

## Key Scenes in Blanchard's *Champion: An Opera in Jazz*

Video excerpts and timestamps are pulled from the Metropolitan Opera on Demand.  
Performance Date: Apr. 29, 2023

**Content Warning:** While the selected scene excerpts from *Champion* contain minimal inappropriate language, please be aware that the full work includes themes of adult content and language. Please review the material and provide appropriate context to ensure it aligns with the needs and maturity of students.

### KEY SCENE #1: Act I, Scene 8: Hey Mr. Albert

[Met Opera on Demand](#): Track #12. ACT I: Hey Mr. Albert  
00:00 – 3:43

Emile relocates to New York from the U.S. Virgin Islands in search of his mother, Emelda. When he finally finds her. Determined to help Emile find work, she introduces him to Howie Albert, a hat manufacturer. Howie quickly notices Emile's athletic build and, seeing potential, decides to train him as a boxer.

#### Libretto Excerpt

EMELDA  
Hey, Mr. Albert,  
Look what this boy can, Mr. Albert.

HOWIE  
You telling me  
You made this hat, kid?

YOUNG EMILE  
Oh, yeah. I make hats all the time.

EMELDA  
Hey, Mr. Albert,  
You give this boy a job, Mr. Albert.

HOWIE  
You telling me  
This is a boy, lady?  
This ain't no body, lady.  
Where'd you get a body like that, kid?

YOUNG EMILE  
Cinder blocks.

HOWIE

You telling me  
Cinder blocks, kid.  
What does that mean, cinder blocks?  
What do you mean saying cinder blocks, kid?

EMELDA

Hey, Mr. Albert,  
Never mind what he means, Mr. Albert.  
This boy with the body  
He needs a job, Mr. Albert.

HOWIE

You're telling me  
A kid with a body like that,  
Built like a brick shithouse,  
You're telling me  
This kid wants to fiddle with felt  
And lace and little fake flowers,  
You telling me  
That's what this kid wants?

EMELDA

Hey, Mr. Albert  
If that's the job you got, Mr. Albert,  
This boy with the body  
Will take that job, Mr. Albert.

*Then SPOKEN....*

HOWIE

Let me change the subject for a minute.  
Let me as you this.  
You ever done any boxing, kid?

YOUNG EMILE

Sure. I make them hats and then I  
put them in a box. Like that.  
You need a boxer?  
I can box a hate like nobody's business.

HOWIE

Yeah. But can you box a man?

YOUNG EMILE

I can box a man, too,  
if you got a big enough box.

*Howie laughs.*

*Then SINGING again....*

HOWIE

What I got is a big enough idea.  
And what you got is a killer smile.  
But do you got the killer instinct,  
The will to get the job done right?  
Cause I'm sick of making hats, boy,  
And I'm telling you now that's  
What it takes to win a fight.

YOUNG EMILE

I ain't no killer, Mr. Howie.

HOWIE

Do you have the killer instinct?  
Do you have the killer rage?

YOUNG EMILE

I ain't no killer, no way.

*Howie smacks Young Emile in the face. Young Emile doesn't respond. Howie smacks him again. And again. And again. Finally Emile blocks one of the swings. Howie swings again. Young Emile blocks Howie's arm and swings back at Howie. Howie ducks. And smiles.*

HOWIE

Well...that's a start.

EMELDA

You teach him, Mr. Albert.  
And you be a smart boy and learn the ropes  
Like Tarzan on the vine.

**KEY SCENE #2: Act I, Scene 22-23: Don't listen, Emile. Don't think—In my head it happens fast**

Met Opera on Demand: Track #27. ACT I: Don't listen, Emile. Don't think—In my head it happens fast

04:56 – 07:03

During the weigh-in, Benny “Kid” Paret taunts Emile about his sexual orientation, provoking tension between the two fighters. Once in the ring, Paret continues to antagonize Emile. In a burst of fury, further encouraged by Howie’s coaching, Emile delivers seventeen blows in less than seven seconds, knocking Paret into a coma.

Libretto Excerpt

YOUNG EMILE AND EMILE

There is no sound.

There are no people I could see.

In my head, the place is empty

And there is no one there but me.

HOWIE, EMELDA AND CHORUS

There is nothing else to hear,

Nothing in your ear

But the sound of the bell.

There is no one else to see

But one man in the ring, facing you.

Only you, only me.

No one else in the world.

Nothing you can hear.

Nothing in your ear...

But the sound of the bell, now!

There's the bell.

Close your eyes, close your ears

Close your mind, and send him to hell! Now!

*Round 7 bell rings. Fight resumes up until round 12. Benny “Kid” Paret is knocked out by Emile.*

RING ANNOUNCER

Medic!

*Young Emile is declared winner of the match as Benny “Kid” Paret lays in the ring lifeless. Medics run over to Paret. Action slows to a freeze with Young Emile realizing what has happened. Emile watches from above as if he is reliving the moment.*

CHORUS

Seventeen blows in less than seven seconds, etc.

EMILE

In my head, it happens fast.

Something good turns into something that don't last.

Something good turns into something bad so fast.

In my head, it comes and goes.

One day when you have everything

One day when everything you have is gone.

Hold on to everything that's good.

Don't let it go. Don't let it disappear.

Don't let it turn around...turn around...turn around bad.

In my head...

*Bell rings. Blackout.*

**KEY SCENE #3: Act II, Scene 20: What is it you want from me? (I'm sorry)**

Met Opera on Demand: Track #47. ACT II: What is it you want from me?

00:00 – 03:02

Emile, suffering from brain trauma from his boxing career and haunted by his past, faces Benny Paret Jr. seeking forgiveness for the fatal fight that took the now young man's father.

Libretto Excerpt

BENNY PARET JR.

What is it you want from me?

Why did you want to see me, Emile?

EMILE

They never let me in to see him

To say I'm sorry, Benny.

I want to say I'm sorry.

BENNY PARET JR.

What is it you want from me?

Why did you want to see me, Emile?

EMILE

I never wanted harm to come to no one.

No, no, no.

I never wanted harm to you.

BENNY PARET JR.

Not me, Emile. Not me.

EMILE

To ask you to forgive me, Benny.

BENNY PARET JR.

Not me, Emile. Not me.

EMILE

Forgive me, Lord.

And take me to Your kingdom.

Like this, I pray.

Every day, I pray.

Every day, I went to see you

And pray, every day, I pray.

BENNY PARET JR.

Not me, Emile. Look at me.

It's not for me to say—

EMILE

To say, “forgive.”

BENNY PARET JR.

It's not for me to say, Emile.

Only you can say, “forgive.”

*They embrace. Emile playfully fake boxes with Benny Paret Jr.*

*Libretto excerpts courtesy of Boston Lyric Opera.*