“Center of the Universe”
an excerpt from the musical *Stop Clock*

Book by Brooke Magalis & Clayton Daniel Briggs
Music by Clayton Daniel Briggs
Lyrics by Brooke Magalis
Lights dim between Danika and Nicholas; darkness separates them. A crowd of townspeople surround Nicholas, obscuring Danika from his view: we are in a memory. As he sings, he pushes through them checking their faces—searching for Danika.

NICHOLAS
I SEARCHED FOR YEARS,
MOVED FROM TOWN TO TOWN.
I LOOKED IN EV’RY DARK SPACE,
DOUBLE-CHECKING EACH FACE
AS I CHASED DOWN EV’RY LEAD I FOUND,
WHILE THE KNOT IN MY CHEST
BURROWED ITS WAY FURTHER DOWN
INTO MY STOMACH AND DUG A PIT.
I REFUSED TO ADMIT
THAT MAYBE SHE’D NEVER BE FOUND.

He reaches the other side of the crowd only to find the edge of the light where the darkness begins. Looking across at Danika, he continues:

NICHOLAS
OF ALL THE PLACES SHE COULD BE
SHE’S IN THE HEART BOHEMIA—

ALL THIS TIME, ALL THESE FEARS,
ALL MY WORK ALL THESE YEARS,
AND SHE’S BEEN STANDING RIGHT HERE
IN THE CENTER OF THE UNIVERSE.

The townspeople reemerge, surrounding Nicholas once more. We see him pick pockets, moving quietly through the crowd.

NICHOLAS
I STOLE TOO MUCH,
FLED FROM TOWN TO TOWN.
ALWAYS TOOK A NEW ROUTE,
TROUBLE SEEKING ME OUT
AS I SEARCHED OUT EV’RY CLUE I COULD.
THERE WAS NEVER MUCH REST.
NICHOLAS (CONT’D)

I WAS WEIGHED SO FAR DOWN
BY ALL MY DOUBT AND THE STING OF LOSS,
I MADE MY WAY ACROSS
THE COUNTRY; I Couldn’T BE STOPPED.

OF ALL THE PLACES SHE COULD BE
SHE’S IN THE HEART BOHEMIA—

He takes a step into the darkness. A dim light fades up as he walks forward; the light behind him fades as he makes his way to Danika, who remains reading all the while with her back to Nicholas.

NICHOLAS

ALL THIS TIME, ALL THESE FEARS,
ALL MY WORK ALL THESE YEARS,
AND SHE’S IN TROUBLE RIGHT HERE
IN THE CENTER OF THE UNIVERSE.

Nicholas is right behind Danika now, almost singing to her. The clock tower is now lit as it was before Nicholas began singing. Danika continues reading.

NICHOLAS

IT TOOK ME TOO LONG TO FIND HER.
NOW HER MIND HAS CONFINED HER,
AND SHE ISN’T FINDING HER WAY BACK.
THE WORLD’S BEEN UNKIND TO HER,
UNFAIRLY DEFINED HER,
AND I NEED TO REMIND HER
SHE’LL BE FINE.

I NEED TO REMIND HER OF
ALL OUR TIME, ALL MY FEARS,
ALL HER WORK ALL THESE YEARS.
SHE’S BEEN STANDING RIGHT HERE FOR
ALL THIS TIME, ALL THESE YEARS
WITH THIS WORK AND HER FEARS.
SHE’S BEEN STANDING RIGHT HERE.
SHE’S THE CENTER OF THE UNIVERSE.