

VISSI D'ARTE

a stage musical

by T. L. Fischer

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

## GHOST ENRICO

The ghost of famed tenor Enrico Caruso.



## GHOST FRANCES

The ghost of feisty opera diva Frances Alda.



## CARUSO (tenor)

Enrico Caruso, age 33 in 1906, dresses elegantly and has fun with it. He speaks with an Italian accent.



## ALDA (soprano)

Age 26 in 1908, Frances Alda described herself as "adventure-loving, enthusiastic."



## FARRAR (soprano)

Geraldine Farrar, age 26 in 1908, is vivacious and pretentious, with piercing blue eyes. Her French pronunciation is less than perfect.



## TOSCANINI

Conductor Arturo Toscanini, age 41 in 1908, is dark-eyed and intense, with black mustaches.



## GATTI

General Director of La Scala and later the Metropolitan Opera Company, Giulio Gatti-Casazza is 39 in 1908. His first wife, Frances Alda, described him as "dark, brooding, introverted."



SUPPORT CHARACTERS

SCOTTI (baritone)

Antonio Scotti, age 42 in 1908, has the heaviest of the Italian accents.

MEZZO (mezzo-soprano)

This supporting role is not based on a specific person.

FREMSTAD/GADSKI

This thirty-something character is an amalgam of Wagnerian sopranos Olive Fremstad and Joanna Gadski. She speaks with a German accent. This is a non-singing role, but may be played by a chorus member.

ROSINA (dancer)

Rosina Galli is in her early twenties in 1914. She first appears in Act II.

TELLEGEN

Movie star Lou Tellegen is in his mid-thirties, tall and handsome. When he first appears, he has a broad, white, toothpaste-commercial smile. He appears only in Act III, and may be played by the same actor who plays the Cop and the Process Server in Act I.

DOROTHY

Dorothy Caruso is tall and pretty, in her early twenties. She appears only in Act III.

ADDITIONAL PLAYERS

## CHORUS MEMBERS

Chorus members are required for several pieces, including the Habañera from Act I of Bizet's *Carmen*, and the Brindisi from Act I of Verdi's *La Traviata*. Three of the chorus members appear individually in some scenes and have several spoken lines:

- FEMALE SINGER 1
- FEMALE SINGER 2
- MALE SINGER

## INTERCHANGEABLE AND ONE-APPEARANCE CHARACTERS

The following characters appear once or intermittently, and may be played by the same two (or more) actors, or by chorus members:

- MRS. STANHOPE
- COP
- STAGEHANDS
- REPORTER
- HOST/SERVER
- SERVANTS
- ORCHESTRA MEMBERS
- GERRYFLAPPERS

### TIMES AND PLACES

A stage cluttered with old opera props and paraphernalia, present day; the Monkey House at the Central Park Zoo, New York City, 1906; A New York City street with a theater entrance, 1908 and 1922; a stage, wings, backstage, and dressing room representing the many opera houses in the United States and Europe where the artists performed between 1906 to 1920; the Hotel Knickerbocker dining room, 1910; the promenade deck of the steamship *Canopic*, 1914; the foyer at the Carusos' home in East Hampton, New York, 1920; the Carusos' apartment in Naples, 1921.

### THE SET

When characters are represented in the play as performing before a live audience, they are referred to as moving onto the "opera-house stage." This area should be distinct from the other places where characters interact. For example, a secondary, raised stage could represent the opera-house stage, while the surrounding actual stage would be available as backstage areas, wings, and other settings.

There should be a box seat, referred to as the Director's Box, situated so that two occupants can be seen and heard.

ACT I

SCENE 1

(The stage is cluttered with props, costumes, and opera posters such as one might find in a theater fallen into disuse.)

A STAGEHAND enters. He bumps a dusty Gramophone machine as he passes through. After he exits, a medley of opera overtures begins to play. As if summoned by the music, GHOST ENRICO enters, emerging from the opera paraphernalia somewhere. GHOST ENRICO walks among the items on stage, laughing, crying, and dancing as he looks around nostalgically. The music cycles through brief selections from the Overture to Strauss's *Die Fledermaus*, the Prelude to Bizet's *Carmen*, the dramatic opening of the "Ride of the Valkyries" from Wagner's *Die Walküre*, and the bittersweet Meditation from Massenet's *Thaïs*. The buoyant mood is revived by the "can-can" music from the Overture to Jacques Offenbach's *Orpheus in the Underworld*.

As the last selection hits a crescendo, GHOST ENRICO spots the audience. Surprised, he makes a comic effort to determine if the audience members can actually see him. Then he greets them)

GHOST ENRICO

(in his distinct Italian accent)

You can see me! Hello out there!

(looks flirtatiously at a female audience member)

And I can see you. *Bene. Molto bene!*

(again to the entire audience)

This is most strange, no? Especially since I've been dead a long, long time. I suppose that makes me a ghost. *Che mistero*, no? So you must be wondering, what in the heck is that ghost doing here? Well, I'm going to tell you:

(melodramatically)

I come for your sake, Ebenezer.

(back to normal)

Just a little joke--different ghost. How about a little hint: For twenty years, I was the most famous singer in the world. Maybe you heard of me:

(strikes a pose with arms wide)

The Great Caruso!

(flutters his hand in the "so-so" gesture)

Great? Maybe sometimes. Between you and me, I had good days, and . . .

(holds his nose)

I had bad days. But *la gente*--audiences just like you --they loved me. Especially the women. They loved me, and me, I loved them back. Ah! I know! I have some clippings right here.

(pulls newspaper clippings from a pocket, notices confusion in the audience)

Newspaper clippings.

(still noting confusion)

Big sheets of paper with words on them. *Mama mia*. I must of been dead longer than I thought! Anyway, okay. Ah, *bene*! Here we go: "The public has gone to the opera in the season just ended almost solely for the purpose of hearing . . . Enrico Caruso." That's me! *Aspetti, aspetti*. I've got more right here--

(stops himself, puts clippings away)

Sorry. Okay, so I brag a little, sometimes. In my time, us opera singers were more famous than movie stars! At least those of us *i grandi teatri*, like La Scala in Milan, Covent Garden in London, and the Metropolitan in New York City. You say our names nowadays, mostly I bet people look at you like you're crazy. Names like, Antonio Scotti. Emma Eames. Pasquale Amato, Mary Garden, Titta Ruffo. Geraldine Farrar. *Sì*, back then, all so very famous. And now-- forgotten. But what you gonna--

(An operatic SCREAM is heard)

GHOST ENRICO (CONT'D)

*Dio mio!* Frances Alda? Is that you?

GHOST FRANCES (OFFSTAGE)

So help me, Enrico, if you mention Geraldine Farrar and not me, I'll kill you! Even if you are already dead!

GHOST ENRICO

(unsure which direction to speak to)  
Alda, *mia cara*. I had not started talking yet about the greatest soprano of all time.

GHOST FRANCES (OFFSTAGE)

Flatterer! . . . Well, keep going. You know I adore flattery.

GHOST ENRICO

Come to me, Alda. There is an audience.

GHOST FRANCES (OFFSTAGE)

(lustfully)  
An audience. How wonderful! But can they see you?

GHOST ENRICO

(flirtatiously to a female audience member)  
Oh, they can see me.

GHOST FRANCES (OFFSTAGE)

Quickly, then, how do I get there?

GHOST ENRICO

I've got an idea.  
(cranks up the Gramophone)  
Get ready now!

(GHOST ENRICO waves his arms about like a conjuring magician. The initial swelling harp music of the "Entrance of the Gods into Valhalla" from Wagner's *Das Rheingold* accompanies him. At the thunderous drums, GHOST FRANCES materializes)

GHOST ENRICO

Ladies and gentlemen: The great soprano, Frances Alda!

(GHOST FRANCES drops into a low curtsy)

GHOST FRANCES

People--living people! Are they real?

GHOST ENRICO

*Amica mia*, is not the question . . . are we real?

GHOST FRANCES

Good point. But they've heard of us? They know who we were?

GHOST ENRICO

Not so much, I think. There's been a lot of changes. I mean, look at the funny way they dress!

GHOST FRANCES

But there they are--breathing and thinking and feeling! Oh! I'm jealous of them, Enrico. To be alive! Do you remember? Do you remember the thrill of the spotlight?

GHOST ENRICO

The thrill of singing a high "C" *perfettamente*.

GHOST FRANCES

The thrill of . . . buying a new hat on a spring day.

GHOST ENRICO

The feel of the soft curves of a pretty woman.

GHOST FRANCES

A good cup of coffee.

(They pause, remembering, then each takes a deep breath and, together, they sigh)

GHOST FRANCES (CONT'D)

And as fast as a hummingbird's wings, our days flutter away forever.

GHOST ENRICO

(contemplative, but childlike)

Like the wings of a little birdie.

GHOST FRANCES

Our time now is fleeting, too--I can feel it. Whatever is lifting the veil between us and this audience, it won't last. We must share something with them, Enrico. We must make them understand that we were once alive. That our hearts filled to bursting with love and desire, and our thoughts raced with hopes and dreams. And that we sang the most beautiful music the world has ever known.

GHOST ENRICO

*Sì*, Alda. Let us show these good people a little about who we were--you and me and our friends--back when we were the ones with blood in our veins.

GHOST FRANCES

Yes! Yes, let's go back. Let's take them there.

(Arm in arm, they begin to exit, starting to bicker as they go)

GHOST FRANCES (CONT'D)

Do you think I could pick up a new hat?

GHOST ENRICO

*Mio dio!* Only you would come back from the dead to go shopping.

GHOST FRANCES

Hey, it's not every day that one crosses the Valley of the Shadow of Death.

(BLACKOUT. The Overture to Gioachino Rossini's *Il Barbiere Di Siviglia* begins as the ghosts exit)

(END OF SCENE)

ACT I

SCENE 2

(The *Barber of Seville* overture continues. Lights up on GHOST FRANCES and GHOST ENRICO in the box seat known as the Director's Box. GHOST FRANCES scans the audience with a pair of opera glasses. GHOST ENRICO blows kisses at a female audience member. The *Barber* overture grows softer for the dialogue)

GHOST FRANCES

Let's begin with a short prologue, shall we? I want our audience to meet the real Enrico Caruso.

GHOST ENRICO

*Ah, bene!* I am going to sing "Vesti la giubba," no?

GHOST FRANCES

I said the real you, silly.

(to the audience)

Ladies and gentlemen, I present to you, the Great Caruso! It is 1906. Caruso is thirty-three years old and already known as the "World's Greatest Tenor."

(Lights up on the Monkey House in New York City's Central Park Zoo in the autumn of 1906. The living Enrico CARUSO enters, snappily dressed and happily strolling)

GHOST ENRICO

(not yet recognizing the setting)

Look! There I am!

(wrests the opera glasses from GHOST FRANCES to see himself better)

Holy cow, I was more better looking than I remembered!

(A COP walks past, tipping his cap to CARUSO. The COP exits as a young woman, MRS. STANHOPE, enters. MRS. STANHOPE and CARUSO exchange flirtatious looks as they pass each other)

## GHOST ENRICO (CONT'D)

Oh, no! No, Alda, no. These good people don't want to see this, this most embarrassing thing!

(The *Barber of Seville* overture becomes dominant again, accompanying the flirtation. MRS. STANHOPE stops to watch the monkeys. CARUSO sidles up to her. The flirtatious glances continue. MRS. STANHOPE turns and starts to stroll away. CARUSO pats her on the bottom. She glares at the tenor and storms away. CARUSO shrugs and goes back to monkey watching. MRS. STANHOPE quickly returns with COP, pointing at CARUSO. COP takes CARUSO by the arm and carts him away, with the victimized lady close on their heels. All three exit.

As the *Barber* overture races through its uproarious final moments, CARUSO enters again at a run, looking over his shoulder. COP enters next, giving chase. CARUSO hides, is seen, runs again, and is caught. With COP roughly dragging him off stage by the collar, the overture's musical climax accompanies his undignified exit)

## GHOST ENRICO

No fair, Alda. Why did I bring you here anyway? I forgot what a tease you are.

## GHOST FRANCES

Don't be a baby. You must admit, Enrico, you were something of a devil with women.

## GHOST ENRICO

No! I admit nothing.

(to the audience)

She exaggerates. All misunderstandings and rumors.

## GHOST FRANCES

Oh, really. Tell me, how many women took you to court for breaking a promise to marry them?

(Momentarily distracted by the question,  
he begins to count the fingers on one hand,  
then stops, indignant)

## GHOST ENRICO

Bah! You women were the problem. I lived through the  
San Francisco Earthquake of 1906, but that was nothing  
compared to the, the *forza distruttiva* of women.  
Believe you and me--I understood women too well!

## GHOST FRANCES

(playacting, she holds her fingertips  
to her head and flutters her eyelids  
as if receiving a telepathic message)  
Wait! Wait! It's coming to me--the perfect accompani-  
ment! Covent Garden, London, summer of aught-six.

(Fade to black on the ghosts as CARUSO  
enters as the Duke from Giuseppe Verdi's  
*Rigoletto*. He sings "La donna è mobile" from  
Act III)

## LIBRETTO SUMMARY

(*La donna è mobile*)

WOMEN ARE AS FICKLE AS FEATHERS ON THE WIND,  
CONSTANTLY CHANGING THEIR MINDS.  
DESPITE HER AMIABLE AND CHARMING FACE,  
WHETHER LAUGHING OR CRYING, SHE IS A LIAR.  
TO TRUST A WOMAN IS TO ALWAYS BE UNHAPPY.  
AND YET, ANYONE WHO DOES NOT KNOW A WOMAN'S LOVE,  
WILL NEVER BE FULFILLED.

(Blackout on CARUSO and lights up again on  
the Director's Box. GHOST ENRICO is alone  
there but has not yet noticed that fact)

## GHOST ENRICO

(applauding)

*Che voce!* What acting, what presence! You know,  
Alda, I--

(noticing he is alone in the box)

Alda? Alda, where did you go?

(Spotlight on GHOST FRANCES, now onstage)

GHOST FRANCES

I'm getting pretty good at this conjuring business,  
aren't I? I've done two, and you haven't done any.

GHOST ENRICO

I conjured up you!

GHOST FRANCES

Foey. I would've figured that out for myself.

GHOST ENRICO

Enough! I'm gonna show you some conjuring!

(GHOST ENRICO stands and waives his arms  
grandiosely as a selection from the Overture  
to Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*  
begins)

(END OF SCENE)

ACT ISCENE 3

(With the *Die Zauberflöte* Overture as accompaniment, set change to a theater side entrance on a New York City street, circa autumn 1908. A REPORTER waits with pen and pad nearby. As GHOST FRANCES speaks, some CHORUS MEMBERS enter, passing along the street and into the theater as if arriving for a rehearsal. GHOST ENRICO exits the Director's Box and enters the main stage)

GHOST FRANCES

Bravo, my friend! This is the perfect place to start.

(to the audience)

Ladies and gentlemen, let me set the scene. In the autumn of 1908, Henry Ford's "Model T" motorcars first rolled off the assembly lines. Hollywood was being transformed from ranch town to movie town. Admiral Robert Peary was heading for the North Pole, and Theodore Roosevelt was midway through his last year in the White House. And New York City was absolutely mad about opera, with two major opera houses and a third being built. The Metropolitan Opera house at 39th and Broadway looked forward to its twenty-fifth season as the social nerve center of high society in the New World. Only blocks away, the Manhattan Opera featured famed diva Nellie Melba and Irish tenor John McCormack. But in a city filled with opera, theater, and music, the biggest draw in town was still . . . the Great Caruso!

(GHOST ENRICO, having joined GHOST FRANCES on the main stage, steps forward as if to give a speech. GHOST FRANCES blocks his path and draws his attention to the living CARUSO, now entering the street scene. REPORTER greets CARUSO eagerly)

REPORTER

Mr. Caruso, readers of the *New York American* want to know: Are you excited about working again with your countrymen from the La Scala opera?

CARUSO

Of course, my friend! But one says only "La Scala," not "the La Scala." To say that is to be redun-dunant. Redunin-in-- redun-- It is to be not correct. Now if you will excuse me, today we begin rehearsal for *Madama Butterfly*.

(CARUSO tips his hat and exits into the theater entrance. Entering the street scene next is Geraldine FARRAR, wearing an enormous hat with a brim 32 inches in diameter. As the ghosts speak, REPORTER interviews FARRAR)

GHOST ENRICO

Alda, look! There is Geraldine Farrar! Do you see?

GHOST FRANCES

How could anyone bloody-well miss her with that thing on her head? I'd forgotten what an exhibitionist she was.

GHOST ENRICO

Be fair, *amica mia*. In many ways you and she were very much alike.

GHOST FRANCES

Bite your tongue.

GHOST ENRICO

No, it is true! You both had spirit *imbattibile*. Like I used to say, "Farrar farà"--this means that Farrar will always find a way to succeed.

GHOST FRANCES

If you mean she would find a way to get the best roles, the most money, her own dressing room--then I'd have to agree.

FARRAR

(to REPORTER)

Married to Antonio Scotti? Is that what my public has heard? Oh, my poor, misinformed children! *C'est tres, tres drôle*.

(Antonio SCOTTI enters, coming up behind FARRAR, who does not notice him)

FARRAR (CONT'D)

Let me put an end to that silly rumor right this minute. Mr. Scotti and I performed together in many of Europe's great houses this past summer--that is true. But the idea of marriage to Antonio Scotti, that is *absolument ridicule!*

(laughs, cut short by SCOTTI)

SCOTTI

(angrily, stumbling over his accent)

So, to marry Scotti, it is ridiculous now? You did not think me ridiculous when I held you by the Seine, and whispered the sweet nothing *da luce della luna!*

(SCOTTI storms through the theater entrance, followed by FARRAR, struggling to fit her hat through the doorway. REPORTER scribbles furiously in his note pad.)

GHOST FRANCES

My goodness--that was juicy. Never too late for good gossip.

(to the audience)

Despite the powerful draw of Caruso and that . . . Farrar woman, the Metropolitan Opera Company saw the upstart Manhattan Opera as a threat. So they recruited even more talent from the theaters of Europe.

GHOST ENRICO

Including a magnificent young soprano from New Zealand--by way of La Scala--Miss Frances Alda!

(Frances ALDA enters with Giulio GATTI-Casazza at her side. As the ghosts speak, ALDA and GATTI talk to REPORTER)

GHOST FRANCES

(admiring her living self)

Ah, to be young again!

GHOST ENRICO

*Sì, mia cara*--you were beautiful. And with Signor Gatti already at your side.

GHOST FRANCES

Ah, yes--my introductions!

(gesturing as if at a display case)

The renowned Giulio Gatti-Casazza had been the Director-General of La Scala in Milan for a decade. The addition of this skilled theater manager to the New York opera scene was a great coup.

GHOST ENRICO

A coup for you as well. See how you looked at him? Love was truly in the air.

(ALDA is watching GATTI admiringly as he responds to REPORTER's questions)

GHOST FRANCES

But he was so much older than me, and so serious. What was I thinking?

GHOST ENRICO

*L'amore*--it is as unpredictable as an earthquake! And as one who survived the San Francisco Earthquake--

GHOST FRANCES

Enrico. Dear. Enough with the earthquake already.

(A figure in a long black coat and black hat--Arturo TOSCANINI--enters the street scene as REPORTER begins to speak. Attempting to remain incognito, TOSCANINI holds his collar closed and has the brim of his hat pulled down.)

REPORTER

One last question, Mr. Gatti, sir--

(REPORTER spots TOSCANINI and shoves past GATTI to jump in TOSCANINI's path)

Wow! Maestro Toscanini! Could I ask you a few questions for the *American*, sir?

(There is a tension-filled pause, during which GHOST FRANCES introduces the conductor)

GHOST FRANCES

Arturo Toscanini, the famed conductor of La Scala, was the most highly anticipated of the 1908 arrivals. He was a fiercely dedicated artist who demanded the same dedication from performers.

REPORTER

(sheepishly)

Just . . . a few . . . questions?

TOSCANINI

NO!

(TOSCANINI brushes past REPORTER and goes through the theater entrance. GATTI and ALDA go into the theater entrance next. REPORTER exits)

GHOST ENRICO

Geraldine Farrar and Maestro Toscanini--the flamboyant diva and the brooding genius. Alda, we must make them a part of our story.

GHOST FRANCES

I suppose we must. I can't deny it. There were never two people so hopelessly destined to be enemies as Maestro Toscanini and . . . Little Miss Pretentious.

GHOST ENRICO

*Sì*. Enemies . . . or lovers!

(END OF SCENE)

ACT ISCENE 4

(The theater entrance/city street scene gives way to an opera-house interior, accompanied by the introductory music for Act I of Giacomo Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*. This includes the instrumental music preceding Pinkerton's first words, "E soffito . . . e pareti.")

Those present in the opera-house interior include STAGEHANDS, several CHORUS MEMBERS, TOSCANINI, GATTI, CARUSO, FARRAR, SCOTTI, ALDA, the MEZZO-soprano, and FREMSTAD-GADSKI. CARUSO and FARRAR are on the opera-house stage. Invisible to the others, of course, GHOST ENRICO and GHOST FRANCES are observing all. GHOST FRANCES stops to annoy FARRAR by blowing at the back of one ear, which FARRAR swats at. The ghost does this a couple of times, making herself laugh. GHOST ENRICO pulls her away, and they exit or withdraw)

FREMSTAD-GADSKI

(to MEZZO)

*Ach!* These Italians! What will become of Wagner now?

MEZZO

Surely Maestro Mahler will still conduct German opera.

FREMSTAD-GADSKI

Ah, Herr Mahler! *Danke Gott* for him! *Ja*. Perhaps he can stay the hand of--

(GATTI passes by and FREMSTAD-GADSKI interrupts herself to greet him)

Signor Gatti! I was just speaking how exciting to have with us the two geniuses of La Scala. *Und*, of course, Herr Mahler will continue to present the works of Wagner?

(GATTI grunts noncommittally, then finds a spot for observing the rehearsal. TOSCANINI raps his conductor's baton on the podium. He conducts without looking at a score. FARRAR starts to sing the duet "Vogliatemi bene," which closes Act I of Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*. She only sings through "come l'onda del mare")

## LIBRETTO SUMMARY

(Vogliatemi bene)

LOVE ME A LITTLE, AS YOU WOULD A BABY,  
 THAT IS ALL I ASK FOR.  
 I COME FROM A PEOPLE ACCUSTOMED TO LITTLE,  
 BUT GRATEFUL FOR LOVE THAT IS AS  
 LIGHT AS A BLOSSOM, AND DEEP AS THE SEA--

(Here, the soaring music is supposed to be rapturously greeted by the tenor singing "Dammi ch'io baci . . . [etc.]." In anticipation, CARUSO, bursting with passion as Pinkerton, takes a deep breath and steps toward his Cio-Cio-San. However, at that moment and before he can emit a sound--)

## TOSCANINI

(rapping his baton loudly on the podium)

NO!

(The orchestra instantly stops playing. CARUSO is caught with his chest expanded, his arms extended, his face in an operatically amorous expression, and his mouth wide open ready to sing. He momentarily freezes in this position and cocks his head sharply to look at the conductor; his amorous expression contorts in comic disbelief)

## TOSCANINI (CONT'D)

(attempting to control his temper)

No. Miss Farrar. These preferences of yours--these tricks of phrasing and pace--they will not do. We are not in Berlin, after all.

FARRAR

Preferences? Tricks? These "tricks" as you call them are also the preference of no less than the Emperor of Germany, His Majesty Kaiser Wilhelm the Second!

TOSCANINI

(barely containing his fury)

With all due respect to the Kaiser, Miss Farrar, he is not conducting this opera.

FARRAR

But the conductor, whoever that might be, must follow my lead.

TOSCANINI

And why might that be, mademoiselle?

FARRAR

Because I, sir, am the star.

TOSCANINI

(exploding)

NO! The only "stars," mademoiselle, are in the heavens! You are no more and no less than the other parts of this company! You--and myself, and Signor Caruso--

(CARUSO wilts, not wanting to be included in this contretemps)

TOSCANINI (CONT'D)

all of us, we are here for the music. As artists, we exist for art; art does not exist for us.

FARRAR

But as you know, Maestro Toscanini, art must be funded in order to exist at all. And the public pays to see my face, not your backside.

TOSCANINI

(He yells at GATTI)

*No posso lavorare con questa donna! Non posso combattere contro una persona che ha un ego più grande del Vesuvio!*

("I cannot work with this woman! I cannot surmount an ego the size of Vesuvius!")

(TOSCANINI storms away and exits)

GATTI

Maestro, please! I am sure we can work things out!

FARRAR

Well I refuse to be subjected to a temper that explodes like Vesuvius! I have sung for kings and queens, but never have I met such a tyrant!

(She storms off in the opposite direction and exits)

GATTI

Miss Farrar, please! Patience, we must all have patience with each other.

(calling back and forth)

Maestro! Mademoiselle!

(Everyone is staring at GATTI. His attempt at a speech degenerates into a mumble, causing those listening to cock their heads and lean forward, trying to hear)

GATTI (CONT'D)

This is all new for many of us. That is to say, we are all new to each other. We must be patient with each other and try to get along while we work through our initial trials . . . [mumbling and grumbling] . . .

(After a brief, awkward pause, he exits)

FREMSTAD-GADSKI

*Ach!* These Italians!

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

ACT I

SCENE 5

(Spotlight on GHOST ENRICO and GHOST  
FRANCES)

GHOST ENRICO

The beginning for Maestro Toscanini and Signor Gatti  
in America was not so good.

GHOST FRANCES

But things improved for them over the next few months.  
As you said, love was in the air, and--

(doing an exaggerated Italian accent  
and gesturing in Italianate fashion)

love, love isa powerfullissimo--like a earthquake!

(Blackout on the ghosts and lights up on a  
deserted backstage area. FARRAR enters,  
dressed as Zerlina from Mozart's *Don  
Giovanni*. TOSCANINI enters from another  
direction. They surprise each other; it is  
an awkward moment)

TOSCANINI

Mademoiselle.

FARRAR

(icily)

Maestro.

TOSCANINI

Best of luck with *Don Giovanni* this evening.

FARRAR

Thank you.

(brief pause)

Well. Good evening.

(FARRAR begins to pass by)

TOSCANINI

Miss Farrar, one moment, please. Let us clear the air between us.

FARRAR

I am sure I don't know what you mean.

TOSCANINI

Have I ever told you, in these months since my arrival here, what great respect I have for you as an artist?

FARRAR

(laughs with disbelief)

To the contrary, sir, you have made it plain what little regard you have for my abilities.

TOSCANINI

It angers me, with myself, that I have given you that impression. Nothing could be further from the truth.

FARRAR

No? But your criticisms. Your public criticisms.

TOSCANINI

My criticisms are my art. Through them I attempt, as best I am able, to conform what is already perfect to another's design. Your voice is like a garden of flowers in bloom--vibrant and enthralling. To bring such blossoms together into that beautiful vase that is an opera, yes, I sometimes must trim a stem, or pluck a petal. But always, I try not to disturb the inherent perfection of a single bloom.

FARRAR

You . . . think my voice is perfect?

TOSCANINI

(stepping closer)

Miss Farrar. Geraldine. Your voice, and your person, are bewitching.

FARRAR

(small voice)

Oh.

(brief pause)

Well, I, I suppose I could have been more receptive to your instructions. Much more . . . receptive.

TOSCANINI

*Grazie.*

(GATTI enters)

GATTI

Ah! There you are. Mademoiselle, please. The curtain is about to rise.

FARRAR

Yes, of course.

(to TOSCANINI)

I . . . Thank you, Maestro.

(TOSCANINI bows slightly in acknowledgment.  
FARRAR moves onto the opera-house stage.  
GATTI remains behind with TOSCANINI)

GATTI

What was that about?

TOSCANINI

Time will tell, my friend. Time will tell.

(SCOTTI, in costume as the title character in Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, enters, joining FARRAR on the opera-house stage. They sing the duet of seduction and demurral, "Là ci darem la mano," from Act I.

GATTI exits before the singing begins, but TOSCANINI, who is not conducting this opera, remains in view in the wings area. As the duet proceeds, he moves nearer to the edge of the opera-house stage. At the same time, FARRAR's Zerlina appears to sing more to TOSCANINI than to her partner onstage)

LIBRETTO SUMMARY

(Là ci darem la mano)

DON GIOVANNI:

COME TO MY HOME TO MARRY ME [INSTEAD OF YOUR FIANCÉE.]  
WITH YOUR HAND IN MINE, DO NOT HESITATE TO SAY YES.  
COME WITH ME, DELIGHTFUL BEAUTY.

ZERLINA:

I WOULD AND YET WOULD NOT,  
MY HEART TREMBLES AT THE THOUGHT.

TOGETHER:

LET US GO, LET US GO,  
AND KNOW THE PLEASURE OF LOVE.

(After the aria, FARRAR and SCOTTI exit in  
one direction and TOSCANINI in the other.  
The diva and the conductor are still  
exchanging "looks" as they part.

END OF SCENE)

ACT I

SCENE 6

(CARUSO enters the backstage area,  
disheveled)

CARUSO

Why me? Why me?!

(ALDA enters, in costume as Juliette from  
Charles François Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette*.  
MEZZO, in costume as Juliette's nurse  
Gertrude, and MALE SINGER accompany her.  
They gather around CARUSO)

MEZZO

He's been crying!

ALDA

Poor baby! Love life again?

CARUSO

"Love life!" What do I know of love? I told myself,  
wait until the new year--1909 will be different. But  
no. Cupid mocks me still!

ALDA

What was it, dear?

CARUSO

Ada came to the Knickerbocker Hotel. I was going to my  
rooms, and she jumped out of the shadows like a  
spider!

ALDA

Let me guess. She wanted money?

CARUSO

Sì. That is all I am to women--a bank! What would the public think if they knew that the World's Greatest Tenor can sing of love, but--

(grasping at the air and then  
looking at his empty palm)

--he cannot keep it in his grasp?

(CARUSO breaks down into sobs. The others try to comfort him. FARRAR, not in costume, enters, practically skipping)

FARRAR

(loudly)

Love! Isn't love grand? Is anyone else here in love?

CARUSO

(bursting into a new round of sobs)

Love!

ALDA

Kind of in the middle of something, Geraldine.

CARUSO

No, it is okay. The show must go on. Life must go on!

(Melodramatically gesturing "stay back" to the others, CARUSO exits)

FARRAR

(to ALDA, but really to everyone)

Be thinking of me when you sing "Je veux vivre," Frances! Because that is me! The Bard's young lovers knew only puppy love compared to me and my adored one!

MEZZO

But why won't you tell us who he is?

MALE SINGER

Yeah, why all the secrecy?

ALDA

I'll bet I know--he's old and fat and ugly, isn't he!  
Oh! Oh! It's coming to me . . .

(as GHOST FRANCES did earlier,  
ALDA puts fingertips to temples as  
if receiving a telepathic message)

Her lover is . . . J.P. Morgan! Old and ugly, but  
very, very rich! Congratulations Geraldine! May you  
and J.P.--oh, and his wife--be very happy together.

FARRAR

You can't rain on my parade, Frances. You're just  
jealous.

(GATTI enters, stroking his beard)

GATTI

Ah, Miss Farrar. The maestro is looking for you. I am  
afraid to say that he looks somewhat perturbed.

ALDA

Does he ever not look perturbed?

(TOSCANINI enters)

TOSCANINI

(to FARRAR)

Miss Farrar. If I might have a word with you about our  
rehearsal this afternoon.

ALDA

(aside to FARRAR in a singsong  
voice)

Oh, oh. Gewaldine is in twa-ble.

(FARRAR sticks her tongue out at ALDA,  
and the latter responds in kind)

FARRAR

(to TOSCANINI, defiantly)

That is just fine, Maestro. I, too, want to discuss the rehearsal! But not here in front of everyone. Please come to my dressing room.

(They go to Farrar's dressing room)

MEZZO

(to ALDA and MALE SINGER as they watch TOSCANINI and FARRAR leave)

I'm taking bets: Before the season's out, which one will kill the other?

(ALDA and MEZZO go onto the opera-house stage. MALE SINGER exits.)

Once in Farrar's dressing room, FARRAR, with her back to TOSCANINI, takes a deep breath, as if preparing to do battle with the conductor. TOSCANINI smooths back the hair at his temples. FARRAR turns and, uniformly, they launch into each other's arms and kiss)

FARRAR

Darling!

TOSCANINI

*Amore mio!*

FARRAR

Could it be that only a day has passed since we were together?

TOSCANINI

No. It must have been an eternity.

FARRAR

I love you.

TOSCANINI

And I love you.

FARRAR

How can two people who were so at odds now feel so drawn together?

TOSCANINI

Even two magnets will repel each other, until they are placed face to face . . .

(he kisses her)

. . . just so.

(tears himself away from her)

Oh, Gerry! Never have I been so torn--torn between my duty to my family, and this passion, this unquenchable fire that you light in my soul!

FARRAR

Sweetheart, don't torture yourself. I'm there for you.

TOSCANINI

Then you are happy as things are? For now, I am saying. When my children are one, perhaps two years older . . .

FARRAR

Silly man. You're as bad as Caruso, thinking every woman is alike. I'm not looking for marriage! I'm living in a dream, a wonderful, intoxicating dream!

(twirls around joyously)

And I just want to go on in this dream, lying in my bed of roses. So long as I can lie there in your arms.

TOSCANINI

(he takes her into his arms)

Flame of my soul!

FARRAR

Treasure of my heart!

(They kiss, and the dressing room falls into soft, dreamy lighting. On the opera-house stage, ALDA sings "Je veux vivre dans le rêve" from Act I of Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette*. MEZZO, as Gertrude, is onstage with ALDA, watching her.)

(During the aria, TOSCANINI and FARRAR dance a fantasy waltz)

LIBRETTO SUMMARY

(Je veux vivre dans le rêve)

I WANT TO LIVE IN THIS DREAM THAT INTOXICATES ME.  
SWEET FLAME, I KEEP YOU IN MY SOUL LIKE A TREASURE!  
LEAVE ME TO DREAM AND TO SMELL THE ROSES,  
BEFORE THEIR PETALS FALL.  
SWEET FLAME, STAY IN MY SOUL, LIKE A TREASURE.

(After the aria, the lights come up again in Farrar's dressing room. As TOSCANINI and FARRAR part, they share one last kiss at the dressing room doorway. ALDA and MEZZO witness this as they leave the opera-house stage. MEZZO becomes so excited, she points and almost cries out. ALDA puts a hand over MEZZO's mouth, stifling any sound. BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

ACT ISCENE 7

(Strains from Dawn & Siegfried's Rhine Journey from Wagner's *Götterdämmerung* accompany the transition and the initial segment of this scene. GHOST ENRICO and GHOST FRANCES are illuminated)

GHOST ENRICO

It was not only the singers who fell for Maestro Toscanini and Signor Gatti. Soon all of New York loved "those Italians."

(With heroic swells from Dawn & Siegfried's Rhine Journey in the background, FREMSTAD-GADSKI is spotlighted on the opera-house stage in full Brünnhilde regalia, holding a massive bouquet in her arms. Applause and calls of "Brava!" are heard. FREMSTAD-GADSKI bows, then gestures for the audience to welcome TOSCANINI on stage beside her. He enters, coming into the spotlight, not hiding his annoyance at the bright lights and attention. Calls of "Bravo!" and "Bravi!" join the applause. TOSCANINI and FREMSTAD-GADSKI join hands and bow together. To the conductor's great discomfort, the soprano suddenly gives him an exuberant hug. Blowing kisses as she goes, FREMSTAD-GADSKI leaves the stage as the music and applause die off. She exits.

Lights up as GHOST FRANCES begins her next historical update. STAGEHANDS join TOSCANINI on the opera-house stage, sweeping up and moving props as needed. Ledger in hand, GATTI enters and begins discussing matters with the conductor while GHOST FRANCES speaks)

GHOST FRANCES

By 1910, Maestro Toscanini was established as the U.S.A.'s preeminent conductor. No one could deny that he and Signor Gatti had triumphed in the New World.

(TOSCANINI and GATTI seem pleased. The conductor shakes hands with the General Director in a congratulatory fashion)

GHOST ENRICO

Signor Gatti triumphed in another way--capturing for his own a beautiful and talented songbird!

GHOST FRANCES

Mmm. But I'm afraid Giulio was not so smooth a Don Juan as Maestro Toscanini.

GHOST ENRICO

In *Napoli*, we say, "No matter if you ride there on a donkey or a horse, it's the same town at the end of the road."

(MEZZO enters and joins TOSCANINI on the opera-house stage. GATTI steps to the wings. TOSCANINI appears to be directing MEZZO on breathing and projection. ALDA enters the wings and stops to watch the rehearsal. GATTI sidles up alongside ALDA)

GATTI

Miss Alda. May I have a moment?

ALDA

Of course, Giulio.

GATTI

Miss Alda . . . Frances. What I wish to say is that . . . That is, although I am your senior by many years . . . or, rather . . . You and I have known each other for . . . hm.

ALDA

Since you and Maestro Toscanini invited me to audition for La Scala.

GATTI

Quite, quite. Yes. Hm.

ALDA

Do you remember how rude the Maestro was to me? I sang in French, trying to show off. And after I'd finished, he said,

(imitating TOSCANINI's voice,  
dripping with irony)

"Mademoiselle Alda, in exactly what language were you singing?"

(A laugh escapes GATTI despite himself. ALDA starts to laugh, too, and GATTI allows himself to laugh with her)

GATTI

(laughing)

Yes, well, that is-- that is--

ALDA

That's the Maestro, isn't it!

GATTI

Completely. Oh, Frances. You must know how I feel about you.

ALDA

Maybe--or maybe not. Why don't you tell me?

GATTI

(taken aback)

Ah! Yes. Well, despite our age difference, as it were, I have developed a distinct . . . fondness for you. Ahem. Now that you and I, being thrown together, as it were, in a more consistent way . . .

ALDA

(pushy)

Yes?

GATTI

(exasperated, he looks up and  
notices what is happening on stage)

This! Listen to this.

(GATTI spins ALDA around by the shoulders  
to view the ongoing rehearsal. TOSCANINI  
signals MEZZO to begin. MEZZO sings "Voi  
che sapete" from Mozart's *Le Nozze di  
Figaro*)

LIBRETTO SUMMARY

(Voi che sapete)

YOU WHO KNOW WHAT LOVE IS, SEE IF I HAVE IT IN MY  
HEART. IT IS NEW TO ME, I CAN'T UNDERSTAND IT.  
I FEEL A PASSION THAT DELIGHTS ME, THEN TORTURES ME.  
IT FREEZES ME, THEN SETS ME AFLAME.  
I SIGH AND MOAN WITHOUT MEANING TO.  
MY HEART RACES AND I TREMBLE WITHOUT KNOWING WHY.  
I FIND NO PEACE DAY OR NIGHT,  
AND YET IT PLEASES ME TO LANGUISH SO.

(When the aria is done, GATTI continues)

GATTI

Despite my bumbling ineloquence, that is how you make  
me feel, Frances. That is what I would say to you if  
I could.

ALDA

Although in a somewhat deeper voice, I would hope.

GATTI

Quite.

(GATTI and ALDA work awkwardly into an  
embrace and kiss. Their embrace is frozen  
under a spotlight while the rest of the  
stage falls into darkness. Spotlights also  
illuminate GHOST FRANCES and GHOST ENRICO,  
who flank the kissing couple)

GHOST ENRICO

Look how he loved you! What was it than won over the young spitfire? His quiet wisdom? His solemn eyes?

GHOST FRANCES

His love letters, I would think. Giulio was far more eloquent with his pen than with his tongue.

GHOST ENRICO

Ah, *certamente!* What woman can resist words as sweet and plentiful as grapes in a vineyard?

GHOST FRANCES

(becoming angry)

Long, passionate letters. No matter how far away my singing engagements took me!

GHOST ENRICO

(oblivious to her changing tone)

There is nothing like distance to call forth the poet in a man. *Per esempio*, one time in Buenos Aires--

GHOST FRANCES

And then, after a two-decade marriage, how many chapters did Shakespeare here devote to me in his memoirs? Ha! No chapters! Not even a full sentence. My name is mentioned four times in the entire book!

(to the living ALDA)

What were you thinking?!

(The lights come up again, and the kiss ends. The lights reveal that CARUSO, TOSCANINI, FARRAR, MEZZO, FREMSTAD-GADSKI, SCOTTI, a PRIEST, and CHORUS MEMBERS are present behind GATTI and ALDA. All are happy and celebratory, except ALDA, who appears dazed and confused. The Bridal Chorus from Act III, Scene I, of Wagner's *Lohengrin*, perhaps as an instrumental adaptation, is heard in the background.)

MEZZO approaches ALDA with a bridal bouquet. CARUSO pins a boutonniere on GATTI's lapel. TOSCANINI escorts the still-dazed ALDA past those in attendance toward the PRIEST. GHOST FRANCES follows close on the bride's heels)

GHOST FRANCES

(to ALDA)

You silly girl! You're too young! He's too old. You don't have enough in common! Flirt some more! Play the field! It won't last!

PRIEST

(as if in continuation)

Into this holy estate this man and woman come now to be joined. And so, if any of you now present can show just cause why they should not be married, speak now, or else forever hold your peace.

GHOST FRANCES

(waving her hands and arms in front  
of the PRIEST)

Yes! I do! She needs more time. She's not thinking straight. Look at her, she's just a child!

(yelling into the PRIEST's ear)

Hel-lo-oh!

(For an instant, the PRIEST seems to notice her, but then--)

PRIEST

I now pronounce you man and wife.

(GHOST FRANCES throws her arms in the air in exasperation as the wedding party cheers. Frustrated, GHOST FRANCES exits or otherwise distances herself. Music from the Overture to Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro* begins.)

END OF SCENE)

ACT ISCENE 8

(Accompanied by the Overture to Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro*, we are transported to the Hotel Knickerbocker dining room amidst post-wedding revelry. A restaurant HOST/ SERVER enters and assists in the transition as those from the wedding party take seats at one or more tables. TOSCANINI, last to be seated, passes FARRAR and bumps some possession of hers, such as a purse or coat, to the floor. They both reach for the item; their hands touch. For an instant, they gaze into each other's eyes while their hands remain touching. Everyone else notices this and stops to stare. When the lovers' gazes break off, the others immediately return to their conversations and activities. GHOST ENRICO steps forward)

GHOST ENRICO

(to the audience)

It is sad, you know, that sometimes in life we think only of the bad things. It is true, marriage would later throw the curved balls at my friend Alda. And more soon than that, the world would explode into the Great War. But before the war, these years were happy times for us. Me, Alda and Signor Gatti, Farrar, Scotti, Maestro Toscanini, and many others, we would spend our winters in New York City, and our summer-times in Europe. On one side, we got America--exciting and zesty like a shot of whiskey. Across the water, we got Europe--aged like a fine wine. And, oh, boy, there was a lot going on in those days, believe me. There was, uh . . . No, wait, that was later. Hm . . .

(looks around for GHOST FRANCES)

Alda? Come tell us what else was happening! Alda!

(GHOST FRANCES enters or comes forward)

## GHOST FRANCES

All right, all right, keep your bloomers on. Let's see, the years before the war. First, we should mention that there was tragedy. In the spring of 1912, many of us who frequented Europe lost friends when the *Titanic* sank into the cold, dark sea. But let us think of the good things. In those years between 1910 and 1914, the world read the first Western novels by Zane Grey, tasted the first Lifesavers candy, and heard the first radio broadcasts--of opera, of course. Charlie Chaplin introduced us to the Little Tramp. And an exhibition in New York City presented shocking new concepts in art from innovators like Cézanne and Picasso.

## GHOST ENRICO

For us opera folk, life was *La Vie Fou*. All over the world we did tours, *concerti*, recitals. Life was crazy, but it was glorious crazy, like riding the Giant Racer at Coney Island!

(CARUSO stands and raises his glass)

## CARUSO

I propose a toast. For the first time in too long, I am free of "the weaker sex."

(as if sharing a joke)

Weak like an earthquake, I think.

## ALDA

Oh God, not the earthquake!

(The others laugh)

## CARUSO

(continuing with his toast)

No more sitting in a courthouse with an angry woman and a bunch of lawyers.

(raises his glass)

Please, my friends, join me.

## ALDA

But, Enrico, you must tell us what we're drinking to.

## CARUSO

Why, to me, of course!

(The others laugh and raise their glasses)

ALL

To Enrico!

(Seated next to CARUSO, SCOTTI stands and sways a little, having had a bit too much to drink. He raises his glass to make a toast)

SCOTTI

*Che buona fortuna!* What good fortune we have, no?  
(puts his hand on CARUSO's shoulder)  
For two poor boys from *Napoli*--we are not doing so bad, eh, *amico mio*?

CARUSO

Sit down you lowly Neapolitan. People are watching.

SCOTTI

Life is wonderful! The world adores us, and I adore the world! I want to sing! Orchestra!

(SCOTTI is illuminated by spotlight; the lights dim on the other diners. SCOTTI energetically sings the "Largo al factotum" from Act I of Rossini's *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*)

LIBRETTO SUMMARY

(Largo al factotum)

I MUST BE OFF TO MY SHOP, FOR THE DAWN IS NEAR.  
WHAT A MERRY LIFE, WHAT PLEASURES AWAIT,  
A BARBER OF QUALITY!  
BRAVO, FIGARO! BRAVO, BRAVISSIMO!  
I AM TRULY ONE OF THE MOST FORTUNATE MEN.  
NIGHT AND DAY, PERPETUALLY BUSTLING AND IN MOTION.  
EVERYONE CALLS FOR ME; EVERYONE WANTS ME.  
FIGARO UP, FIGARO DOWN! FIGARO HERE, FIGARO THERE!  
WHAT A BEAUTIFUL LIFE!

(SCOTTI finishes the aria in the same position he was in when he called "Orchestra!")

CARUSO

(making SCOTTI sit back down)

There is no orchestra, you drunken fool!

(A young adult, PROCESS SERVER, shyly approaches CARUSO. PROCESS SERVER holds a clipboard with papers on it)

PROCESS SERVER

Holy cow! The Great Caruso, in person! I'm sorry to bother you Mr. Caruso, but I wanted to tell you that I'm a huge admirer. I come watch you sing as often as I can afford to.

CARUSO

*Grazie.* You are very kind.

PROCESS SERVER

Could I get your autograph, sir? It would be an honor.

CARUSO

(taking the clipboard and a pen)

The honor is all mine.

(confused momentarily)

Let's see . . .

PROCESS SERVER

Oh, just here, please. That would be super.

CARUSO

(signs and returns the clipboard)

There you are.

PROCESS SERVER

(suddenly formal, hands some papers to the tenor)

Thank you, sir. Mrs. Mildred Meffert demands satisfaction for breach of your promise to marry her. Consider yourself served.

CARUSO

Oh, no! Not again!

(Blackout. END OF ACT)

ACT II

SCENE 1

(It is after dark in late October 1914.  
FARRAR and TOSCANINI are kissing on the  
promenade deck of the steamship *Canopic*)

FARRAR

*Je t'aime.*

TOSCANINI

*Ich liebe dich.*

FARRAR

Tease!

(Releasing each other, the two lovers look  
around to make sure they weren't seen. They  
move to the promenade railing to look out at  
the sea)

FARRAR

Everyone knows about us, anyway, you know.

TOSCANINI

Still. We mustn't be too obvious, *amore mio*.

FARRAR

Of course.

(pause)

Why mustn't we?

TOSCANINI

Silly girl--newspaper men, photographers. The usual.

FARRAR

Oh, yes. The usual.

(pause)

But, darling . . . When won't it be "the usual" anymore? Will you and I ever be married?

TOSCANINI

Gerry, please. We've been through this. My absences have been difficult enough for my wife and children, and now with the war . . . Only a little while longer, I promise--to let this terrible conflagration die down.

FARRAR

"A little while longer"? But that's what you said six years ago. I'm almost thirty-two!

TOSCANINI

I am sorry. This is not the time to throw personal cataclysms into the mix. For all we know, this war may last many months.

(GATTI and CARUSO enter on the promenade deck, catching the conversation's end)

GATTI

Talk of the war again, eh? I'm afraid that we will be talking about the war for years, not months, my friends.

(As GATTI speaks, SCOTTI enters with FEMALE SINGER 1 and FEMALE SINGER 2. All take up positions along the rail, looking out to sea)

FEMALE SINGER 1

Years? Oh, Signor Gatti, do you really think the war will last for years?

CARUSO

Do not worry, my dear. Signor Gatti worries about politics like he worries about the opera. He is *un pessimista*! No offense, *Direttore*.

GATTI

None taken. History will judge whether I am a pessimist or a realist.

SCOTTI

We go into the lounge, no? It's gonna freeze us up out here!

FEMALE SINGER 2

But look at the moon. Isn't it romantic? I feel lucky to be alive on such a night!

CARUSO

(crossing himself)

Do not say such things! You're going to jinx us, and after we were all so lucky to get out of Europe. Don't you forget: There are U-boats out there, with periscopes and torpedoes, waiting like wolves!

(Their gazes drop uniformly down to the sea, which they scan silently for a moment)

GATTI

Miss Farrar, should such a beast cross our path, we will rely on your friendship with the Kaiser to ameliorate the situation.

(The others laugh nervously)

FARRAR

I would do my utmost, Signor Gatti.

FEMALE SINGER 2

At least the U.S.A. has sense enough not to get mixed up in foreign wars.

FEMALE SINGER 1

But what will become of Europe? Will we have no more summers in Paris?

FARRAR

Or Berlin.

CARUSO

Or London. I cannot think of it. Covent Garden is my summer home!

TOSCANINI

It truly is unthinkable. I have always considered Europe an oasis of civilization--a garden of culture and language and music. But rather than reveling in our subtle differences, we seem determined to burn our garden to the ground.

FARRAR

I feel . . . I feel a sudden sense of foreboding.

FEMALE SINGER 1

I feel afraid.

SCOTTI

I feel cold.

CARUSO

No, no, this will not do! We must think happy thoughts. I know! We will go punting on the Thames. Come, join hands, everybody. Hold hands and close your eyes.

(taking the hands of those nearest him, he looks over at TOSCANINI)

You, too, Maestro!

(One by one, the others follow CARUSO's lead, with TOSCANINI finally, reluctantly, taking FARRAR's hand and closing his eyes)

CARUSO (CONT'D)

Okay, good! Ready?

(brief pause)

Imagine we are rowing . . . drifting . . . floating down the gentle river. The sun, it shines, poking here and there through leaves that glow the greenest green you ever saw. A million shades of green. The sun, it is warm on our faces. Up in the trees, the little birdies sing. "Tweet-tweet! Tweet-tweet!"

(Several of the others open their eyes for a moment to glance over at CARUSO; they share a knowing look regarding their friend's innocent silliness. They close their eyes again)

## CARUSO (CONT'D)

Past country gardens, we glide in our boat. And we wave hello to the gentlemen and the ladies who play croquet in clean white clothes. All is well. All is happy. *Che sarà, sarà.*

(Lights up on ALDA and MEZZO in a dreamlike setting as Lakmé and Mallika from Delibes' *Lakmé*. They sing "Dôme epais le jasmin," also known as the Flower Duet, from Act I)

## LIBRETTO SUMMARY

(Dôme epais le jasmin)

'NEATH THE LEAFY DOME,  
WHERE THE JASMINE WHITE  
TO THE ROSES COMES GREETING,  
ON THE FLOW'R-DECKED BANK,  
GAY IN MORNING LIGHT,  
COME, AND JOIN WE THEIR MEETING.  
SLOWLY ON WE'LL GLIDE  
FLOATING WITH THE TIDE,  
ON THE STREAM WE'LL RIDE AWAY;  
THROUGH WAVELETS SHIM'RING BRIGHTLY,  
CARELESSLY ROWING LIGHTLY,  
WE'LL REACH SOON THE STEEPS  
WHERE THE FOUNTAIN SLEEPS,  
WHERE WARBLE THE BIRDS SPRIGHTLY.

(Fade to black. END OF SCENE)

ACT IISCENE 2

(The Intermezzo from Pietro Mascagni's *Cavalleria Rusticana* takes up where the Flower Duet left off. A spotlight blooms on a pretty ballerina, ROSINA Galli. Slowly and gracefully, ROSINA dances. After a few moments, lights come up on GHOST ENRICO and GHOST FRANCES, who are watching ROSINA dance)

GHOST ENRICO

This is the one?

GHOST FRANCES

Yes.

GHOST ENRICO

I remember this girl. Pretty, but not so pretty as you.

GHOST FRANCES

Rather too chubby for a ballerina, don't you think?

GHOST ENRICO

(laughs at her cattiness)

Sure, Alda, sure.

(The lights on the ghosts fade to black. When the music and dance end, lights up on the opera-house stage. GATTI is present and reveals himself by stepping forward and applauding)

GATTI

Brava! Brava, Miss Galli.

ROSINA

Oh! Signor Gatti! Forgive me. It's not often that the stage is so deserted.

GATTI

No need to apologize. You are quite talented. We are all looking forward to your première next week.

ROSINA

(delighted at the thought, she  
touches his arm)

Oh, thank you, sir. This is my dream come true!

GATTI

(charmed)

Is it? Good for you. To be achieving your dreams so  
young is an impressive feat.

ROSINA

Well, it's one of my dreams.

GATTI

What else do you dream of?

ROSINA

I dream of the same thing that all girls dream of--  
falling in love. Was it love at first sight for you  
and Madame Alda?

GATTI

For me, yes. But I had to write a hundred love letters  
to win her over.

ROSINA

I'll bet she fell in love as soon as you looked at  
her. You have the most beautiful eyes, you know.

GATTI

(embarrassed and a little shocked)

Young lady--

ROSINA

But I'll bet Madame Alda tells you that all the time!

GATTI

(after thinking for a second)

Not since we married.

(ALDA, CARUSO, and SCOTTI enter in a whirl  
of laughter and movement. ALDA is wearing  
the Egyptian headdress that Caruso will wear  
soon as Radames in Verdi's *Aïda*. ROSINA  
humbly stays to one side)

CARUSO

Alda, come on--give me back the hat! What kind of Radames would I be without a hat?

(ALDA does the "Egyptian walk," with her arms bent "S"-shaped in front and behind, staying out of Caruso's reach)

ALDA

I should throw it down a storm drain after what you did! Giulio, did you hear what he did to me in Brooklyn?

GATTI

I heard.

(Noticing ROSINA, ALDA tosses the headdress to SCOTTI)

ALDA

(to ROSINA)

We were doing *La Bohème*, and I'd no sooner sung "Sì, mi chiamano Mimi" when my pantalettes began to fall down underneath my dress!

SCOTTI

Right up there on the stage--in front of everybody!

ALDA

With every note I sang, I could feel my fancy underwear slipping further and further down.

ROSINA

(shocked)

Heavens! What did you do?

ALDA

I made my way over behind a sofa in the set, shimmied a little,

(she shimmies)

until the pantalettes dropped. Then I kicked them off, singing my little heart out. No one would've been the wiser!

CARUSO

How could I pass that up?

ALDA

Enrico went straight over and held up the underwear for the whole world to see!

ROSINA

Right in front of the audience?

ALDA

The entire house went crazy with laughter!

GATTI

(to CARUSO)

I should fine you.

CARUSO

It will never happen again, Signore.

GATTI

(gesturing to CARUSO and SCOTTI)

That's what you said after the two of you appeared in the death scene wearing monocles! Mimi was supposed to be dying, and instead she was laughing at a childish prank!

(ALDA, CARUSO, and SCOTTI all start laughing at the memory of this earlier prank)

SCOTTI

(giving the headdress back to Caruso, he makes a circle with forefinger and thumb and holds it over one eye like a monocle)

That was a good one, too! Frances almost fell off the bed.

ALDA

My sides were splitting! It was the first time Mimi ever giggled herself to death!

CARUSO

Come on, let's go eat. I found a new restaurant--  
*assolutamente delizioso*--as good as *Napoli*! This  
Egyptian warrior needs his spaghetti!

SCOTTI

Signor Gatti, you want to come eat with us?

GATTI

No, thank you. I have far too much work to do.

ALDA

(disdainful)

I told you he wouldn't come. Why even ask.

(turning her back on GATTI)

C'mon boys, let's go eat!

(ALDA grabs CARUSO and SCOTTI, one on each  
arm, and they exit. GATTI watches them  
leave, then speaks to ROSINA, who approaches  
closer to him again)

GATTI

Don't ever fall in love with an older man, Rosina.  
He may worship the ground you walk upon, but he  
will become a chain around your neck. Soon you would  
resent him.

(to himself)

I should probably set her free.

(to ROSINA again, embarrassed)

Please forgive me. We don't know each other well  
enough to speak of such . . . . When you are older you  
will understand more . . . It's really . . .  
ahem . . . [mumbling] . . .

ROSINA

(standing close)

I would never resent such love. And I would never  
leave you alone.

(ROSINA exits. GATTI watches after her and  
strokes his beard)

GATTI

(to himself)

Yes, Frances. Perhaps I should set you free.

(GATTI exits. CARUSO enters onto the opera-house stage. He is dressed as Radames in Act I of Verdi's *Aïda*, but he lacks the Egyptian headdress. Just before he begins singing, someone offstage tosses the headdress to him. CARUSO sings "Celeste Aïda")

LIBRETTO SUMMARY

(Celeste Aïda)

HEAVENLY AÏDA, DIVINE FORM,  
MYSTICAL BLEND OF FLOWERS AND LIGHT,  
YOU ARE THE QUEEN OF MY THOUGHTS, THE SPLENDOR  
OF MY LIFE.

I WOULD RESTORE YOU TO THE BRIGHT SKIES  
AND SOFT BREEZES OF YOUR NATIVE LAND;  
I WOULD RAISE YOU TO A THRONE NEAR THE SUN.

(After the aria, CARUSO exits.

END OF SCENE)

ACT IISCENE 3

(GHOST FRANCES and GHOST ENRICO enter or are illuminated. They speak while STAGEHANDS enter to make set alterations, and as CHORUS MEMBERS enter and prepare for a rehearsal of the Brindisi from Act I of Verdi's *La Traviata*. GATTI remains or enters; TOSCANINI enters and enters into a discussing with the General Director. GHOST FRANCES and GHOST ENRICO move amongst those present while speaking, with GATTI as the initial focus of their discussion)

GHOST FRANCES

Before we married, Giulio did worship the ground I walked upon. What a shock it must have been for him to realize that he had not married a goddess, domestic or otherwise, but a flesh-and-blood woman. His ballerina provided the perfect solution to his disenchantment: She would worship him.

GHOST ENRICO

But you found comfort, didn't you, my friend? There was a military officer, maybe?

GHOST FRANCES

(angrily)

Only after I learned about them!

GHOST ENRICO

No, no! I did not mean to offend.

GHOST FRANCES

No, I was not going to sit at home alone while he cavorted with his little dancer!

GHOST ENRICO

Of course. *Scusate*, Alda. *Scusate*.

GHOST FRANCES

(anger turning to introspection)

I couldn't live out my life in my husband's shadow, then retire meekly to Italy to wait for my reserved spot in the family crypt. That would not be my life. But I tried to make the best marriage I could, Enrico. Even after I knew it wouldn't last.

GHOST ENRICO

I know.

GHOST FRANCES

But the years could have been so much fun if he and I could have talked and played--the way you and I did! Why couldn't marriage have been like that?

GHOST ENRICO

Well, for one thing, I was one heck of a fun guy.

GHOST FRANCES

You were. Fun, and sweet.

(CARUSO and ALDA enter together for the *La Traviata* rehearsal. ALDA is rolling her eyes as if she's heard enough)

CARUSO

(to ALDA)

I tell you, *amica mia*, showing off your pretty little feet is going to cost you your big beautiful voice! If you don't wear galoshes in the rain, you are sure to catch a cold.

GHOST FRANCES

(to GHOST CARUSO)

See what I mean? You old sweetie!

GHOST ENRICO

If I was the sweet, you were the spice! I never knew anybody as feisty as Frances Alda. When you were just a baby, I think you looked up at the sky and said to God, "This had better be good!"

CARUSO

(to ALDA)

If you want to ruin your voice because you are vain,  
don't blame me.

ALDA

Oh, dear. Do you really think I'm vain? Well,  
maybe . . .

(pretending to notice something on  
CARUSO's face)

. . . hm.

CARUSO

What? What is it?

ALDA

Oh, it's nothing. Just a blemish.

CARUSO

(panic-stricken, he rushes to look  
in a mirror or reflective surface)

What?! Oh no! Where?!

(CARUSO realizes that ALDA is putting him  
on. Then, CARUSO, ALDA, and the CHORUS  
MEMBERS pick up wine goblets and begin to  
take their places for the rehearsal)

GHOST FRANCES

Yes, you and I both understood: The party ends at  
midnight, so don't wait to join the fun. You and I  
shared a thirst for life, Enrico.

GHOST ENRICO

A "thirst for life." This reminds me of an old saying  
in *Napoli*: "Drink deeply from the cup of life, 'cause  
you'll probably just trip on the rug and spill the  
rest anyway."

GHOST FRANCES

I think it must lose something in the translation.

(At TOSCANINI's signal, CARUSO, ALDA, and CHORUS MEMBERS sing the Brindisi ("Libiamo ne' lieti calici") from Act I of Verdi's *La Traviata*.)

LIBRETTO SUMMARY

(Libiamo ne' lieti calici)

ALFREDO:

LET US DRINK FROM THE BEAUTIFUL CUP OF JOY,  
AND THE FLEETING HOUR WILL BE HAPPY.  
LET US DRINK TO THE SECRET RAPTURES THAT LOVE  
BRINGS,  
FOR WITH WINE, KISSES ARE EVEN MORE PASSIONATE.

VIOLETTA:

WITH YOU I CAN SPEND THE TIME WITH DELIGHT.  
IN LIFE EVERYTHING IS FOLLY WHICH DOES NOT BRING  
PLEASURE.  
LET US BE HAPPY, FOR LOVE IS FLEETING;  
IT IS A FLOWER WHICH QUICKLY BLOOMS AND DIES.

ALL:

BE HAPPY--WINE AND SONG AND LAUGHTER BEAUTIFY  
THE NIGHT;  
LET THE NEW DAY FIND US IN THIS PARADISE.

(As the singing ends, all are standing with their wine goblets raised to life. Blackout.)

END OF SCENE)

ACT IISCENE 4

(The blackout between scenes holds as the sound of falling rain becomes audible. A loud clap of thunder is heard, then the instrumental prologue of "Porgi amor" from Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro* begins.

Lights up as TOSCANINI enters the backstage area, coming indoors from a rainy late-April day of 1915. He shakes his umbrella and brushes rain from his shoulders. Looking around to confirm that he is alone, he opens a letter and begins to read it. As the instrumental portion of the aria ends, TOSCANINI lowers the letter)

TOSCANINI

(to himself)

My love.

(The singing of "Porgi amor" begins, heard from offstage or from behind a scrim. TOSCANINI opens the letter again as the aria progresses, but then hurriedly puts it away. Evidently hearing something, he moves to a spot where he won't be seen. FARRAR enters from an interior entrance. She is in costume or partial costume as Cio-Cio-San from Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*. She goes to her dressing room. The conductor emerges from his hiding place and paces outside Farrar's dressing room)

LIBRETTO SUMMARY

(Porgi amor)

O LOVE, BRING ME A CURE  
FOR MY SORROW, FOR MY SIGHS!  
BRING MY DARLING [HUSBAND] BACK TO ME,  
OR AT LEAST LET ME DIE.

(When the aria ends, TOSCANINI knocks at the dressing room door)

FARRAR

*Entrez!*

TOSCANINI

(entering the dressing room)

It's me.

FARRAR

(haughtily)

Well! With your explosive diatribe after *Carmen* last week, I thought you might've spontaneously combusted and your ashes washed away with the rain.

TOSCANINI

(entering and closing the door)

I apologize about that. I did lose my temper.

FARRAR

More than usual.

TOSCANINI

Yes, yes, more than usual. But you must admit, that was not your best performance.

FARRAR

I was not in voice, but you cannot blame that disastrous night on me!

TOSCANINI

No. Your voice was the least of it. Martinelli's French, that second-rate Escamillo, the orchestra--you see? The orchestra. For that I have no one to blame but myself. "Disastrous" is correct.

FARRAR

How apropos for the third anniversary of the *Titanic* catastrophe.

TOSCANINI

Your voice is feeling better tonight, I hope?

FARRAR

Fully restored, thank you.

TOSCANINI

I am glad for you.

(pause)

Gerry . . . I did not come here to speak of *Carmen*.

FARRAR

Oh?

TOSCANINI

I came to speak about us.

FARRAR

Oh. I hope you didn't give that "ultimatum" of mine too much weight.

TOSCANINI

You were correct, Gerry.

FARRAR

I was?

TOSCANINI

Yes. As you said, I have been "stringing you."

FARRAR

"Stringing me along."

TOSCANINI

All these many years--many wonderful years--it has not been fair to you. It has not been fair to my wife, or to my children.

FARRAR

(excited)

I am so ready, darling. I simply think it's time.

TOSCANINI

I know you do. That is why . . . That is why I am returning to Italy right away.

FARRAR

You mean, for the summer. To settle things.

TOSCANINI

I have cancelled my last appearances. And the tour. At first, I thought we needed--I needed--some distance, to try to figure things out. But today I received a letter from my wife, begging me to come home to her. In her own way, her simple words have all the beauty of an aria.

FARRAR

Oh. Oh, God. What a fool I've been. You're settling things with me. Of course, it makes sense--seven years. How does the saying go? *Sept ans pour l'œil errer, sept ans pour retourner.*

TOSCANINI

Gerry, my love for you has been real. In many ways, more profound than anything I know with my spouse. But you have always known how it torments me, this contest between my duty to my family and my passion for you.

FARRAR

(shifting gears)

Well, I must say, in many ways I am relieved. This dalliance has been a pleasant distraction. But a practical New England girl with a hot-blooded Mediterranean--I think not! Cool shades and warm hues may harmonize, but they do not mix.

TOSCANINI

I am so sorry, Gerry.

(He attempts to embrace her, but she avoids him)

FARRAR

No! I mean . . . no apologies are required. As I said, I think it's time.

TOSCANINI

Yes. As you said.

FARRAR

Now if you will please excuse me, I really should run through my scales.

TOSCANINI

Of course.

(brief pause)

Good evening, then.

FARRAR

(in a singsong voice)

Good evening!

TOSCANINI

(turning back at the door)

*Bon chance with Madama Butterfly* tonight.

FARRAR

(impatiently, not looking at him)

Yes, yes! *Merci!* Bye, bye!

(TOSCANINI leaves the dressing room and exits. FARRAR looks at herself in the mirror for a moment, then paces back and forth in a panic. While this is happening, CARUSO and several CHORUS MEMBERS or others enter the backstage area outside the dressing room. FARRAR suddenly swings her door open)

FARRAR

(calling out before noticing that others are present)

Arturo!

(upon seeing the others staring at her, she launches into her trademark ostentatiousness)

*Bonjour, tout le monde!* As this is my last performance of the season, I wanted to share some exciting news. I've been invited me to Hollywood, California. A director desires to capture my Carmen in a moving picture.

CARUSO

Congratulations, Gerry. That is exciting.

FARRAR

Isn't it? But now I must run through my scales. *À toute à l'heure!*

(FARRAR steps back into her dressing room and closes the door, again visibly distraught. Fade to blackout. The ghosts are spotlighted)

GHOST FRANCES

And so, in the spring of 1915, Arturo Toscanini withdrew from the forefront of opera in America. At that time, the war raged on in Europe. In May, a German submarine sank the ocean liner *Lusitania*, causing many Americans to reconsider their neutrality. That same year of 1915 also saw the premier of D.W. Griffith's controversial but revolutionary film, *Birth of a Nation*. Albert Einstein published his theory of general relativity. And to support the right of women to vote, thousands of suffragettes marched in New York City.

GHOST ENRICO

And one of the world's most famous singers, Geraldine Farrar, went to Hollywood to make moving pictures with the great Cecil B. DeMille. And even though Gerry would come back a big movie star, her broken heart from Maestro Toscanini would be with her for all of time.

(Lights up on FARRAR on the opera-house stage. As Cio-Cio-San, she sings "Un bel dì vedremo" from Act II of Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*)

LIBRETTO SUMMARY

(Un bel dì vedremo)

ONE FINE DAY, WE WILL SEE A SHIP APPEAR IN THE PORT.  
DO YOU SEE IT? HE IS COMING!

AND I WAIT FOR HIM TO COME, BUT I DO NOT GROW WEARY.  
AND LEAVING FROM THE CROWDED CITY, A MAN CLIMBS THE  
HILL.

WHO IS IT? WHO IS IT?

AND WHEN HE ARRIVES WHAT WILL HE SAY? WHAT WILL HE  
SAY?

HE WILL CALL BUTTERFLY FROM THE DISTANCE.

I WILL STAY HIDDEN A LITTLE WHILE TO TEASE HIM,  
AND THEN HE WILL CALL TO ME,

"LITTLE ONE, DEAR WIFE, ORANGE BLOSSOM!"

THE NAMES HE CALLED ME BEFORE.

ALL THIS WILL HAPPEN, I PROMISE YOU.

(Fade to black.

END OF ACT)

ACT III

SCENE 1

(Lights up on the opera-house stage, where FARRAR is in costume as the title character of Georges Bizet's *Carmen*, along with CARUSO, as Don José, and the CHORUS MEMBERS. FARRAR gives a dynamic performance of "Quand je vous aimerai? . . . L'amour," aka the Habañera, from Act I)

LIBRETTO SUMMARY

(Quand je vous aimerai?)

WHEN WILL I LOVE YOU?

GOOD LORD, I DON'T KNOW.

MAYBE NEVER, MAYBE TOMORROW. BUT NOT TODAY, THAT'S CERTAIN. LOVE IS A REBELLIOUS BIRD THAT NOTHING CAN TAME.

IF YOU DON'T LOVE ME, I LOVE YOU!

BUT, IF I LOVE YOU, YOU HAD BETTER WATCH OUT!

THE BIRD YOU HOPED TO CATCH FLAPPED ITS WINGS AND FLEW AWAY. WHEN LOVE IS FAR AWAY, YOU SIT WAITING FOR IT; AS SOON AS YOU STOP WAITING, THERE IT IS!

YOU TRY TO GRAB IT, IT AVOIDS YOU;

YOU TRY TO AVOID IT, IT GRABS YOU!

LOVE, LOVE, LOVE, LOVE!

(Blackout. END OF SCENE)

ACT IIISCENE 2

(Lights up on the opera-house wings while the same *Carmen* proceeds out of view. FARRAR is heard singing the Habañera reprise at the finale to Act I. Some CHORUS MEMBERS from the Habañera, including FEMALE SINGER 1 and FEMALE SINGER 2, are present in the wings, as is SCOTTI, dressed as the toreador Escamillo. Première ballerina ROSINA stands close to GATTI and whispers to him. ALDA enters, in costume as Micaëla. ROSINA and GATTI pull away from each other. ALDA is clearly not pleased. GATTI exits. When the Habañera reprise ends, CARUSO is heard to cry out in pain. Following the raucous instrumental ending to *Carmen's* Act I, CARUSO enters, holding his arm as he runs into the wings)

SCOTTI

What happened?

CARUSO

She bit me! Farrar bit me! *Mama mia* that hurt!

ALDA

She bit you?!

(FARRAR enters the wings with a wild and triumphant expression on her face. Applause and shouts of approval can be heard)

CARUSO

You keep away from me, Gerry! I don't know what you think you're doing out there, but you've gone crazy!

FARRAR

That is *la Carmencita*! In Hollywood, Mr. DeMille taught me to find her true, turbulent nature. I do believe I've captured her essence!

ALDA

Somebody needs to capture you and put you in a straitjacket.

CARUSO

You're only supposed to shove me a little!

FARRAR

Carmen is trying to make her escape look realistic. One little shove wouldn't fool anyone!

(She steps toward CARUSO as if to demonstrate. He jumps behind ALDA)

SCOTTI

(peeking out at the audience)

Whatever you did, the audience liked it!

CARUSO

They're not getting bites on the arm!

(FARRAR exits, then GATTI enters again, escorting movie star Lou TELLEGEN. TELLEGEN broadly displays his white toothy smile. He is clearly proud of the attention he's getting. The women present--except for ALDA--react excitedly at this movie star in their presence)

GATTI

(to TELLEGEN)

No doubt your wife is preparing for the next act. I'll see if I can find her.

(GATTI exits. FEMALE SINGER 1 and FEMALE SINGER 2 approach TELLEGEN excitedly)

FEMALE SINGER 1

Wow, Lou Tellegen! I've seen all your pictures, Mr. Tellegen.

FEMALE SINGER 2

I've seen most of them twice! Can I have your autograph?

FEMALE SINGER 1

Oh, me too!

(TELLEGEN signs for them, then they move away, comparing autographs. With his sleeve rolled up, CARUSO approaches the movie star)

CARUSO

(displaying his arm)

Lou, look at what your crazy wife did! She bit me!

TELLEGEN

Huh! She's a wildcat all right! You should have seen her go after the cigarette girls on the set back in Hollywood!

CARUSO

And we still gotta do three more acts!

TELLEGEN

I tell you, Enrico old boy, Gerry's got the right idea. Moving pictures is the way to go. Sure, phonograph records are good--but they don't capture the whole you, the way you move! I guarantee you, a hundred years from now the world will have forgotten "The Great Caruso," but people will still be talking about moving-picture star "Lou Tellegen." It's the nature of the medium.

CARUSO

I dunno. I still feel kind of funny about California. Did I tell you? I survived the earthquake there back in aught-six.

TELLEGEN

Um, yeah, you've mentioned that.

(FARRAR and GATTI enter together)

FARRAR

(for everyone's benefit)

Oh my goodness! It's my famous-actor husband, Lou Tellegen!

ALDA

Oh, brother.

FARRAR

(still to TELLEGEN)

Wait for me, won't you, darling husband?

GATTI

Come, Lou--join me in the Director's Box. *Bon chance* with Act Two, everyone!

(GATTI exits with TELLEGEN)

CARUSO

(to FARRAR)

And no more rough stuff!

(FARRAR holds her hands up like claws, the wild look comes back into her eyes, and she bites at the air threateningly, causing CARUSO to jump back. Blackout.

END OF SCENE)

ACT III

SCENE 3

("The Ride of the Valkyries" from Act III of Wagner's *Die Walküre* begins. Lights up gradually on the opera-house stage to reveal the Valkyries waving their spears against an oncoming storm; FREMSTAD-GADSKI is Brünnhilde. Lights up on MALE SINGER in the backstage area, pacing in a near panic while looking at a newspaper. FEMALE SINGER 1 runs up to MALE SINGER)

MALE SINGER

(looking at the newspaper)

It's finally happened. The day we all thought would never arrive!

FEMALE SINGER 1

What is it? What's going on?

MALE SINGER

This is huge.

FEMALE SINGER 1

C'mon, what is it?! Tell me!

MALE SINGER

It's war! The U.S.A. has declared war on Germany!

FEMALE SINGER 1

Oh my gosh!

MALE SINGER

We're in it now!

(Suddenly, to the Valkyries' surprise, the orchestra stops playing abruptly. GATTI enters on to the opera-house stage)

GATTI

(to the *Die Walküre* audience)

Ladies and gentlemen, I beg your pardon. We have an important announcement. We have just received word that it is now official: On this sixth day of April, 1917, the Congress of the United States of America has declared war on the German Empire.

(reacting to a stir in the audience)

Please, remain calm everyone. Calm. And please allow me to say, although I am not an American citizen myself, God Bless America!

ALL

God bless America!

(GATTI leaves the opera-house stage, but the Valkyries remain. "The Ride of the Valkyries" resumes where left off. The Valkyries crowd together on the opera-house stage. Darkness gradually envelopes them, as if they are swallowed by the storm.

END OF SCENE)

ACT III

SCENE 4

(The Intermezzo of Mascagni's *L'Amico Fritz* begins. Lights up on a scene that seems to mirror the preceding scene exactly, with MALE SINGER in the backstage area, pacing and looking at a newspaper. One might think that Scene 3 had started over again, except for the different music and the lack of Valkyries. FEMALE SINGER 1 runs up to MALE SINGER)

MALE SINGER

(looking at the newspaper)

It's finally happened. The day we all thought would never arrive!

FEMALE SINGER 1

What is it? What's going on?

MALE SINGER

This is huge.

FEMALE SINGER 1

C'mon, what is it?! Tell me!

MALE SINGER

Enrico Caruso has married! At 45, the World's Greatest Tenor has finally married for the first time!

FEMALE SINGER 1

Oh my gosh!

MALE SINGER

He's in for it now!

(Blackout. Spotlight on REPORTER and CARUSO)

REPORTER

Mr. Caruso, readers of the *American* are just dying to know more about you and Miss Dorothy Park Benjamin.

CARUSO

(waving a finger)

Ah, ah, ah!

REPORTER

I mean, Mrs. Caruso. So how does it feel to marry into one of America's most prestigious families?

CARUSO

Well, it's kinda funny. Ever since I became famous, women are chasing me for my money. But Dorothy, she gave up a fortune to marry me!

(Lights up on the opera-house stage. SCOTTI, MEZZO, ALDA, and several CHORUS MEMBERS, are present for an informal rehearsal. CARUSO joins them, and everyone present greets him)

ALL

(calling out varied greetings)

Enrico! Congratulations! [Etc.]

CARUSO

Hello my friends! It is good to be back! This honeymooning stuff was meant for younger men!

(There is general laughter)

MEZZO

(aside to ALDA)

If he's really married, why isn't he wearing a ring?

ALDA

Didn't you see it? It goes right through his nose!

(SCOTTI and the ORCHESTRA MEMBERS begin to rehearse "Votre toast" also known as "Toréador, en garde" from Act II of Bizet's *Carmen*. SCOTTI picks up a red cape when he begins singing. As CARUSO walks by, the baritone passes the cape over the tenor's head as if dodging a charging bull. CARUSO joins in the fun, holding fingers up like horns, pawing at the floor with one foot, charging the cape, and so forth. ALDA and others join the clowning around and the ensemble singing)

## LIBRETTO SUMMARY

(Toréador, en garde)

I CAN GIVE YOU A TOAST, SIRSI!

FOR ALONG WITH THE SOLDIERS, TOREADORS UNDERSTAND:

FOR PLEASURE, FOR PLEASURE THEY HAVE COMBAT!

LET'S GO, EN GARDE! LET'S GO! LET'S GO!

AH! TOREADOR, EN GARDE! TOREADOR, TOREADOR!

AND DREAM AWAY, EVEN IN COMBAT,

THAT DARK EYES WATCH YOU, AND THAT LOVE AWAITS YOU!

(There is laughter and applause when the song ends. ALDA grabs castanets and dances while singing the "Je vais danser" duet-- where Carmen sings her own accompaniment, before Don José chimes in--from Act II of *Carmen*. Everyone is delighted, but they are soon interrupted--

Enter DOROTHY Caruso)

DOROTHY

Enrico! Enrico, dear! ENRICO!

CARUSO

Ah! My lovely *moglie*. Let me introduce you to everyone! You remember my friends, Antonio Scotti and Frances Alda. And over here--

DOROTHY

(taking him by the arm and directing him toward the exit)

Can we do this another time, dear?

CARUSO

But . . . But, *dolcezza*! We are rehearsing!

DOROTHY

(ignoring his objection)

My friend Mabel told me about the loveliest home in East Hampton, right on Lake Georgia! I thought we'd take a drive.

CARUSO

East Hampton? You don't like the Knickerbocker Hotel?

DOROTHY

Well we can't live there forever, silly! Now, the house isn't on the market yet, but it will be soon, and . . .

(DOROTHY and CARUSO leave the rehearsal area but are still visible)

ALDA

(to MEZZO, with SCOTTI nearby)  
Told you. Ring through the nose!

(Outside the rehearsal area, CARUSO has put the breaks on and is talking to DOROTHY. She smiles and gives him a playful flip on the nose. They flirt and kiss lovingly.

CARUSO steps back to the rehearsal area to grab his hat. He is grinning happily)

CARUSO

Oh, well! What you gonna do. We're off to the Hamptons!

(He exits, lightly and happily singing "La donna è mobile")

SCOTTI

If it makes somebody that happy, we all should have a ring through the nose!

(Blackout.

END OF SCENE)

ACT IIISCENE 5

(Spotlight on GHOST ALDA and GHOST ENRICO)

GHOST FRANCES

(to the audience)

Soon after Enrico plunged into matrimony, the Great War finally ended on November 11, 1918. But the influenza pandemic of 1918 and '19 was already well under way. That terrible disease killed millions. And afterward, how do you suppose Americans celebrated the end of the war and the subsiding of the influenza? Prohibition! Now that makes sense, doesn't it? "Oh, look, happy days! I know, let's make it a crime to have a bloody drink! Let's make fun a felony! Let's--"

GHOST ENRICO

Alda!

GHOST FRANCES

Sorry. Sorry, about that. Anyway, this should be your time, Enrico. What do you want to remember?

GHOST ENRICO

I want to remember my last really happy time. I had a new little family. I had my friends. And it was my favorite time of the year.

(Lights up on a foyer *chez* Caruso. It is mid-December 1920, and the Carusos are throwing a Christmas party. Only the foyer is visible, where DOROTHY and CARUSO are welcoming several CHORUS MEMBERS as guests. SERVANT 1 and SERVANT 2 are present to answer the door and receive guests' coats and hats; they exit and enter as needed to fulfil their duties. The first guests exit, moving inside to the party. MEZZO arrives next at the front door and enters)

CARUSO

(greeting MEZZO)

Merry Christmas!

DOROTHY

(greeting MEZZO)

Merry Christmas, dear. Welcome to our home.

MEZZO

What an amazing house! It must be the biggest, most beautiful house in East Hampton.

DOROTHY

Thank you! It took the Knickerbocker shutting down to finally get Enrico to move, but the timing was right.

CARUSO

(crosses himself)

The timing cannot be good when you have no choice. In *Napoli*, we say a forced move brings bad luck.

DOROTHY

(to MEZZO)

Him and his superstitions! Once when I was pregnant with Baby Gloria, I held a rabbit on my lap and petted it. Enrico was certain our baby would be born with long ears and a hare lip.

(to CARUSO)

Now, did that happen? Isn't Gloria as beautiful a baby as she could be?

CARUSO

Only because I took away the rabbit!

MEZZO

Speaking of bad luck, Enrico, are you feeling any better? I heard you gave quite a scare last week.

CARUSO

(holding his side gingerly)

Thank you, I feel much better now.

(DOROTHY and MEZZO step to one side,  
talking, as SERVANT 1 answers the door.  
ALDA enters, greeted by CARUSO)

CARUSO

Ah, bene! When Signor Gatti arrived alone, I thought  
maybe you would not come.

ALDA

She's not here, is she?

CARUSO

No. Signor Gatti and Scotti arrived together. Scotti  
is already a bit tipsy, I think.

ALDA

Then I've got some catching up to do.  
(to SERVANT 2 as she hands her  
coat to him)  
Bring me something wettish would you?  
(calling after SERVANT 2)  
Wet and piny!

(The SERVANT exits into the party with  
ALDA's coat in hand)

DOROTHY

(holding out her hand to invite ALDA  
into the conversation with MEZZO)  
Frances, Merry Christmas! Welcome!

(ALDA joins DOROTHY and MEZZO. SERVANT 1  
answers the door again, and FARRAR and  
TELLEGEN enter. TELLEGEN is scruffy and  
without his former cocky grin. He tosses  
his coat rudely at SERVANT 1)

FARRAR

(in a singsong voice)  
*Bon Noël, fröhliche Weihnachten,* Merry Christmas!

CARUSO

Merry Christmas, my friends!

TELLEGEN

(surly and drunk)

Merry friggin' what-have-you-got-to-drink.

(SERVANT 2 enters, returning from the party  
with a drink for ALDA. She takes a sip)

ALDA

Mm! Must've come from a very clean bathtub.

(SCOTTI, drunk, enters from the party)

SCOTTI

*Amici miei!*

(hugging one person after the other)

Hello my friend.

(to the next)

*Buon Natale.*

(to the next)

Merry Christmas, my friend.

(SCOTTI gets to TELLEGEN, but the actor  
pushes him away)

TELLEGEN

Bugger off.

(SCOTTI shrugs and exits, evidently seeing  
someone he wants to hug in the other room)

DOROTHY

Geraldine, weren't you making a movie for Pathé last  
summer? I haven't seen it in theaters yet.

FARRAR

There were artistic differences. I do believe I have  
retired from the motion picture industry.

TELLEGEN

Stayed just long enough to get her name on top  
billing--bigger than her own husband's. Then took  
me down with her.

FARRAR

(embarrassed, to TELLEGEN)

You know that's not true.

TELLEGEN

Enough friggin' talk. Where's the liquor?  
(starts toward the main party)

FARRAR

(catching TELLEGEN by the arm before  
he exits, she whispers angrily)  
Can't you at least be a friendly drunk?

TELLEGEN

(loudly)  
Shut the hell up!

(TELLEGEN pulls away roughly and exits to  
the party)

FARRAR

(to CARUSO, DOROTHY, MEZZO, ALDA)  
I . . . I apologize. Lou is having . . . having a hard  
time . . .

(FARRAR turns away, breaking down.)

DOROTHY

Your fans will be so disappointed if you don't make  
any more movies, Geraldine.

(to the others)  
What is it they're calling her fans these days?

ALDA

(conciliatorily)  
They're calling her fans "gerryflappers," because  
those young women they call flappers so admire Gerry's  
energy and talent.

(FARRAR looks at ALDA as if she doesn't  
recognize her. ALDA holds out one hand,  
which FARRAR hesitantly takes. After a brief  
moment, DOROTHY ends the silence)

DOROTHY

Who wants to see Baby Gloria?

(The ladies respond simultaneously)

FARRAR

Oh, yes, please!

ALDA

I'd love to!

MEZZO

Wonderful!

DOROTHY

She may be asleep, but we can peek at her.

(The ladies exit, and SCOTTI enters)

SCOTTI

Come on, Enrico. I think Gerry's husband is about to start a fight with Martinelli.

(puts his arm around CARUSO and  
gives a squeeze)

Besides, us *Napoletani* need to stick together, no?

CARUSO

Okay, okay!

(SCOTTI exits back to the party. CARUSO moves more slowly. Before he goes in to the party, he winces in pain and brings his hand to his side. He exits.)

Blackout. END OF SCENE)

ACT III

SCENE 6

(Lights up on the Director's Box. GATTI and TOSCANINI are there together)

GATTI

The war has been over for two years now. Two years!  
And still no Wagner is allowed, no Mozart, no Strauss.  
All German opera is . . .

TOSCANINI

*Verboten.*

GATTI

Exactly.

TOSCANINI

It is strange. The war lasted three times as long for  
the English, and they played Wagner even as bombs fell  
from Zeppelins.

GATTI

Wagner in English translations.

TOSCANINI

Nevertheless.

GATTI

(looking through opera glasses)

I notice you have not asked about Madame Farrar.

TOSCANINI

(raising his own opera glasses)

Mm. And I notice, old friend, that you have not  
mentioned your wife once this evening.

GATTI

What? Well, I, I . . .

TOSCANINI

Yet you refer to a certain ballerina quite frequently.

GATTI

(flustered)

What?! Well . . . I, that is . . . [mumbling] . . .

(Spotlight on MALE SINGER, waving up at GATTI, signaling him to come down. TOSCANINI points this out to GATTI. GATTI and TOSCANINI leave the Director's Box.)

Lights up on CARUSO, in costume as Canio/Pagliacci from Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci*, on a chaise longue or sofa. He is in pain. Several others are around him, including FARRAR and ALDA. GATTI and TOSCANINI enter. On seeing TOSCANINI, FARRAR exits)

MALE SINGER

(to GATTI)

He collapsed!

GATTI

And with the house filled to capacity!

ALDA

(steps away from CARUSO's side and speaks to GATTI privately)

There is no way he can go on tonight.

GATTI

Certainly. You are right, of course.

(to CARUSO)

There is no way you can go on tonight. I will notify the audience.

CARUSO

(in pain)

No! Say nothing, *Direttore*. I will go on.

ALDA

Enrico, no. You're too ill.

CARUSO

Do not worry, *mia cara*. But, Maestro Toscanini, I fear my performance will not be worthy of your kind visit.

TOSCANINI

I am only a concerned friend tonight, Enrico. But they are right. You should not go on in this condition.

CARUSO

Of all people, Maestro, you should understand.

(sits up with difficulty)

There. You see. That is better.

GATTI

Are you sure? You truly feel better? If you feel better--

ALDA

Giulio!

CARUSO

Yes. Yes, you see? It was a momentary thing.

ALDA

Of course it's better sitting there! Maestro, tell him!

TOSCANINI

I have given my opinion. Now he must make his own decision.

ALDA

(exasperated)

You men and your confused sense of honor!

(CARUSO pulls himself together and goes onto the opera-house stage. He sings "Vesti la giubba" from *Pagliacci*)

## LIBRETTO SUMMARY

(Vesti la giubba)

RECITE! EVEN THOUGH I AM DELIRIOUS  
AND NO LONGER KNOW WHAT I AM SAYING OR DOING.  
AND YET IT MUST BE DONE. FORCE YOURSELF!  
BAH! CAN'T YOU BE A MAN?  
PUT ON YOUR COSTUME AND PAINT YOUR FACE WHITE.  
THE PEOPLE HAVE PAID AND CAN LAUGH AS THEY PLEASE.  
AND IF HARLEQUIN LURES COLOMBINA AWAY,  
LAUGH, PAGLIACCIO, AND EVERYONE WILL APPLAUD!  
TURN THE SPASMS OF PAIN INTO LAUGHTER,  
AND THE TEARS OF PAIN INTO A GRIN!  
LAUGH, PAGLIACCIO, THOUGH YOUR LOVE IS BROKEN!  
LAUGH AT THE PAIN THAT POISONS YOUR HEART!

(During the sobs that conclude the singing,  
and/or during the instrumental denouement,  
CARUSO begins to wince with pain. Clearly  
in physical distress, after the aria he  
makes his way offstage. The others come to  
his aid again; he collapses onto the same  
seating as before. ALDA pats his forehead  
with a handkerchief. CARUSO takes the  
handkerchief from her and coughs into it.  
ALDA takes it back and shows it to the  
others)

ALDA

Blood!

(Blackout. END OF SCENE)

ACT III

SCENE 7

(Lights up on FARRAR in her dressing room. TOSCANINI is standing outside her door, indecisive. He knocks)

FARRAR

*Entrez!*

TOSCANINI

(entering the dressing room)

Hello, Gerry.

(FARRAR is thrown into a momentary tizzy. She attempts to find a comfortable pose)

FARRAR

Oh! Hello! Yes, of course, please, do come in. Any word on poor Enrico?

TOSCANINI

His lovely spouse and the doctor are taking him home. For the moment, his pain seemed to subside.

FARRAR

Thank God.

TOSCANINI

Yes. I pray he will recover.

FARRAR

Yes.

(awkward pause)

You know, Maestro, your return to our shores for La Scala's American tour has been greatly anticipated.

TOSCANINI

"Maestro"? Strangely formal, given our history.

FARRAR

Well, our history is history, isn't it? Like another lifetime.

TOSCANINI

A lifetime before you became a star of the screen as well as the stage.

FARRAR

"Star"? I thought you didn't approve of that term.

TOSCANINI

Indeed. Yet I came to see you as one of the few worthy of such a description.

FARRAR

(laughs spuriously)

You are truly a maestro of flattery. Anyway, I do believe I've retired from my movie-making lark.

TOSCANINI

(noticing a framed photograph of  
Kaiser Wilhelm II)

I see that you have restored the Kaiser.

FARRAR

Restored? His photograph remained there throughout the Great War!

TOSCANINI

You are truly indomitable, Gerry. As Enrico says, "Farrar farà!"

FARRAR

My allegiance to America is absolute. But that did not make me forget old friends.

TOSCANINI

Speaking of forgetfulness, I owe you a belated congratulations on your marriage.

FARRAR

Belated? Pshaw. What's five years between old friends?

TOSCANINI

I hope you do think of us as friends, Gerry. I have thought of you often over the years.

FARRAR

(momentarily letting her guard down)

Have you?

TOSCANINI

Of course.

FARRAR

No need to concern yourself over me! *Zaza* has put my career back on top, and as for my marriage, well . . . I'm very happy in my marriage.

TOSCANINI

You deserve such happiness.

FARRAR

So everything has worked out for the best.

(After a brief pause, they speak simultaneously)

TOSCANINI

(overlapping with FARRAR)

I should be on my way.

FARRAR

(overlapping with TOSCANINI)

I really must finish preparing.

(They laugh uncomfortably)

TOSCANINI

Well. *Bene*.

(He moves toward her in a way that might suggest he intends to kiss her goodbye. This time she does nothing to preempt any such attempt. But at the last instant, he stops and takes her hand)

TOSCANINI

Then . . . until we meet again, my dear.

(He kisses her hand and gives a slight bow)

FARRAR

(in a small, sad voice)

Goodbye.

(TOSCANINI leaves the dressing room and FARRAR closes it behind him. Once he is gone, she collapses against the door and puts her hand against it. Outside, the conductor does not go far before stopping and stepping back to the dressing room entrance. He raises his hand and rests it against the outside of the door, opposite FARRAR's hand. At that moment, there is a brief instrumental reprise of "Porgi amor" from Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro*. TOSCANINI lowers his hand slowly, then walks away. FARRAR breaks down.

Fade to black. END OF SCENE)

ACT III

SCENE 8

(A single spotlight illuminates GHOST ENRICO)

GHOST ENRICO

Ladies and gentlemen, despite the prayers of my friends, I did not recover. In the spring of 1921, the doctors told me to go someplace warm. They did not like it, though, when I crossed the ocean to Italy. But I wanted to go home.

(grows panicky)

I needed to go home! I wanted to be near to Mama's resting place! I wanted--

(looking around for ALDA)

Alda! Alda are you there?

(A second spotlight on GHOST FRANCES)

GHOST FRANCES

I'm here, my friend.

GHOST ENRICO

This part scares me, Alda. All over again.

GHOST FRANCES

I know. You can do it.

(Lights up on a classically operatic death scene. CARUSO is on his death bed, looking out a nearby window, while his wife DOROTHY holds his hand, distraught)

GHOST ENRICO

My dear young wife and my little baby, Gloria, they came with me to *Napoli*. There, through the window by my bed, I could see the blue sky, and the birds that would fly past. At nighttime, I could see the stars up

## GHOST ENRICO (CONT'D)

above. Dorothy, she would tell me, "Oh, Enrico, you're gonna get better. Do not be so sad." But in her eyes, I could see the truth.

(pause)

On the second day of August, nineteen hundred and twenty-one, the pain, it got real bad. Finally . . . it stopped.

(DOROTHY, her head bowed down, is weeping. CARUSO steps from his bed, unnoticed by DOROTHY because it is only in the dying man's imagination that this happens. CARUSO sings "E lucevan le stelle" from Act III of Puccini's *Tosca*)

## LIBRETTO SUMMARY

(E lucevan le stelle)

THE STARS GLEAMED, AND THE GROUND WAS FRAGRANT.  
WITH THE CREAK OF THE GARDEN GATE  
AND LIGHT FOOTSTEPS IN THE SAND,  
SHE CAME TO ME AND FELL INTO MY ARMS.  
WITH SOFT KISSES AND SWEET CARESSES, I TREMBLED.  
GONE FOREVER IS MY DREAM OF LOVE.  
TIME HAS FLED, AND I DIE IN DESPAIR,  
BUT NEVER HAVE I LOVED LIFE SO MUCH!

(When the aria ends, CARUSO climbs back into bed and slumps over. Siegfried's Funeral Music from Wagner's *Götterdämmerung* begins. Dorothy looks up and realizes that her husband has died)

## DOROTHY

Enrico? Enrico! No! NO!

(Throwing her arms across him, she weeps. GHOST ENRICO enters the scene and strokes DOROTHY's hair lovingly. She does not react. He kisses her on the head. Siegfried's Funeral Music continues as accompaniment)

## GHOST FRANCES

(to the audience)

Enrico Caruso was only 48 years old when he died, but his legacy was monumental. His powerful personality undoubtedly had much to do with that. He could be as stubborn and petty as a toddler, but those who truly knew him considered him the most generous and gentle of men. And, of course, there was his voice. One critic described it as a "slice of nature." That voice contributed to the popularity of early phonograph records, and made Enrico Caruso the first big star of recorded music. In many minds, the passing of the Great Caruso was the passing of opera's most golden age.

(Fade to black on the death scene as GHOST ENRICO joins GHOST FRANCES)

## GHOST ENRICO

Thank you, *mia cara*, for those kind words. But what happened then? What happened after I was gone?

## GHOST FRANCES

Then? Then the modern world exploded onto the scene!

(The Entrance of the Gods Into Valhalla from Wagner's *Das Rheingold* begins. END OF SCENE)

ACT IIISCENE 9

(With the Entrance of the Gods Into Valhalla from Wagner's *Das Rheingold* as accompaniment, the scene is transformed again to the New York street scene. It is now the spring of 1922, but the theater entrance is essentially the same. REPORTER enters, watching for someone of note to interview)

## GHOST FRANCES

The 1920s was an era of beginnings, beginnings that would create a world somewhat more recognizable to you, our audience. American women finally gained the right to vote. Agatha Christie's first mystery novel was published. Coco Chanel turned suntans into a status symbol. Radio broadcasts became a part of everyday life. Children first met a bear named Winnie and a mouse named Mickey. Movies started to talk! And so much more! The Spirit of St. Louis. Penicillin. Shopping malls, supermarkets, credit cards--Oh, Lord, the shopping was getting better and better!

## GHOST ENRICO

Okay, okay--shopping! But what happened to you and to Geraldine and the others?

(SCOTTI, MEZZO, and MALE SINGER, enter enthusiastically from the theater, as if leaving after a successful performance)

## GHOST FRANCES

For us, life went on with all its usual ups and downs. Our friend Antonio Scotti remained the world's greatest baritone into the 1930s! Eventually, of course, new talents eclipsed us all. But there are certain things in life that predictability does not make any easier.

(REPORTER goes to SCOTTI, MEZZO, and MALE SINGER and begins to speak with them. Suddenly they find themselves in the path of a group of GERRYFLAPPERS, who enter at a determined march with a banner declaring their love for Geraldine Farrar. REPORTER, SCOTTI, MEZZO, and MALE SINGER are herded to one side by the GERRYFLAPPERS. From the sidelines, the three singers watch what follows with amusement. FARRAR enters from the theater door; the GERRYFLAPPERS greet her with adulation. REPORTER rushes to FARRAR's side)

FARRAR

(calling out to her fans)

*Bonjour! Bonjour tout le monde!*

REPORTER

Madame Farrar, your fans are shocked by your recent announcement. Can you tell us why you would retire from the operatic stage now, at the height of your popularity?

FARRAR

My plan was always to withdraw from the limelight when I completed my fourth decade on this glorious Earth.

(FARRAR waves at the GERRYFLAPPERS, to their delight)

REPORTER

But is there any truth to the rumor that you're leaving because a new star, Maria Jeritza, is having such great success as Tosca--one of your own signature roles?

FARRAR

(fleetinglly stern)

Nonsense.

FARRAR (CONT'D)

(back to her normal affectation)

*Ca me fait rire, vraiment.* My public has demanded that my final portrayal be that of the doomed singer, Floria Tosca. I think that shows the regard still held for my interpretation. Now, if you'll excuse me--

(to the GERRYFLAPPERS)

*Bonjour! Bonjour mes enfants!*

(FARRAR exits, escorted by her adoring fans. SCOTTI, MEZZO, and MALE SINGER look at each other, shrug, and follow the GERRY-FLAPPERS in celebratory fashion. They exit)

GHOST FRANCES

I'm going to say something, even though it's painful--Geraldine Farrar was a truly great performer, with an amazing range of talents.

GHOST ENRICO

Alda! I am so proud of you!

GHOST FRANCES

Don't get me wrong--she drove me crazy. But when Farrar was on stage, all eyes were upon her alone.

(TELLEGEN enters, evidently drunk, from the theater door)

GHOST ENRICO

There's her husband, Lou! Whatever happened to him?

(As GHOST FRANCES talks about him, TELLEGEN takes deep swigs from a flask in one hand. REPORTER approaches to ask questions, but TELLEGEN apparently asks for money to replenish his now-empty flask. REPORTER indicates empty pockets. TELLEGEN shoves roughly past the newsman and exits)

GHOST FRANCES

By the time Gerry retired in 1922, Lou Tellegen was washed up as a movie star. They went through one of the ugliest divorces ever in 1923. His name would resurface only one more time--in 1934, when he committed suicide by stabbing himself in the chest.

GHOST ENRICO

Poor Lou. When a guy like that marries a woman more famous than him, he's bound to have troubles! It would have been better for everybody if Gerry and Maestro Toscanini had ended up together.

GHOST FRANCES

Better for everyone except Mrs. Toscanini and their children.

GHOST ENRICO

Oh. Sì. But of course.

(While REPORTER stands with his back to the door, taking notes, TOSCANINI enters from the theater. The conductor does not notice the newsman. With his folded umbrella in hand, the conductor looks up, checking for rain. He pulls up his collar and pulls down the brim of his hat. When REPORTER turns around, they spot each other. TOSCANINI practically runs away, with REPORTER hot on his heels)

GHOST FRANCES

Arturo Toscanini would know thirty-five more years as the world's preeminent conductor. Among other places, he would conduct at La Scala, the New York Philharmonic, and even as the first non-German to conduct at the Wagnerian festival in Bayreuth. He would know years of celebrity on the radio with the NBC Symphony Orchestra. Maestro Toscanini would go down in history as the greatest conductor of the 20th Century.

GHOST ENRICO

And you, Alda? Please tell us that you enjoyed a long and wonderful life.

(ALDA enters from the theater. REPORTER, now returning, engages her in conversation)

GHOST FRANCES

I did. I enjoyed a long life filled with friends and fun and love and music. Which is not to say that life was always a bowl of cherries.

GHOST ENRICO

No. No life is always a cherry bowl.

(GATTI and ROSINA enter together from the theater. ALDA diverts REPORTER's attention until ROSINA moves past. GATTI joins ALDA's side for the sake of propriety)

GHOST FRANCES

Somehow--mostly by living separately--my marriage to Signor Giulio Gatti-Casazza survived until 1928. The best part was making his little ballerina wait for her chance to be the next Mrs. Gatti. Not long after he and I divorced, I went into a semi-retirement. I still saw Dorothy Caruso from time to time, and I even made a recording once with Enrico and Dorothy's daughter, Gloria.

(DOROTHY Caruso enters as if coming to meet ALDA. Arm in arm, they exit. GATTI and REPORTER follow and exit. GHOST ENRICO and GHOST FRANCES look at each other)

GHOST ENRICO

It is time to go, my friend.

GHOST FRANCES

(reluctant)

Yes.

(steps toward the audience)

But I'm still jealous of them. Am I terrible, Enrico? I am so jealous of life!

GHOST ENRICO

I hope that they are, too, these good people. I hope they are remembering to cherish each moment of life.

GHOST FRANCES

(to the audience)

Yes. Yes, you must! No matter how ill-used you feel at times, no matter what tribulations you face--take refuge wherever it is that you find beauty. Forge on past the hours of distress. Open your mind to the music and drama and passion of life! And don't miss one single note.

GHOST ENRICO

Ready?

GHOST FRANCES

I suppose.

(They link arms and exit into the theater door.)

FARRAR is spotlighted. She sings "Vissi d'arte" from Act II of Puccini's *Tosca*)

LIBRETTO SUMMARY

(Vissi d'arte)

I LIVED FOR ART, I LIVED FOR LOVE!  
I NEVER HARMED A LIVING SOUL!  
I TRIED TO RELIEVE AS MANY MISFORTUNES AS I COULD.  
MY PRAYERS WERE ALWAYS GIVEN IN TRUE FAITH.  
ALWAYS WITH TRUE FAITH, I BROUGHT FLOWERS TO THE  
ALTAR.  
SO WHY, O LORD, MUST I SUFFER THIS HOUR OF DISTRESS?  
I GAVE JEWELS FOR THE MADONNA,  
AND I GAVE MY SONG TO THE STARS IN HEAVEN,  
WHICH ONLY SEEMED TO SHINE WITH MORE BEAUTY.  
IN THIS HOUR OF DISTRESS, THEN, WHY, O LORD,  
IS THIS HAPPENING TO ME?

THE END