

Frank Gagliano

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Today was my “Lost In The Stars” day. At other times, in this plague period (depending on the moment), song titles dropped in from my yore days and nailed the moment’s sadness: “Dancing In the Dark,” “I Have Dreamed,” Brel’s, “We’re On A Carousel,” and his, “Marieke” — even Sinatra’s 1940 days-of-innocence song of tolerance, “The House I Live In” — to name a varied few.

Today — after getting my usual dose of sad news (especially the sadness from my hometown, NYC, a now surreal landscape that my friends there call, “eerie”) — and driving through almost car-less traffic on my way to the post office (still open), and passing the closed library’s parking lot — without a car parked in it — a family group (I guess) — spread out (of course), played frisbee and gamboled on the cement, and brought on the tears. And the song, “Lost In The Stars,” dropped in.

I had seen the original 1950 Kurt Weill/Maxwell Anderson “Lost In The Stars” Broadway “music drama,” and had been overwhelmed by the experience. The lead role of Stephen Kumalo — who sings the title song — was created on Broadway by baritone Todd Duncan, who in 1935 had sung the original Porgy in “Porgy and Bess.” Kumalo, a black Anglican priest from a small South African village, experiences a crisis of faith and sings the song. Here are the last lines of the lyric: “. . . “But I’ve been walking through the night and the day/ Till my eyes get weary and my head turns grey/ And sometimes it seems maybe God’s gone away/ Forgetting the promise that we’ve heard him say/And we’re lost out here in the stars. . .”

I was to realize, much later, that a theatre song like “Lost In The Stars” had blazed the way for Claibe Richardson and me to write our “Congo Square” songs, “Despair” and “Everything Ends.”

The song, “Lost In The Stars” has become a standard. The Sinatra and Bennett recordings are wonderful. I’m sure you all have your own “drop in” songs that define your daily angst these days. I just discovered the Judy Garland version. Here’s the link to Judy’s version of this moment of lost faith (warning: be prepared to be emotionally destroyed):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GqPqux11QSE>.



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Judy Garland Lost in the Stars Judy Garland sings Kurt Weill and Maxwell Anderson's "Lost in the Stars" from Episode 24 of The Judy Garland Show.