



Ian Krouse

Night
On the
Galactic
Railroad

Cover illustration

Hiroyuki Asada watercolor

Ian Krouse

Night

On The

Galactic Railroad

An opera for young people in two acts

Libretto in English and Japanese by the composer based upon the two versions of the posthumous children's book *Ginga Tetsudō no Yoru* by Kenji Miyazawa, published in Japanese (1934), with additional passages adapted from English translations of Kenji's poetry by Hiroaki Sato (used with permission), Akiko Yosano's tanka '*koto no ne ni*,' and an anonymous tanka. Inspired by the translations by Julianne Neville, Roger Pulvers, Joseph Sigrist, and D.M. Stroud, and the animated movie version (1985) directed by Gisaburo Sugii.

Ian Krouse Music

Los Angeles, 2022

Act I

2/10/23

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Duration: 47'

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Duration: 58'

Total duration of opera 105'

Cast (in order of appearance)

TEACHER/CONDUCTOR/PALEONTOLOGIST *		Baritone
ZANELLI	A classmate of Giovanni	Treble Alto
GIOVANNI	A boy of middle school age	Soprano
FIRST PRINTER/ SIGNALMAN**		Tenor
	A tall middle-aged man, who as the Signalman, has a red, sharp pointed hat, long robe and a huge key dangling from his belt	
SECOND PRINTER/ BIRD CATCHER***		Baritone
	A portly character of indefinite age, with a bushy red beard and a tattered brown coat	
THIRD PRINTER/ FARMER****		Bass-baritone
	A man of about thirty, who as the Farmer, is dressed in the simple clothing of a Japanese peasant at the turn of the 19 th century	
GIOVANNI'S MOTHER/PILGRIM		Mezzo-soprano
	A middle-aged woman	
WIRELESS OPERATOR/CAMPANELLA'S FATHER		Bass
OLD WOMAN/MILK MAN		Tenor
CAMPANELLA*****	Giovanni's best friend	Mezzo soprano
TUTOR*****	A well-dressed young man in his late teens	Tenor
TADASHI*****	A well-dressed small boy	Treble Soprano
KAORU*****	Tadashi's sister, a well-dressed girl of about twelve	Mezzo-soprano
MASARU	A classmate of Giovanni	Actor/Chorus member

SCHOOLCHILDREN/GALACTIC CHORUS*****

Trebles

GALACTIC CHORUS

SATB*****

*The 'Teacher/Paleontologist' is based upon Albert Einstein. Several of the singers will play two (or more) characters, one in the "Third Dimension" (Earth) and a counterpart in the "Fourth Dimension" aboard the magical Galaxy Train.

**The characters 'First Printer', 'Signalman', 'Old Woman', and 'Milk Man' may all be sung by the same singer in order to create a more substantial role.

***The 'Bird Catcher' is based upon the character Papageno, from *Die Zauberflöte* of Mozart.

****The 'Farmer' is, of course, Kenji Miyazawa himself, of which there are numerous photos available for reference.

*****Campanella, who does not sing until after his death, (which we do not see) is the object of Giovanni's quest, a parallel to that of the Farmer (Miyazawa) who searching for his own deceased sister, accompanies Giovanni on his journey through the galaxy and, in the end, helps him to return home.

*****The Tutor and the two children, Kaoru, and Tadashi, are victims of the sinking of the Titanic.

*****The chorus of children should contain at least 24 voices.

*****The SATB chorus is comprised of soloists who are not appearing on stage at a given time and may be augmented by others.

Guide to the languages and terminology used in the opera

Japanese terms:

Giovanni and Campanella *san*

In Japanese, '*san*' is a title of respect added to a name. It can be used with both male and female names, and with either surnames or given names. '*San*' can also be attached to the names of occupations and titles.

Sayonara/Goodbye

Konnichiwa/Hello

Ichi ni san go roku shichi hachi gu/one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight

Okasan/Mother

Tadaima/I just returned home

Okaeri/Welcome back (a response to *tadaima*)

Itte kimasu/See you later

Itterasshai/Be safe (a response to *itte kimasu*)

Sumimasen/Please

Arigato/thank you

Konbanwa/Good evening

Amanogawa/The Milky Way

The Star Wanderer's Song by Kenji Miyazawa

あかいめだまのさそり
ひろげた鷲のつばさ
あおいめだまの小さいぬ
ひかりのへびのとぐろ
オリオンは高くうたい
つゆとしもとをおとす

アンドロメダのくもは
さかなのくちのかたち
大ぐまのあしをきたに
五つのばしたところ
小熊のひたいのうへは
そらのめぐりのめあて

<i>Akai medama no sasori</i>	Red eyed Scorpio
<i>hirogeta washi no tsubasa</i>	Spread wings of Aquila, the Eagle
<i>aoi medama no koinu</i>	Blue-eyed Canis Minor, the Little Dog
<i>hikari no hebi no toguro</i>	Coil of Serpens, the Snake of light
<i>Orion wa takaku utai</i>	Orion sings from on high
<i>tsuyu to shimo to o otosu</i>	Casting the frost and dew
<i>Andromeda no kumo wa</i>	Cloud of Andromeda
<i>sakana no kuchi no katachi</i>	Shape of a fish's mouth
<i>ōkuma no ashio kitani</i>	From Ursa Major, the Great Bear
<i>itsusu no bashita tokoro</i>	Extending its paw's length five times northwards
<i>koguma no hitai no ue wa</i>	Above Ursa Minor, the Lesser Bear's forehead
<i>sola no meguri no meate</i>	Where the guide for the Star Tour, Polaris, shines.

Tanka –Akiko Yosano

<i>koto no ne ni</i>	amidst the notes
<i>kyosho no oto no</i>	of my koto is another
<i>uchi majiru</i>	deep mysterious tone,
<i>kono ayashisa mo</i>	a sound that comes from
<i>mune no hibiki zo</i>	within my own breast

Tanka – Anonymous

<i>tsuki wa saerushi</i>	the moon is full
<i>yo wa sin sin to</i>	the night is very still
<i>kokoro bososa yo</i>	my heart beats
<i>kane no koe</i>	like a bell

Esperanto

Pliocena Marbordo/Pliocene Seashore

Italian

Rondo capriccioso, Rondo is a musical form in which a refrain occurs and reoccurs at least three times, separated by contrasting sections called episodes; capriccioso literally means capricious but when used as a musical term, whimsical would be a better equivalent

Opera, a musical form that joins theater and music, and, in some instances, (as in the present case), literature

Hebrew

Hallelujah/Praise God

Nearer, My God, To Thee – Old Protestant Hymn

English

*Nearer my God to Thee
Nearer to Thee
E'en tho' it be a cross
That raiseth me.*

Chinese

*wǒ suī liú dòng wú qīn,
hóng rì xī shěn,
hēi àn lóng zhào wǒ shēn,
yǐ shí wéi zhěn.*

[Though like the wanderer,
the sun gone down,
Darkness be over me,
my rest a stone.]

Spanish

*La senda hallaré
que al cielo va;
en ella tu bondad
me sostendrá.*

*Y ángeles habrá
Que me conducirán,*

[I will find the path
that goes to heaven.
In it your goodness
will sustain me.

There will be angels
to lead me...]

Korean

*Cheonsa nal bureuni,
Neul chansong hamyeonseo,
Juke deo nagagi,
wonhamnida*

[Angels to beckon me,
Always praising
Lord, nearer to Thee
I long to be.]

Lugandan (Gandan)

*Edda ndiyingira wa Kitange,
Nga nkomekkereza
(E)'ngendo zange.
Ekirinsanyusa,
Yesu, kuberera
Yesu, kuberera*

[I am going to my Father,
At the conclusion
Of my journeys.
What makes me happy,
Jesus, is to follow you...]

Norwegian

Nærmere deg, min Gud...

[Nearer, my God, to thee.]

German

Näher bei dir, mein Gott

Näher bei dir, mein Gott

Näher bei dir!

[Nearer, my God, to thee.]

Hindi

Taubhi main gaaunga,

Paas tere, aye khuda,

Haan, tere paas,

[Still, all my song shall be,

Nearer, my God, to thee.]

Scientific terms

Atmosphere – a layer of gas or layers of gases that envelope a planet, and is held in place by the gravity of the planetary body. A planet retains an atmosphere when the gravity is great, and the temperature of the atmosphere is low.

Black Hole – a region of spacetime where gravity is so strong that nothing – no particles or even electromagnetic radiation such as light – can escape from it. The theory of general relativity predicts that a sufficiently compact mass can deform spacetime to form a black hole. Scientists now believe that there are many black holes scattered about the universe. Recently astronomers have captured images of a massive black hole at the center of our own galaxy.

Brownian motion – or pedesis, is the random motion of particles suspended in a medium. This pattern of motion typically consists of random fluctuations in a particle's position inside a fluid sub-domain, followed by a relocation to another sub-domain.

Cretaceous – a geological period that lasted from about 145 to 66 million years ago. It is the third and final period of the Mesozoic Era, as well as the longest. At around 79 million years, it is the longest geological period of the entire Phanerozoic.

Crystal – a solid material whose constituents are arranged in a highly ordered microscopic structure, forming a crystal lattice that extends in all directions.

Fossils – the preserved remains, or traces of remains, of ancient organisms. Fossils are not the remains of the organism itself. They are rocks. A fossil can preserve an entire organism or just part of one. Bones, shells, feathers, and leaves can all become fossils.

Galaxy – a gravitationally bound system of stars, stellar remnants, interstellar gas, dust, and dark matter. The word is derived from the Greek *galaxias*, literally 'milky', a reference to the Milky Way Galaxy that contains the Solar System.

Hydrogen – the chemical element with the symbol H and atomic number 1. Hydrogen is the lightest element. At standard conditions hydrogen is a gas of diatomic molecules having the formula H₂. It is colorless, odorless, tasteless, non-toxic, and highly combustible.

Jade – either of two tough compact typically green gemstones that take a high polish: jadeite or nephrite

Milky Way – the galaxy that includes our Solar System, with the name describing the galaxy's appearance from Earth: a hazy band of light seen in the night sky formed from stars that cannot be individually distinguished by the naked eye.

Mercury – a silver-white poisonous heavy metallic element that is liquid at ordinary temperatures and is used especially in batteries, in dental amalgam, and in scientific instruments

Morse Code – Morse code is a method used in telecommunication to encode text characters as standardized sequences of two different signal durations, called dots and dashes, or dits and dahs. Morse code is named after Samuel Morse, one of the inventors of the telegraph.

Nitrogen – the chemical element with the symbol N and atomic number 7. Nitrogen is a nonmetal and the lightest member of group 15 of the periodic table, often called the pnictogens. It is a common element in the universe, estimated at seventh in total abundance in the Milky Way and the Solar System.

Obsidian – a dark natural glass formed by the cooling of molten lava

Phosphorescent – a type of photoluminescence related to fluorescence exposed to light (radiation) of a shorter wavelength, a phosphorescent substance will glow, absorbing the light and reemitting it at a longer wavelength. Unlike fluorescence, a phosphorescent material does not immediately reemit the radiation it absorbs. Instead, a phosphorescent material absorbs some of the radiation energy and reemits it for a much longer time after the radiation source is removed

Sandstone – a sedimentary rock consisting of usually quartz sand united by some cement (such as silica or calcium carbonate)

Stratification plane – a division between two layers of sedimentary rock that often marks changes in the circumstances of deposition.

Stratum – a layer or a series of layers of rock in the ground. Kenji uses the term to describe a layer of the atmosphere.

Tertiary – relating to or denoting the first period of the Cenozoic era, between the Cretaceous and Quaternary periods, and comprising the Paleogene and Neogene subperiods.

The Third Dimension – Three-dimensional-space is a geometric setting in which three values are required to determine the position of an element: height, width, and depth; the way in which we experience life in the universe. **The Fourth Dimension** – a dimension in addition to length, breadth, and depth specifically: a coordinate in addition to three rectangular coordinates especially when interpreted as the time coordinate in a space-time continuum; something outside the range of ordinary experience.

Topaz – a mineral that is essentially a silicate of aluminum and usually occurs in orthorhombic translucent or transparent crystals or in white translucent masses

Vacuum – a space devoid of matter. The word is derived from the Latin adjective *vacuus* for "vacant" or "void". An approximation to such vacuum is a region with a gaseous pressure much less than atmospheric pressure.

Void – completely empty space

Worm Hole – A wormhole is a speculative structure linking disparate points in spacetime and is based on a special solution of the Einstein field equations. A wormhole can be visualized as a tunnel with two ends at separate points in spacetime.

The constellations that are mentioned or visited:

Northern Cross/Swan Station (Cygnus) - a northern constellation on the plane of the Milky Way, deriving its name from the Latinized Greek word for swan. Cygnus is one of the most recognizable constellations of the northern summer and autumn, and it features a prominent asterism known as the Northern Cross (in contrast to the Southern Cross).

Eagle Station (Aquila) - a constellation on the celestial equator. Its name is Latin for 'eagle' and it represents the bird that carried Zeus/Jupiter's thunderbolts in Greek-Roman mythology.

Canis Minor (The Little Dog) - a small constellation in the northern celestial hemisphere. In the second century, it was included as an asterism, or pattern, of two stars in Ptolemy's 48 constellations, and it is counted among the 88 modern constellations.

Serpens – the Snake, a constellation in the northern celestial hemisphere. One of the 48 constellations listed by the 2nd-century astronomer Ptolemy, it remains one of the 88 modern constellations designated by the International Astronomical Union.

Orion – a major constellation named for the Greek mythological hunter. Orion is one of the most conspicuous constellations and contains many bright stars.

Andromeda - a constellation in the Northern hemisphere lying between Cassiopeia and Pegasus, the three brightest stars being of the second magnitude. It contains the Andromeda Galaxy a spiral galaxy 2.2 million light years away.

Ursa Major (The Great Bear) - a constellation in the northern sky, whose associated mythology likely dates back into prehistory. Its Latin name means "greater bear," referring to and contrasting it with nearby Ursa Minor, the lesser bear.

Ursa Minor (The Lesser Bear) - a constellation in the Northern Sky. As with the Great Bear, the tail of the Little Bear may also be seen as the handle of a ladle, hence the North American name, Little Dipper: seven stars with four in its bowl like its partner the Big Dipper.

Polaris - a star in the northern circumpolar constellation of Ursa Minor. It is designated Ursae Minoris and is commonly called the North Star or Pole Star. With an apparent magnitude that fluctuates around 1.98, it is the brightest star in the constellation and is readily visible to the naked eye at night.

Sagittarius - the "archer," one of the constellations of the Zodiac, located in the Southern celestial hemisphere. It is one of the 48 constellations listed by the 2nd-century astronomer Ptolemy and remains one of the 88 modern constellations.

Scorpio/Scorpius (The Scorpion) - one of the constellations of the Zodiac, located in the Southern celestial hemisphere. Scorpius is one of the 48 constellations identified by the Greek astronomer Ptolemy in the second century. It is an ancient constellation that pre-dates the Greeks.

Centaurus/Centaurus Village (The Centaur) - a bright constellation in the southern sky. One of the largest constellations, Centaurus was included among the 48 constellations listed by the 2nd-century astronomer Ptolemy, and it remains one of the 88 modern constellations. Centaurs were Greek mythical creatures with the upper body of a human and the lower body and legs of a horse.

Southern Cross (Crux) - a constellation of the southern sky that is centered on four bright stars in a cross-shaped asterism commonly known as the Southern Cross. It lies on the southern end of the Milky Way's visible band.

The Coal Sack - a dark nebula in the skies, being easily visible to the naked eye as a dark patch obscuring a brief section of Milky Way stars as they cross their southernmost region of the sky, east of Acrux (Alpha Crucis) which is the bright, southern pointer star of the southern cross. It dominates and overflows the southeast corner of what is considered the extent of the constellation Crux at a little less than twice the distance of Acrux.

Night On the Galactic Railroad

An Opera in Two Acts

Act I

Scene One: *Afternoon class*

Libretto by Ian Krouse
(adapted from Kenji Miyazawa's *Ginga Tetsudō no Yoru*, 1927)

Music by Ian Krouse
2008, 2021-2022

Moderately (♩ = 76) **TEACHER*** **1** Slower (♩ = 66)

Teacher: Now then class, though it looks like a riv-er, who can tell me what this

Piano: Star-chart chord/motif - 12-tone set** The Mysterious Milky Way

(The Teacher points to a large star map hung over the blackboard.

(noticing that Giovanni appears to be dozing off)

2 a tempo - gently (♩ = 69) **Giovanni's name**

T.: pale, milk-y strand real-ly is? Gio-van-ni-san, Gio-van-ni-san? Do you know?

Piano: Giovanni dolce p mf mp molto pp

(Giovanni springs up obediently, confused and tongue-tied, having nothing to say. Some of the children laugh at his embarrassment. The teacher, visibly frustrated, turns to Campanella.)

3 Energetically **Campanella's name** rit.

T.: All right then, Cam-pa-nel-la-san?

Piano: The Mysterious Milky Way f p playfully

*Throughout the score the first appearance of a character is so marked. **The first appearance of each principle motive is indicated.

(Campanella stands obediently as if to answer, glances at Giovanni, but he too does not respond. Again, the class titters, but a little more restrained this time.)

4 A little slower (distantly and seriously) (♩ = 60)

5 A tempo (♩ = 69)

Hont. ¹³ *p*

T. *rit.* ³ Oh well, let's move

Campanella's sorrow/fate

pp with deep expression

molto *fp*

(The teacher moves to an impressive looking picture of the Milky Way.)

6 A little Slower (♩ = 60)

SCHOOLCHILDREN

7

(Reacting with sounds of awe and wonder.)

SC. ¹⁸ Ooh ah

T. *strangely, intensely* *pp* ³ When you look at the pale white

on.

The Mysterious Milky Way

p *f* *pp* *pp subito*

School Children *mf* *p*

T. ²¹ *accel.* light of the gal - ax - y through a pow - er - ful tel - e - scope, you'll see stars, stars,

mp

(accel.)
(becoming quite excited)

Teacher's Passion For Science

8 A tempo (♩ = 69)

24

T. stars, stars, a great num-ber of stars! Right, Gio -

(rudely taunting Giovanni)

ZANELLI

(The other children titter noticeably.) (trailing away, having been noticed by the teacher)

27

Z. Ot - ter skin coat, ot - ter skin coat, ot-ter skin coat, ot-ter skin coat, ot - ter skin coat!

T. -van-ni, right, Gio - van - ni?

rall. molto

(Time stops: all of the characters except for Giovanni freeze in place, utterly motionless, except for those few marked spots appearing later, where they all briefly re-animate.)

GIOVANNI

9 With sudden passion (♩ = 69)

30

G. *passionately and with some agitation* But I knew that! I knew that! And so did Cam-pa-nel - la! *calming* Why could-n't I

10 With a gentle dance-like motion ($\text{♩} = 76$)

rit. *ossia* *with great warmth* *poco riten.*

G. *say so? Why did-n't he? We read a - bout it, to -*

Friendship

p mp

a tempo *riten. (simile)* *a tempo*

G. *-geth - er, at his house. Cam - pa - nel-la had a big book*

11 *a tempo* (with more urgency)

with increasing excitement

G. *from his fa - ther's stud - y. We looked at a pho - to,*

50

G. of the Milk - y Way, ink-y black, and all dot - ted, with star - white points!

12 *with great excitement* *f*

59 G. It was so won - der - ful! It was so won - der - ful! Cam - pa - nel - la

(For a moment the class comes alive again. The children sigh, impressed.)

64

S.C. Ah Oh Ooh Ah

G. can't have for - got - ten, can't have for - got - ten that. *trailing off*

T. Now then, if the Milk - y Way...

(The class freezes again.)

69 rit. . . . **13** A little slower ($\text{♩} = 86$) (Again, the class reanimates briefly.)

SC. Ooh Ah

G. What can he have been think - ing, when he did not ans - wer?

T. Now then, now then...

(Time freezes again.)

75 **a tempo**

G. Was he think - ing of how hard I work morn - ing and night?

14 With growing urgency ($\text{♩} = 100$)

79 *with growing fervor*

G. He must know how tired I al - ways am, and how I nev - er get to play with the

84

G. oth - ers af - ter school. Per - haps, to - day, he was feel - ing

sustained (♩ = 95)

rit.

15 A little slower (♩ = 90)

p poss.*

89

G. sor - ry for me. Per - haps to - day, when

rit.

16 Faster (♩ = 100)

93 *trailing away deep in thought*

poco accel.

G. he did - n't an - swer... 1)

*It is very important that the singer delivers the high B-flat as quietly and exquisitely as possible. This is a very inward moment and should not be in any way melodramatic.

1) Running throughout the opera, a constant thread in many variants, is the idea of self-sacrifice for someone else's benefit, a philosophy that was vital for Kenji and one that he lived for (and died by). This is, of course, one of the reasons Kenji was so taken with Christianity. Here, Giovanni realizes that his best friend Campanella has deliberately pretended *not* to know the answer to the teacher's question in order to deflect attention away from his friend's discomfiture. Almost all of the principle characters in the opera, even the delightful Bird Catcher in Act II, who symbolically sacrifices himself in imitation of his birds, are preoccupied with this notion. These discourses must never be heavy-handed or preachy, but always sincere and thoughtful.

(The class reanimates.)

17 A little slower and more relaxed ($\text{♩} = 63$)

falsetto

98

T. ...now then, if the Milk-y Way is tru-ly a riv-er, then each lit-tle star is a sing-le grain of sand.

p

101 (impressed)

SC. Ooh ah

T. And the wa-ter of the riv-er, (that which trans-mits light through the void of

(The children are, once again, understandably impressed.)

103

SC. *p* Oh, *p* oh, *p* oh,

T. space) a pure vac - - u-um! And

falsetto

105 *rit.* **Tempo 1** (♩ = 76) (abruptly)

SC. *Ah!*

T. (with great emphasis.)
here at the cen-ter of the gal-ax-y is a black hole, a black hole!

The Black Hole

mf > pp mp

108 **18** As before (♩ = 72) *rit.*

T. *mf*
Class, re-mem-ber, to-night is the night of the fes-ti-val- the Milk-y Way Fes-ti-val.

mf > p

111 **19** A little faster (♩ = 86) *rall. molto* **20** Slower (♩ = 66)

T. *p*
I want all of you to go out and take a good look at the

Milky Way Festival

21 Faster (as before) (♩ = 86)

trailing away deep in thought

Spoken: "But mind the current - the river is dangerous this time of year!"

117
T. *night sky.*
3 3
pp

(The sounding of the school chimes brings the class to an abrupt close. The children start to fidget expectantly.) *rit.*

22 A tempo (♩ = 66)

123
T. That's all for to-day. Please close your books. Sa - yo -
f
Big Ben chimes

(The students bow low and exit the classroom. Campanella waves to Giovanni who lingers, the last to leave. Giovanni, left all alone, wistfully examines the contents of the glass cases in the hallway.)

23 As before but a little slower (♩ = 76)

129
SC. shouting
Sa-yo-na-ra!
3
T. - na - ra.
p *mf*

Interlude

(Giovanni exits the school and roves out, waving to other children as he passes. Though interested, he does not join their activities.)

molto rall. ----- **24** Ease into the new tempo -
slow at first, with growing energy (♩ = 48)
accel. poco

132 *8va*

Giovanni roves out

p

♩ = 52 *accel. gradualmente* ♩ = 56 (*accel.*)

136

p *mf*

(*accel.*) -----

140

25 A little faster (♩ = 58) (*accel.*) ----- *molto* -----

143

f *molto*

(Giovanni encounters a group of children clustered around Campanella, playing boisterously. Campanella pleasantly acknowledges Giovanni but says nothing.)

26 Playfully (♩ = 120)

Star-wanderer's Song*

147

S.C. 

*Whole step trill on the G-flat

f *p* *mf*

playfully

155 (Some of the children should mime the percussion.)

Tko D. 

T. Bl. 

S.C. 

- ka - i me - da - ma no sa - so - ri hi - ro - ge - ta wa - shi no tsu - ba

mf *mf*

8va *jauntily* *ppp subito*

163

Tko D. 

T. Bl. 

S.C. 

- sa a - o - i me - da - ma no ko - i - nu

8va *simile* *8va* *tr* **Whole step trill on the C*

*The Star-wanderer's Song (Hoshi Meguri No Uta) was composed by Kenji. In the opera it is generally treated as a march.