

Waltzing with Matthew

Lights up on a boy – MATTHEW – maybe eleven to thirteen years old – sitting at a grand piano. He's playing Chopin's "Minute Waltz." His MOTHER enters from stage right.

MOTHER: Honey, it's late. You should stop for the night.

MATTHEW: One more time? Please?

MOTHER: What's so important about practicing now? (beat) Is this about Dad?

MATTHEW: He could play the Minute Waltz in fifty-seven seconds. Before he deployed this time, I made a bet I could beat his time.

MOTHER (joining MATTHEW on the bench) It's hard with him so far away.

MATTHEW: I'm afraid.

MOTHER: Oh, me, too.

MATTHEW: No, I mean. What if... what if me not being able to beat his time means he won't come home.

MOTHER: (wrapping her arm around her son). Sweetie, whether you race through the piece in fifty-six seconds, or play it in the two minutes most people do, it won't bring your dad back sooner, or prevent him from coming home.

MATTHEW: Promise?

MOTHER: Promise. (she ruffles his hair) Want to know a secret about the Minute Waltz?

MATTHEW: Sure.

MOTHER: We all call it the Minute Waltz, but it was originally called the minute (she pronounces this 'mye-newt') waltz, because it's so short. Its other name is the Little Dog Waltz, because Chopin wrote it for a dog he loved.

MATTHEW: Seriously.

MOTHER: 'Fraid so.

MATTHEW: I still wanna try.

MOTHER: Okay. One more time... then bed.

MATTHEW: Deal.

(MATTHEW starts the piece again, racing through it, as the lights fade to blackout.)