

## Key Scenes in *X: The Life and Times of Malcom X*

Video excerpts and timestamps are pulled from the Metropolitan Opera on Demand.  
Performance Date: Nov. 18, 2023

### KEY SCENE #1: Act I, Scene 1: A man was on the tracks (Reverend Little is Dead)

[Met Opera on Demand](#): Track #6. Act I: A man was on the tracks (Reverend Little is Dead)

00:00 – 02:43

The police arrive at the Little family home with news that Reverend Little, Malcolm's father, was found dead on the train tracks. A family friend breaks the news to Louise Little.

#### Libretto Excerpt

MEN

A man was on the tracks.  
A streetcar ran him down.  
Reverend Little is dead.  
He says that Earl was on the tracks.  
He says the streetcar ran him down.  
A white man cut him down  
Some white men cut him down.  
They pushed him on the tracks.  
These devils hunt us down... like cursed dogs.

LOUISE

The air seems thin and fragile.  
In these twilight hours,  
every light's a fire, fire  
Now mine tonight

MEN

They pushed him on the tracks.  
Those devils dressed in white  
They want to kill us all without a fight  
They killed his brothers too.  
It could be me or you.  
Hung one high in Georgia!  
Shot one dead up north.  
Murdered one low in the night  
and Earl tonight.  
Some white men cut him down.  
They pushed him on the tracks.  
These devils hunt us down... like cursed dogs.

## KEY SCENE #2: Act II, Scene 2: You are not empty

Met Opera on Demand: Track #16. ACT II: You are not empty

00:00 – 5:45

After studying the Koran and the teachings of the Nation of Islam during his time in prison, Malcolm leaves and meets with the leader of the Nation, Elijah Muhammed. Elijah tells Malcolm to denounce his last name inherited from a history of enslavement and replace it with an X. Thus, Malcom X is born.

### Libretto Excerpt

ELIJAH

Malcolm,  
who have you been?  
Malcolm,  
from where do you come?  
Why are you so thirsty and worn?  
Who would you be?

MALCOLM

I came from a desert  
of pain and remorse,  
from slavery, exile,  
from jail's brute force.

ELIJAH

Who would you be?

MALCOLM

I would just be a man  
who knows right and wrong,  
who knows the past was stolen away.

ELIJAH

A life we see.  
A reason to be.  
But who will you be?

MALCOLM

My name means nothing.

ELIJAH

An "X" you must claim.

MALCOLM

My name means I was a slave.

ELIJAH

An “X” you must claim  
for what was lost –  
your African name,  
an ocean crossed.  
An “X” will stand  
until God returns  
to speak a name  
that will be yours.  
Come, Malcolm X,  
let me teach you.  
*Allahu-Akbar*  
Allah is the greatest.  
Let me teach you.

ELIJAH

As Salaam-Alaikum,  
Peace be unto you.

MALCOLM

Wa-Alaikum-Salaam,  
and unto you be peace.

### **KEY SCENE #3: Act III, Scene 4: I have learned so much in Africa**

[Met Opera on Demand](#): Track #30. ACT III: I have learned so much in Africa  
00:00 – 5:39

Not long before his assassination, Malcolm X speaks to his newly founded Organization of Afro-American Unity. He shares what he learned in Africa—that their struggle connects to a larger, global fight against colonialism and racism. Though he’s warned of threats against his life, Malcolm stands firm, unaffected by the fear surrounding him.

Libretto Excerpt

MALCOLM

I have learned so much in Africa.  
We’re apart of something so big,  
a movement spanning the globe.  
We’re freedom fighters all,  
from here to Angola,  
Mozambique, Ghana,  
Zimbabwe, South Africa.  
Chosen, destined by guns to fall...  
Ballots or bullets, your call!  
This is not race revolt.

Settlers came, took the ground  
from Black, Yellow folks, and Brown.  
A global struggle is now on.  
The settlers' power will come down.  
Human rights for all, not just some!  
We have the right to self-defense.  
We're done with slavers' crumbs,  
promises, and small reforms.  
We're sick from deaths of daughters,  
from burying our sons.  
The world hears our call  
in our loss and pain.  
We hear them all.  
We must aim well for freedom.  
Cards teeter and fall.  
The house collapses.

REGINALD

Who set the bomb –  
destroyed your home?  
Men are hunting you down.  
Where will you go?

MALCOLM

We've been hunted before  
by men who hid in darkness.  
There is nowhere to hide.  
We do not know  
which mask evil wears.  
These men don't wear white hoods  
but hide on the street in suits.

BETTY

Who set the bomb,  
destroyed our home?  
Men are hunting you down.  
Where can we go?  
America is a house of glass.  
Anyone can see the violence inside.  
Bricks fly to the walls.  
The roof shatters.  
The Nation is a house of cards.  
Men like Malcolm push too far.  
Men like Malcolm light the match!

*Libretto excerpts courtesy of Seattle Opera.*

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