very well in the style of the musical as a whole, but since the first person to use the phrase is the older and old-fashioned Mr. Price, I feel it is a suitable choice.

### Text-specific problems

Text-specific translation problems are those that appear in a specific text, but that are not relevant for other texts. For text-specific problems one needs to take a closer look than the musical as a whole; each song has a different place in the musical, some differ in musical genre, and they are sung by different characters. Therefore, I will discuss some pressing problems that arise with each individual song in the introduction to the translation.

## Price and Son Theme/The Most Beautiful Thing in the World

This is the opening song, in which most the main characters are presented to us. It is the longest of the songs that I translated; however, much of it is repetition or dialogue, so it was not the hardest to translate. The song consists of two parts: the Price and Son Theme, a classic jingle, and the main song, which acts as a prologue to the story.

The jingle sets the scene: we are at the Price & Son factory, it has been making shoes for quite some time (which can be seen by the set of the factory, and heard in the datedness of the music). After this opening, we learn everything we need to know before the story truly begins: Charlie didn't want to make shoes, Nicola pushed him to go to London, and we see Lola when she was still a child. Everything that happens during this song is background information. Thankfully, much is conveyed through dialogue. The dialogue in this (and other songs) still has to be spoken within a certain timeframe, but it is of course less demanding to translate than actual lyrics.

The challenge in this song lies in giving the characters different voices. Since so many characters have singing and speaking roles, it becomes more important to make sure they don't all have the same idiolect. I tried to convey this by using slightly different word choices, but besides the regular constraints of translating song, this may not have been very successful.



## Price and Son Theme/Het Mooiste Ding hier op Aard'

### Ensemble

Vouw uw voet in Price and Son,  
ons werk is schoon en sterk.  
Duurzaam en pragmatisch,  
fraai, maar ook voor 't zware werk.  
Als u loopt of wandelt,  
fietst of slentert in de zon,  
de slimme schoen voor elk seizoen  
is Price and Son.

Trust your feet in Price and Son.  
Our work is tried and true.  
Practical, pragmatical,  
steadfast, and sturdy too.  
If you stroll or saunter  
and/or bike, jog, hike, or run,  
the prudent shoe for you to choose  
is Price and Son.

### Mr. Price

Je denkt nu, schoonheid zit in zang en zomers,  
  
of in het zonlicht op het lentegroen.  
Maar kijk vooruit, en wees geen dromer,  
je vindt die schoonheid en die luxe in een...  
*Weet je wat het mooiste ding hier op aard' is  
Charlie?*

You might think beauty comes in spring and  
sparrow,  
or when the sunrise hits the morning dew.  
But if you walk the straight and narrow,  
you'll find the elegance and comfort is a...  
*Do you know what the most beautiful thing in the  
world is, Charlie?*

### Jonge Charlie

Een schoen!

A shoe!

### Mr. Price

Het mooiste ding hier op aard',  
het mooiste ding hier op aard',  
Charlie dat ik ken, zing Charlie!

The most beautiful thing in the world,  
the most beautiful thing in the world,  
Charlie, that I know. Sing it, Charlie!

### Beiden

Het mooiste ding hier op aard',  
het mooiste ding hier op aard',

The most beautiful thing in the world,  
the most beautiful thing in the world,

### Mr. Price

Charlie, 't is o zo mooi.

Charlie it's beautiful.

Vier generaties liepen dit pad hier voor jou.  
Als mijn tijd op is, krijg jij dit gebouw.  
En er zit waarheid in

Four generations have paved the way before you.  
You'll be next in line when my time is through.  
And there's a saying

gezegdes die hier rond doen:<sup>3</sup>  
je leest de waarde van een man af aan zijn...

handed down I've found of value.  
That you can tell about the fella from his...

Jonge Charlie

Schoen!

Shoe!

Mr. Price & Ensemble

Het mooiste ding hier op aard',  
het mooiste ding hier op aard',  
Charlie, dat ik ken, ik ken.  
Het mooiste ding hier op aard',  
het mooiste ding hier op aard',  
Charlie het is zo mooi!  
't is o zo mooi!

The most beautiful thing in the world,  
the most beautiful thing in the world,  
Charlie, that I know, I know.  
The most beautiful thing in the world,  
the most beautiful thing in the world,  
Charlie, it's beautiful!  
It's beautiful!

Jonge Charlie: *Maar, wat als ik geen schoenen wil maken?*

*But, what if I don't want to make shoes?*

Mr. Price: *Je bent een grappig kind, jij.*

*You're a right funny kid, you are.*

Ensemble

Ooooooooooh  
Ooooooooooh  
Ahhhhhh

Ooooooooooh  
Ooooooooooh  
Ahhhhhh

Het mooiste ding hier op aard',  
het mooiste ding hier op aard',  
Charlie, dat ik ken, ik ken.  
Het mooiste ding hier op aard',  
het mooiste ding hier op aard',  
Charlie, het is zo mooi!  
't is o zo mooi!

The most beautiful thing in the world,  
the most beautiful thing in the world,  
Charlie, that I know, I know.  
The most beautiful thing in the world,  
the most beautiful thing in the world,  
Charlie, it's beautiful!  
It's beautiful!

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<sup>3</sup> I originally had 'die hier de ronde doen', but the stress pattern did not allow this. I considered 'die hier rond gaan', which fits the stress pattern, but this took away the important rhyme -oen that was needed to connect to 'schoen'. I decided to merge the two expressions, into a non-existent, but still logically sounding idiom, which preserves the meaning, the stress pattern of the line and the rhyme.

### Jonge Simon

Alsof ik dans hoog boven alle mensen,  
of dat ik wegzweef, hoef nooit meer iets te doen.  
Voel me een vogel, heb niets meer te wensen,  
ja magie lijkt echt te bestaan in deze...

Feels like I'm dancing across the high wire.  
Or bravely soaring off into the blue;  
Just like a rocket looks with sparks and fire.  
Feels like the magic never ends inside these...

### Simons vader

*Haal die dingen van je voeten en kom naar binnen,  
stom joch!*

*Take those things off your feet and get inside here,  
you stupid boy!*

Nicola: *Charlie, hier zijn de schoenen waar ik je  
over vertelde, kom eens kijken. Zijn ze niet  
geweldig? Als jij met me naar het altaar wilt lopen,  
moet je eerst voor deze schoenen aan mijn voeten  
zorgen.*

*Charlie, here are the shoes I told you about! Come  
have a look-see! Aren't they the most necessary  
things ever? If you want to slip a ring on my finger,  
you'll first slip these shoes on my feet.*

Charlie: *Een tikkeltje chique voor het leven in North  
Hampton, vind je niet?*

*It's a tad posh for life in Northampton, wouldn't  
you say?*

Nicola: *Dan is het maar goed dat we naar Londen  
gaan! En is het geen passend afscheid van de stank  
van boerderijen en fabrieksleer? We zijn dan wel in  
een klein stadje geboren, maar dat wil niet zeggen  
dat we daar ook moeten blijven!*

*Then good thing we're moving to London!  
And won't they make a fittin' farewell to the stink  
of cattle farms and tanning leather?*

Charlie: *Zie je die prijs? Dat is drie maanden huur!*

*Oh, we may have been born in a small factory  
town, but we sure as hell don't have to die there!*

Nicola: *Pik ze of koop ze, dat is jouw keus, maar  
deze schoenen liggen in mijn toekomst.*

*You see the price? There's three months' rent!  
Pinch 'em or pay for 'em, that is up to you, but  
these shoes are in my future!*

Opnieuw beginnen,  
een mooie nieuwe start.  
We laten alles hier,  
tot ziens leer, bruin en zwart.  
Totdat je nergens meer iets ziet  
van alles wat ik achterliet,  
en het begint hier allemaal met deze *schoen!*

To new beginnings,  
hello to sunny days.  
We're upward mobile now,  
goodbye to small town ways.  
'Til it's impossible to find  
a trace of what we left behind.  
And the defining element is in these *shoes!*

### Nicola & ensemble

Het mooiste ding hier op aard',  
het mooiste ding hier op aard',  
Charlie, dat ik ken, ik ken.

The most beautiful thing in the world,  
the most beautiful thing in the world,  
Charlie, that I know, I know.

Het mooiste ding hier op aard',  
het mooiste ding hier op aard',  
Charlie, het is zo mooi!  
't is o zo mooi!

Mr. Price: *Jouw leven en toekomst zijn hier, in deze  
fabriek. Je hoort hier thuis!*

Charlie: *Nee pa, ik hoor bij Nicola in Londen!*

Mr. Price: *Nee, je hoort hier.*

Charlie: *Een toast op mijn toekomst?*

Mr. Price: *Maar je verlaat je huis en haard voor een  
winkelbaantje in Londen!*

Charlie: *Marketing, pa. Richard Bailey heeft Nicola  
en mij banen aangeboden in vastgoedmarketing.*

Mr. Price: *Je breekt m'n hart, Charlie.*

Charlie: *Op jou, pa.*

Mr. Price: *Schoenen helpen een man op weg, maar  
alleen zijn hart bepaalt de route. En dus, een toast  
op onze Charlie. Op dat je schoenen hun weg altijd  
terug naar huis zullen vinden.*

#### Ensemble

Op Charlie!  
Het is zo mooi!  
't is o zo mooi!  
Op Charlie!  
Het is zo mooi!  
't is o zo mooi!  
Op Charlie!

#### Mr. Price

De schoen is deel van onze thuisgeschiedenis.

#### Nicola

Die schoenen leiden mij uit deze duisternis.

#### Jonge Simon

Alsof ik wegzweef!

#### Mr. Price

De schoen is deel van onze thuisgeschiedenis.

The most beautiful thing in the world,  
the most beautiful thing in the world,  
Charlie, it's beautiful!  
It's beautiful!

*Your life, your future, is right here at this factory!  
You belong here!*

*No Dad, I belong with Nicola in London!*

*No, you belong here.*

*Will you toast my journey?*

*But to leave your home and family for a job  
shopping in London!*

*Marketing, Dad. Richard Bailey has offered Nicola  
and me positions marketing real estate.*

*You're breaking my heart, Charlie.*

*To you, Dad.*

*Shoes can protect a man's journey, but only his  
heart can choose the path. And so, a toast to our  
own Charlie. May you never fail to point your shoes  
back home.*

To Charlie!  
It's beautiful!  
It's beautiful!  
To Charlie!  
It's beautiful!  
It's beautiful!  
To Charlie!

These shoes are symbols of our family's history.

These shoes will carry me to where I wanna be.

Feels like I'm dancing!

These shoes are symbols of our family's history.

Nicola

Die schoenen leiden mij uit deze duisternis.

These shoes will carry me to where I wanna be.

Jonge Simon

Jullie gaan nergens heen want jullie zijn van mij!

Don't you go anywhere 'cause you belong to me!

Charlie

*Jongens, jullie hebben het over schoenen!*

*You all do realize you're talking about shoes?*

Ensemble

Het mooiste ding hier op aard',  
het mooiste ding hier op aard',  
Charlie, 't is o zo mooi! (o zo mooi)  
't is o zo mooi! (o zo mooi)

The most beautiful thing in the world,  
the most beautiful thing in the world,  
Charlie, it's beautiful! (Beautiful!)  
Beautiful! (Beautiful!)

Het mooiste ding hier op aard',  
het mooiste ding hier op aard',  
Charlie, dat ik ken, ik ken.  
Het mooiste ding hier op aard',  
het mooiste ding hier op aard',  
Charlie, het is zo mooi!  
Het is zo mooi!  
Het is zo mooi!  
't is o zo mooi!

Beautiful thing in the world,  
the most beautiful thing in the world,  
Charlie, that I know, I know.  
The most beautiful thing in the world,  
the most beautiful thing in the world,  
Charlie, it's beautiful!  
It's beautiful!  
It's beautiful!  
It's beautiful!

## Sex is in the Heel

“Sex is in the Heel” is the song in which Lola explains her vision of how boots are to be made. After she and Charlie met, and he had agreed to design a boot for her, Charlie made a flat, burgundy boot, instead of the red stiletto that Lola wanted. This song is Lola’s attempt to convince Charlie of the importance of heels on boots. Charlie is skeptical about the possibility of producing stiletto’s, but George (one of the factory workers) assures him that it can be done, and so Lola joins the creative team of Price & Son.

This song is one of the most up-beat, dance-centric songs in the entire musical, which means that the lyrics matter less than rhythm and singability. Without having the text to read, some of the lyrics of the original English are unintelligible. However, that does not matter, so long as the message comes across: we need boots with heels! That does not mean that no other information is conveyed in the song: numerous reasons are given as to why stiletto’s are essential, but the central message remains the same. Since this is quite a long song for such a simple message, it has little difficulty conveying that message.

One of the most difficult parts of this song is the ‘rap’ from Pat, in which she explains the scientific view on heels. The verse is rather fast, and as I mentioned in chapter two, many Dutch words are longer than their English counterparts. I eventually managed to make a translation that can be rapped in the same time, but the rhyme that was in the original did not survive.

## Seks zit in de Hak

### Lola

De seks zit in de hak, zelfs ook als ie afbreekt  
de seks zit in de hak, alles anders verbleekt  
Krik me op, maak me stukken groter.  
Til me op, hier en daar wat bloter.  
De seks zit in de hak, neem dat van mij aan.

The sex is in the heel, even if you break it.  
The sex is in the heel, honey you can't fake it.  
Jack it up, 'cause I'm no flat tire.  
Mack it up, six inches higher.  
The sex is in the heel so just embrace it.

### Lola & Angels

Van Londen tot Milaan,  
stiletto's zijn onmisbaar.  
In rood en neonlicht, geef me  
Jimmy Choo choo choo choo choo choos.  
In New York, Parijs<sup>4</sup>, Hongkong,  
schoenen zijn onmisbaar.  
Verleiding stijgt enorm,  
de hakken geven leven!

From London to Milan,  
stilettos are an ism.  
In red and neon life, gimme Jimmy Choo, choo,  
choo, choo, choo, shoes.  
In New York, Paris, Hong Kong,  
live it like an ism.  
Seduction amplified,  
the heel is the transmission!

### Pat

Volgens echte wetenschappelijke kennis  
spant de hak het been en het zitvlak gedeelte,  
tilt de bil op, en het postuur wordt  
top, en klaar voor het paarseizoen.

Asserting actual scientific reason,  
heels tense the leg and the hindquarter region  
lifting the rear and making it appear  
pert and ready for mating season.

### Lola

*Dat is de wetenschappelijke blik. maar weet je wat ik zeg?*

De seks zit in de hak, het zijn net magneten.  
De seks die maakt je zwak, en ik mag het weten.  
Krik het op, tot het lekker hoog is.  
Naar de top, het is fantastisch.

*That's the scientific view. But you know what I say?*

The sex is in the heel, fierce as you can make it.  
The sex is the appeal, kinky boys can shake it.  
Pump it up, till it's ostentatious.  
Funk it up, it's contagious.

---

<sup>4</sup> I considered using 'Paris' instead of the Dutch translation, because neither New York nor Hong Kong have a different name in Dutch (in the case of Hong Kong, only the spelling is different). Switching to Dutch in the middle of the phrase (between the English sounding names) feels slightly unnatural. However, since the Dutch names for London and Milaan are used, I decided to use 'Parijs' after all.

De seks zit in de hak, neem dat van mij aan.

The sex is in the heel so just embrace it.

Lola, Angels & vrouwen

Van Londen tot Milaan,  
voel die chique passie.  
In rood en neonlicht, nergens heen zonder  
m-m-m-mijn Manolos.  
New York, Parijs, Hongkong,  
de hak laat ze bezwijken.  
Verleiding stijgt enorm,

From London to Milan,  
feed that chic hot feeling.  
In red and neon life won't go nowhere without  
M-m-my Manolos.  
New York, Paris, Hong Kong,  
stilettos leave 'em reeling.  
Seduction amplified,

Iedereen

de hakken gaan de lucht in,  
de hakken gaan de,  
de hakken gaan de lucht in!

the heel should hit the ceiling,  
the heel should hit the,  
the heel should hit the ceiling.

Van Londen tot Milaan,  
stiletto's zijn onmisbaar.  
In rood en neonlicht, geef me, leef met  
p-p-p-p-p-Prada.  
New York, Parijs, Hongkong,  
schoenen zijn onmisbaar .  
Verleiding stijgt enorm,  
de hakken geven leven!

From London to Milan,  
stilettos are an ism.  
In red and neon life, gotta lotta  
p-p-p-p-p-Prada  
New York, Paris, Hong Kong,  
live it like an ism.  
Seduction amplified,  
the heel is the transmission!

Lauren: *Ze zijn geweldig, ik zou ze allemaal dragen!*

*These are brilliant. I'd wear any one of them.*

Charlie: *Jij bent niet onze doelgroep.*

*You are not our niche market.*

George: *Er zijn wel wat interessante ideeën hier.*

*There are some very interesting ideas here.*

Charlie: *Het zijn allemaal stiletto's, het is fysiek onmogelijk om er een te maken die het gewicht van een volwassen man kan dragen.*

*They're all stiletto heels. It's physically impossible to make a stiletto that can bear the weight of a full-grown man.*

George: *Niet zo snel.*

*Not so fast.*

Als we er staal in doen,  
één stuk de hele schoen,  
we ondersteunen de gebreken,  
dat zelfs Don hem niet kan breken.

If we could mold the steel,  
one piece from ball to heel.  
We'd underpin it, and remake it,  
so not even Don could break it.



Charlie: *Sorry?*

George: *Ik zei...*

We ondersteunen de gebreken,  
dat zelfs Don hem niet kan breken.

Charlie: *Ja? Denk je?*

George: *We kunnen het!*

Lauren: *We kunnen het!*

Charlie: *We kunnen het!*

Iedereen

Van Londen tot Milaan,  
stiletto's zijn onmisbaar.  
In rood en neon licht, geef me rode  
la-la-la-la-la-laarzen.  
New York, Parijs, Hongkong.  
Watch out world,  
watch out world,  
here we come!<sup>5</sup>

*Sorry?*

*I said...*

We'd underpin it, and remake it,  
so not even Don could break it.

*Yeah? You think?*

*We can do it.*

*We can do it.*

*We can do it!*

From London to Milan,  
stilettos are an ism.  
In red and neon life, gimme big red  
boo, boo, boo, boo, boo, boo, boots.  
New York, Paris, Hong Kong,  
Watch out world,  
watch out world,  
here we come!

---

<sup>5</sup> These last two lines are tricky. Both are English idioms, and neither have a direct Dutch equivalent. These lines are sung by the entire cast of the show, and the last line ends with a long high note. I decided to leave them in English. A contemporary Dutch audience will most likely know some English, and these phrases are occasionally used in Dutch conversation. Since they have such a prominent place in the song, a lesser but still passable translation will not do: it would stand out. Therefore, I believe this is the best solution.

## The History of Wrong Guys

Lauren, who sings this song, is a secondary character, and this song functions as comic relief. She has just had a conversation with Charlie, and right after he walks away she turns to the audience and this song starts. Much of its comedy relies on the delivery of this song. Some of the mannerisms of the character are imbedded in the music and the lyrics, but to fully experience it the song needs to be performed.

Peter Newmark mentions that music and lyrics can reflect each other, and add meaning (60). In this song, we see a great example of that. After Lauren says: “used to think you were from outer space”, an alien-like sound is added to the melody, which adds to the comedy of the song. It would be a waste to lose this connection between the music and the lyrics, so a certain level of literality seems appropriate here.

The bridge of this song is also funny: it has Lauren listing the previous chapters of her history of wrong guys, each offense rhyming with the number of the chapter. This rhyme of course needed to be kept, but the song did leave room in what the actual offences were. Because this is a comedic song, I enjoyed myself rhyming with all the things that could be wrong about a potential partner.

## Het Verhaal van Foute Mannen

### Lauren

*Oh nee. Niet over nadenken! Nee nee nee, ik  
waarschuw je! Oh! Ik denk dat ik verliefd ben. Dat  
gaat niet. Volgens mij val ik op hem. Oh nee..  
Waarom niet?*

Iedereen maakt wel eens slechte keuzes,  
dat is voor niemand geheim;  
en ik denk dat jij er een van mij gaat zijn.  
Uhn-ohw.  
Dacht vroeger dat je uit de ruimte kwam,  
tot je plots'ling mijn adem ontnam.  
Je bent best leuk  
als je zo bezig bent.  
Uhn-ohw.

Maar ik ken dit toch?  
Ben ik alweer verkocht?  
Weer een nieuw deel van het verhaal van foute  
mannen.  
Je was altijd zo 'eh',  
er was niet heel veel aan.  
Maar nu ontpop je in een man  
waar ik echt voor moet gaan.

Charlie, graag of nie(t)!<sup>6 7</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> The first sentence of the chorus is the most important sentence in the song; it is more a lamentation than a regular line, in which Lauren bewails the fact that she has fallen for a taken man. There was no single satisfactory translation that captured both the sound of this cry, and the connotation of the line, so I decided to change the line for each chorus. In the first chorus, Lauren is (perhaps temporarily) unaware of the fact that Charlie is taken, so the option of him actually dating her is still on the table. The second chorus expresses the anger Lauren feels at again falling for the wrong man, and the third is despairing in tone.

<sup>7</sup> The –t is in brackets, because of all of the characters with full solo-songs, Lauren is the one

*Oh, no. you don't dare. Girl, girl, girl, I'm warning  
you! No! I think I have a crush. I can't. I think I'm  
falling for him. Oh, no. Why not?*

Women have been making bad choices  
since the beginning of time.  
Are you gonna be another one of mine?  
Uhn-ohw.  
Used to think you were from outer space.  
Who's that bright-eyed guy in your place?  
You're kind of cute  
When you're not so shy.  
Uhn-ohw.

I've been here before,  
have I come back for more?  
Another chapter in the history of wrong guys.  
You used to be so "eh,"  
a limp lackluster bore.  
But now you're changing into  
something I just can't ignore.

Charlie, honestly!

---

with the strongest accent, which adds to the comedic aspect of this song. This leads to her using some words that others would not, and dropping some word-final consonants. The –t can or cannot be sung, though omitting it would be preferred.

Waarom doe ik dit alweer?  
Is er werk'lijk meer aan jou  
dan wat ik altijd dacht?  
Waarmee verras je me nog meer?  
Oh, oh, oh!

*Hij heeft een vriendin, jij druif! Waarom zijn ze  
alleen maar aardig als ze onbereikbaar zijn?*

Ik wil niet weer voor noppes voor hem vechten.  
Daar kom ik niet overheen.  
We blijven beter vrienden.  
'k ben beter af *alleen*.  
Uhn-ohw.

Maar oh ik ken dit toch?  
Ben ik alweer verkocht?  
Weer een nieuw deel van het verhaal van foute  
mannen.  
Gister nog geen vlam,  
wat is er fout gegaan?  
Want nu heb ik een gevoel  
waar ik vol voor moet gaan!

Charlie, potverdrie!  
Waarom doe ik dit alweer?  
Oh, oh, oh!

't verhaal van foute mannen:  
Hoofdstuk één: hij's gemeen.  
Twee: heeft een zachte g.  
Drie: geen chemie.  
Vier: hij drinkt niets als bier.<sup>8</sup>  
Vijf: blijft niet van mijn lijf.  
Zes: wil een minnares,  
zoekt nog naar succes, geeft me zoveel stress,  
zit nog aan de fles, heeft geen vast adres,

I've been hurt like this before.  
Is there really more to you  
than what I always thought?  
How can you surprise me anymore?  
-ore, -ore, ore!

*He's got a girlfriend, you flake! Why are they only  
nice when they're unavailable?*

Don't want to be another star-crossed lover.  
We all know how that ends.  
I'm better off without him,  
we're better off as *friends*.  
Uhn-ohw.

But I've been here before,  
have I come back for more?  
Another chapter in the history of wrong guys.  
  
Yesterday no spark,  
no heart aching allure.  
But today I'm feeling  
something I just can't ignore.

Charlie, honestly!  
I've been hurt like this before.  
-ore, -ore, ore!

The history of wrong guys:  
Chapter one: he's a bum.  
Two: he's not into you.  
Three: he's a sleaze.  
Four: loves the girl next door.  
Five: loves the boy next door.  
Six: don't love you no more.  
makes you insecure, makes you so unsure,  
is so immature, loves his mother more,

---

<sup>8</sup> The grammatical error adds to Lauren's accent.

of... heeft al een vriendin: Nicola. a.

Charlie, kan dit nie(t)!

Waarom doe ik dit alweer?

Er is werk'lijk meer aan jou  
dan dat ik altijd dacht.

Maar nee ik doe dit echt niet meer!

Oh, oh, oh!

Trish: *Oi! Waar ga jij heen?*

Lauren: *Recht naar de top!*

or... has a girlfriend named Nicola. a.

Charlie, honestly!

I've been hurt like this before.

I can see there's more to you  
than what I always thought.

But I won't be burned anymore.

-ore, -ore, -ore!

Trish: *Eh! Where you off to?*

Lauren: *I've been executized!*

## Not My Father's Son

“Not My Father's Son” is sung by Lola. She and Charlie have agreed to work together to make boots; Lola will make the designs, and Charlie will take care of everything else. Lola shows up at the factory out of her costume; she is dressed in normal, male clothes. After being insulted by Don she runs off to the toilet, and Charlie follows her to get her to come out. They have a heart-felt conversation, and this song is part of that conversation. Lola tells Charlie about when she was a little boy. His father, who was a boxing champion, taught him to box as well, in the hope that he would stop being bullied. Only after finding drag and realizing that he needed to be true to himself, could Lola be happy. Charlie realizes that they have a lot in common; he could never live up to his father's ideal for him either. The scene ends with Lola telling Charlie her real name, Simon.

This song is a ballad, which means that it is relatively slow. On the one hand, the slow speed of this song makes it easier to make it singable; there are a lot of rests that can be played with, which means that adding or omitting notes is relatively simple. On the other hand, this pacing means that odd stresses will stand out a lot, so more than with fast songs it is important that the stresses are placed on the correct positions in the song. This high amount of rests also means that the fairly small unit of the line is oftentimes broken up in even smaller units, which can be problematic. For example, in the line “and the best part of me”, there is a rest after ‘best’; this falls in the middle of a word in my translation. My solution was to extend the syllable before the rest to replace said rest, so the syllables are still connected. Another problem is that many of the end notes in this song are long, so the rhyming elements are emphasized; therefore rhyme cannot be neglected.

In some songs, simply understanding the general sense of the song is enough; however, this is not one of those songs. Lola tells a story that is not portrayed on the stage at any time during the show, but does have consequences: when Don challenges Lola to a boxing match, it is relevant to know that she was professionally trained, and when she sings ‘Hold Me In Your Heart’ in her father's nursing

home, the audience needs to know what their relationship was like. Therefore, the meaning of the words need to be taken in close consideration.

## Niet Mijn Vaders Zoon

### Lola

Vroeger was ik klein,  
ik wou zoals hij zijn,  
deed er alles aan.  
Hij liet mij niet gaan.  
Mijn vader hoopte toen  
dat vechten mij goed zou doen.  
Als een bokskampioen, kwam het voor mij:  
hoorde ik er bij.

Zie me nu, machteloos, hou m'n adem in.  
Ik probeer eindeloos, maar het heeft toch geen zin.  
Het was nooit zo simpel, om zijn soort man te zijn.  
Mocht niet leven zonder schaamte en pijn,  
en het beste deel van mij  
zet hij zo opzij.

Ben niet mijn vaders zoon.<sup>9</sup>  
Ik ben de man niet  
waar hij van droomt.  
Met de kracht van Sparta,  
en de kalmte van Job  
doe ik nog steeds niet na  
alles waar hij voor staat.  
Zijn voorbeeld toont zich niet in mij.

Ik gaf toe aan mijn droom,  
en was eind'lijk vrij.  
Hield mezelf niet in toom  
met haar en kledij.  
Want de wereld leek beter,  
een stukje van de grond.

When I was just a kid,  
everything I did,  
was to be like him,  
under my skin.  
My father always thought,  
if I was strong and fought,  
not like some albatross, I'd begin  
to fit in.

Look at me, powerless and holding my breath.  
Trying hard to repress what scared him to death.  
It was never easy to be his type of man.  
To breathe freely was not in his plan,  
and the best part of me  
is what he wouldn't see.

I'm not my father's son.  
I'm not the image  
of what he dreamed of.  
With the strength of Sparta  
and the patience of Job,  
still couldn't be the one  
to echo what he'd done,  
and mirror what was not in me.

So I jumped in my dreams,  
and found an escape.  
Maybe I went to extremes  
of leather and lace.  
But the world seems brighter  
six inches off the ground.

---

<sup>9</sup> The rhythm of this line (with a quarter rest after the first two syllables) forced me to omit the subject of this line. Tricks to include the subject (such as adding 'k before the direct verb) damaged the singability of the line.



En de lucht leek lichter,  
ik was gezond.<sup>10</sup>  
Was niet meer vermomd.  
Wist dat ik bestond.

Ben niet mijn vaders zoon.  
Ik ben de man niet  
waar hij van droomt.  
Met de kracht van Sparta,  
en de kalmte van Job  
doe ik nog steeds niet na  
alles waar hij voor staat.  
Zijn voorbeeld toont zich niet in mij.

Al die verwachtingen heel mijn leven,  
kolkend in mijn hoofd:  
was het zat.  
Ik besepte dat ik wou zweven,  
kon me eind'lijk laten gaan,  
en zag dat het niet aan mij lag.

#### Charlie

Ben niet mijn vaders zoon  
Ik ben de man niet  
Waar hij van droomt

#### Lola

Met de kracht van Sparta

#### Lola & Charlie

En de kalmte van Job  
Doe ik nog steeds niet na  
Alles waar hij voor staat  
Zijn voorbeeld toont zich niet in mij.

And the air seemed lighter,  
I was profound.  
And I felt so proud  
just to live out loud.

I'm not my father's son.  
I'm not the image  
of what he dreamed of.  
With the strength of Sparta  
and the patience of Job,  
still couldn't be the one  
to echo what he'd done,  
and mirror what was not in me.

The endless torrent of expectations  
swirling inside my mind  
wore me down.  
I came to a realization  
and I finally turned around,  
to see that I could just be me.

I'm not my father's son.  
I'm not the image  
of what he dreamed of.

With the strength of Sparta

and the patience of Job,  
still couldn't be the one  
to echo what he'd done  
and mirror what was not in me

---

<sup>10</sup> These three lines are short and slow, which results in emphasis on the rhymes. Therefore I believe this translation absolutely needed to rhyme. The resulting lines may not be the most natural, but the song as a whole profits.

Lola

Wij zijn één, Charlie boy. Jij en ik.

*Charlie uit Northampton;*

*ik ben Simon, uit Clacton.*

We're the same, Charlie boy, you and me. *Charlie*  
*from Northampton,*

*meet Simon from Clacton.*

Charlie

*Laten we laarzen maken.*

*Let's make boots.*

## Soul of a Man

“Soul of a Man” is sung by Charlie. He is planning to reveal his new product on a fashion event in Milan, and Charlie has invested a lot of his own money to make sure things get done on time. However, he starts overworking the factory workers, constantly pushing them to work even harder on things that seem to be done well already. He gets so frustrated, that eventually he explodes and insults Lola in front of everyone. Everyone leaves, and Charlie is left alone with his thoughts.

This song is a power ballad, so just as with “Not My Father’s Son”, the rhyme and rhythm are very important. Furthermore, Charlie is in a very specific state of mind: he hates himself for what he did to his co-workers and friends, but is also disappointed and desperate that he could not save the factory. This means that some word or phrasing choices that may seem to fit, deviate from the emotions Charlie is expressing, and so cannot be used. For example, the line ‘Wat een rotjaar’ was considered for one of the verses. Charlie only blames himself for the failure however, so he would not place the blame on the year being bad. Subtle differences in tone like this would hurt the sense of the song.

Another aspect that makes this song specifically hard to translate is the fact that there are several very deliberate shoe puns in the song, too noticeable to leave out, but subtle enough to not distract too much from the gravity of the song. Since puns are untranslatable, I tried to compensate by adding a number of new shoe-related puns.

## Rots van een Man

Schoenen loodzwaar;  
ik ben niets waard,  
heb geen bezwaar.

Zit in een spiraal, draaiend omlaag!

Toekomst op het spel, maar  
het ging veel te snel.

Geen kans op herstel.

Diezelfde Charlie staat nu op straat.

Want ik word toch nooit die

rots van een man,<sup>11</sup>

waardig en sterk, als die

rots van een man.

Hij wees me op weg, als die

rots van een man,

heroïsch en wijs. Ja die

rots van een man

was mijn kampioen.

Oh wat kon ik doen?

Wat een verhaal,

zag het helemaal al, daar

I'm bad news, a

black and blues-er.

Who's a loser,

a merry-go-round spiraling down!

I'm all used up, I'm

chafed and chewed up.

Who's just screwed up,

the same old Charlie hitting the ground.

Cause I'll never be the

soul of a man,

noble and wise. Like the

soul of a man

who lifted me high. Like the

soul of a man,

heroic and true. Like the

soul of a man that I

looked up to

What else could I do?

Stupid Hubris,

no excuses

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<sup>11</sup> This translation may seem strange, but it was chosen carefully. As mentioned are there several shoe puns in this song, and the title is no exception. 'Soul' is a homophone of 'sole', the underpart of a foot or shoe. This meaning connects to the line 'who lifted me high': the sole of a shoe literally lifts the wearer higher off the ground. The translations 'ziel' and 'zool' were not satisfactory: the first one was too literal and meaningless, the second too specific and on the nose. I considered 'steun', which covered both the emotional and literal meaning, but the [ø]-vowel did not fit well in this position. Eventually, I chose 'rots'; leaning more towards the 'soul'-meaning (as in 'een rots in de branding zijn'), the fact that a rock is still a physical object brings it a little closer to the 'sole'-meaning. This translation also ties in with the same line: 'hij wees me op weg'. Stone direction markers can be found in both England and the Netherlands, so this subtle double entendre can still be found and appreciated.

sta ik voor paal.  
Wat is dit voor geknoei op mijn vaders vloer?  
Stoute schoenen aan,  
maar niet goed gegaan.  
Wat heb ik gedaan?  
Totale mislukking, ik kan dit niet!  
Hoe word ik ooit die

rots van een man,  
waardig en sterk, als die  
rots van een man.  
Hij wees me op weg, als die  
rots van een man,  
heroïsch en wijs. Ja die  
rots van een man  
was mijn kampioen.  
Oh wat kon ik -

Net als ik  
bijna ben wie ik wil zijn  
blijk ik toch een held op sokken,  
geschrokken, dus ik verdwijn  
Oh word ik ooit die

rots van een man,  
waardig en sterk, als die  
rots van een man.  
Hij wees me op weg.  
Rots van een man,  
heroïsch en wijs. Ja die  
rots van een man  
was mijn kampioen.  
Oh wat kon ik doen?

Ik ben toch niet, nee ik word toch nooit -  
Oh ik liet je in de steek.  
Whoa, rots, rots van een man.

I blew my fuses,  
I guess I'm just a ruse in my father's shoes.  
Not amusing,  
no confusing this  
streak of losing.  
Totally brutal and useless too.  
How can I be the

soul of a man,  
noble and wise. Like the  
soul of a man  
who lifted me high.  
Soul of a man,  
heroic and true. Like the  
soul of a man that I  
looked up to.  
What else could I -

Just when I'm  
reaching for that rung at the top,  
I'm that broken heel unsteady,  
and ready, ready to drop  
When will I be the

soul of a man,  
noble and wise. Like the  
soul of a man  
who lifted me high.  
Soul of a man,  
heroic and true. Like the  
soul of a man  
that I looked up to  
What else could I do

I'll never be, no I'll never be -  
I have gone and let you down  
Whoa, soul, soul of a man.

Nee het is nu echt te laat,  
zelfde Charlie staat nu op straat!

Here comes that familiar sound  
same old Charlie hitting the ground!

## Conclusion

Translating musical lyrics is an intense occupation. Besides the five pillars of Low's pentathlon there are even more issues to consider: what character is singing or speaking, what set pieces are on stage at the time, how this song ties in to the rest of the musical and more. Oftentimes, a choice had to be made between several options for a line, none of which were actually great. This led to some finished productions, that still have some significant issues. Translating songs means making compromises, and settling on a solution. However, my experience was not entirely unpleasant. Sometimes leaving a song for a couple of days opened my eyes to some ideal line I had been missing; other times, spending a lot of time and hard work on a translation payed off. I have learned that a song translation is never quite finished, and that there is always room for improvement.

Throughout the process, the literature I read on the subject of translating songs helped me immensely. Low's pentathlon approach served as the structure on which I could form my translations, and other writers brought my attention to certain problems or opportunities that I might not have considered otherwise. I have gained even more respect for the translators who allowed foreign musicals to be performed on a Dutch stage than I already had. Making a good musical translation is hard, and Seth Gaaikema and Martine Bijl have managed to do so on multiple occasions.

The reason I included the sheet music for my translations is because the music is as important as the lyrics. The music dictates the amount of space there is to change the length of lines, sets the tone for the song, and sometimes directly relates to the meaning of the words. The sheet music is no substitution for watching or hearing the song performed, but it gives some insight in the changes made to the music, that cannot be understood from simply looking at the text. Other aspects of a musical song performed are also missing: costumes, sets and choreography, among

others, could not be included in this thesis, which limits the experience. However, the first step is the translated lyrics, and these at least I could provide.

I hope you enjoyed my bachelor's thesis.



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