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Ondine

A Romantic Fantasy in Three Acts

by Jean Giraudoux

Adapted by Maurice Valency

A SAMUEL FRENCH ACTING EDITION



New York Hollywood London Toronto

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IMPORTANT MUSIC INFORMATION

The music for ONDINE , by Virgil Thompson, is scored for flute, harp, celesta, percussion (one player) and string quartet, plus optional string bass. Recordings of this music, or sheet music, are available through Boosey & Hawkes, Inc.; ATTN: Sylvia Goldstein; 24 West 57th Street; New York, NY 10019. Copies of the VOCAL MUSIC are available from Samuel French, Inc. at \$3.00 per copy. MUSIC ROYALTY for the use of this vocal music is \$5.00 per performance for amateurs. Stock music royalty is quoted upon application.

SAMUEL FRENCH, INC. can supply a sound effects cassette tape for ONDINE at \$32.50, plus postage.

ONDINE

Play by Jean Giraudoux; adapted by Maurice Valency;
 staged by Alfred Lunt; music by Virgil Thomson;
 settings by Peter Larkin; costumes by Richard
 Whorf; lighting by Jean Rosenthal; production stage
 manager William Chambers; presented by the Play-
 wrights' Company at the 45th St. Theatre, Feb. 18,
 1954.

THE CAST

AUGUSTE	<i>John Alexander</i>
EUGENIE	<i>Edith King</i>
RITTER HANS	<i>Mel Ferrer</i>
ONDINE	<i>Audrey Hepburn</i>
THE ONDINES	<i>Dran Seltz</i>
	<i>Tani Seltz</i>
	<i>Sonia Torgeson</i>
OLD ONE	<i>Robert Middleton</i>
LORD CHAMBERLAIN	<i>Alan Hewitt</i>
SUPERINTENDENT OF THE THEATRE	<i>Lloyd Gough</i>
TRAINER OF SEALS	<i>James Lamphier</i>
BERTHA	<i>Marion Seldes</i>
BERTRAM	<i>Peter Brandon</i>
VIOLANTE	<i>Ann Meacham</i>
ANGELIQUE	<i>Gaye Jordan</i>
VENUS	<i>Jan Sherwood</i>
MATHO	<i>Barry O'Hara</i>
SALAMMBO	<i>Lily Paget</i>
A LORD	<i>William Le Massena</i>
A LADY	<i>Stacy Graham</i>
ILLUSIONIST (THE OLD ONE)	<i>Robert Middleton</i>
THE KING	<i>William Podmore</i>
A SERVANT	<i>James Lamphier</i>
FIRST FISHERMAN	<i>Lloyd Gough</i>
SECOND FISHERMAN (THE OLD ONE) .	<i>Robert Middleton</i>
FIRST JUDGE	<i>Alan Hewitt</i>
SECOND JUDGE	<i>William Le Massena</i>
EXECUTIONER	<i>Robert Crawley</i>
KITCHEN MAID	<i>Stacy Graham</i>

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT ONE

A Fisherman's Cottage.

ACT TWO

A Hall in the King's Palace.

ACT THREE

The Courtyard in the Castle of the Wittenstein.

Ondine

ACT ONE

The house Curtain rises, revealing a scrim. On the count of four, the music begins—MUSIC CUE #1—and the LIGHTS of the hut, behind the scrim, slowly fade up. On the count of ten, the scrim rises. On the count of twelve, add MUSIC CUE #1B (or clap of THUNDER). MUSIC #1 continues.

SCENE: *A fisherman's hut near a lake in the forest. The living room has a fireplace, down Right; a door that leads into the kitchen, up Right; and a door that leads out into the forest, up Left Center. The windows, at Left, are shuttered. There is a table Right Center, with a bench behind and a stool to the Left of it. A heavy chair, down Left. It is night, the fire is blazing, and a storm is raging.*

TIME: *The Middle Ages.*

AT RISE: *Two old people, AUGUSTE and EUGENIE, are in the room. EUGENIE is seated, knitting, on a stool down of the fireplace, Right. AUGUSTE is seated on the stool Left of the table.*

AUGUSTE. What can she be doing out there at this hour?

EUGENIE. Don't worry about her. She can see in the dark.

AUGUSTE. (*Rises, crosses to window.*) In this storm!
(*Add MUSIC CUE #1BA, or clap of THUNDER.*)

EUGENIE. She's quite safe. The rain doesn't wet her.

AUGUSTE. (*Opens window.*) She's singing. Is it she that's singing? You think that's her voice?

EUGENIE. Whose else? There is no other house within twenty leagues.

AUGUSTE. Now it comes from the top of the waterfall and now from the middle of the lake.

EUGENIE. Because now she's on top of the waterfall and now in the middle of the lake.

AUGUSTE. (*Closes window, crosses Right to table.*) It's all so simple, isn't it? But did you, by any chance, ever amuse yourself by diving down the waterfalls in the nude when you were her age?

EUGENIE. Yes. Once. (*FADE OUT MUSIC #1.*)

AUGUSTE. Eugenie! (*Sits Left of table.*)

EUGENIE. They fished me out by the feet. Every girl tries to do just once what Ondine does fifty times a day. I jumped into the whirlpool once, and I tried to catch the waterfall once in a bowl, and once I tried to walk on the water. It seems very long ago.

(*MUSIC CUE #1D, or low rumble of THUNDER.*)

AUGUSTE. You've spoiled her, Eugenie. A girl of sixteen has no business running around in the forest in the dark in a storm.* A well brought-up girl does not insist on doing her sewing on the brink of a waterfall. She doesn't insist on saying her prayers under water. Where would we be today if you had been brought up like that?

(**MUSIC CUE #1E, or low rumble of THUNDER.*)

EUGENIE. (*Rises, stirs pot on fire.*) She's very helpful with the housework.

AUGUSTE. That brings up another question.

EUGENIE. Doesn't she wash the dishes? Doesn't she clean your shoes?

AUGUSTE. I don't know. Does she?

EUGENIE. (*Picking up dish from table*) It's not clean, this dish?

AUGUSTE. (*Rises.*) That's not the point. Have you ever, in all her life, seen her cleaning or washing anything?

EUGENIE. (*Sits on stool, down Right.*) What difference

does it make whether or not I've seen her. She gets it done.

AUGUSTE. (*Crosses to her.*) Yes. But explain this—three dishes or twelve, one shoe or eight, it takes her exactly the same time to do them. She takes them out; she's hardly gone a minute, and she's back. The dish-cloth is dry. The shoe-polish hasn't been used. But everything is clean, everything sparkles. And that affair of the golden plates on her birthday*—did you ever get to the bottom of that? And her hands. Why are they never soiled, like everyone else's?

(*MUSIC CUE #1F, or low rumble of THUNDER.)

EUGENIE. Because she's not like anyone else. She's never been like anyone else.

AUGUSTE. Today she lifted the gate of the trout-pond. All the trout are gone. All but the one I brought home.* (*The windows spring open suddenly. LIGHTNING.*) Who did that? (LIGHT CUE #1. *MUSIC CUE #2.)

EUGENIE. The wind, Auguste.

AUGUSTE. I hope she doesn't start that performance again with the lightning, and those horrible heads that peer in at the window out of the storm. The old man with the crown—oh!

EUGENIE. I love the woman with the pearls.

AUGUSTE. Well I don't!

EUGENIE. Well, bar the window if you're afraid.

AUGUSTE. (*Crosses to close the windows.*) There!

(*There is a flash of LIGHTNING. LIGHT CUE #2. MUSIC CUE #2B. The head of an old MAN with a crown and a streaming beard appears in the window frame.*)

THE HEAD. No lock so strong, no bar so stout, will serve to keep the old one out! No use, Auguste!

AUGUSTE. I'll show you if it's no use! There! Now perhaps— (*He closes the window.*)

(*It immediately bursts open. There appears, in another*

LIGHTNING flash, a charming NAIAD's head with a necklace of pearls.)

THE NAIAD. Good evening, Eugenie!

(EUGENIE waves. NAIAD vanishes.)

EUGENIE. Ondine, you're annoying your father. It's time to come in.

AUGUSTE. *(Closing window)* Ondine, I'm going to count up to three. If you're not inside when I finish, I'll bolt the door.* And you can sleep out.

*(*MUSIC CUE #2C, or clap of THUNDER.)*

EUGENIE. You're not serious?

AUGUSTE. You'll see if I'm serious.* Ondine, one!

*(*MUSIC CUE #2D, or clap of THUNDER.)*

EUGENIE. *(Stops her ears.)* Stop it, Auguste. It's deafening.

AUGUSTE. Am I doing it? Ondine, two!*

*(*MUSIC CUE #2E, or clap of THUNDER.)*

(LIGHTNING.)

EUGENIE. Really, Auguste, I don't see the use—well, then, hurry! We all know you can count up to three.

AUGUSTE. Ondine, three!

(CUT OR FADE OUT MUSIC #2.)

EUGENIE. *(Waiting for the thunder)* Well, well, finish, Auguste, finish—

(There is no thunder.)

AUGUSTE. I've finished. *(He bolts the door.)* There. Now perhaps we can have a little peace. I'd like to see anyone come in now.

(The door springs open. They turn in terror. A KNIGHT*

in full armor stands on the threshold. He holds his helmet under his arm.)

*(*MUSIC CUE #3. LIGHT CUE #3.)*

RITTER HANS. *(Clicking his heels)* Ritter Hans von Wittenstein zu Wittenstein.

AUGUSTE. *(Bows.)* My name is Auguste. I am a fisherman.

RITTER HANS. I took the liberty of putting my horse in your shed. The horse, as we know, is the most important part of the knight-errant. And the most sensitive.

AUGUSTE. I'll go and rub him down at once, my lord.

HANS. Thanks very much. I've already done it. I make it an invariable rule, away from home, to rub down my horse myself. May I sit down? *(Crosses to stool, Left of table.)*

AUGUSTE. The house is yours, my lord.

(MUSIC CUE #3A, or clap of THUNDER.)

HANS. *(Sets down his helmet and puts by his sword.)* What a storm! The water has been running down my neck steadily since noon. Of course it doesn't stay. It runs out again through the blood-gutters. But once it gets in, the damage is done. That's what we fear most, we knights-errant, the rain. The rain. And, of course, a flea. Once a flea gets in here—

AUGUSTE. Would you care to remove your armor, my lord?

HANS. My dear Auguste, have you ever watched a lobster shed his carapace? Then you know, it's not the affair of a moment. *(Sits.)* I will rest first. You said your name was Auguste, I believe?

AUGUSTE. And my wife, Eugenie.

HANS. *(Bows to EUGENIE.)* Ah. Auguste and Eugenie. Charming names.

EUGENIE. Excuse them, my lord. They are not names for knights-errant.

HANS. *(Removing his gloves)* Dear Eugenie, when a knight-errant has spent a month in the forest, searching in vain for Osmond and Pharamond, you cannot imagine

his joy when he comes suddenly at dinner time upon Auguste and Eugenie.

EUGENIE. (*Taking gloves*) Thank you, my lord. It's ill-mannered, I know, to annoy a guest with questions, but perhaps you will forgive this one: are you hungry?

HANS. I am hungry. I am extremely hungry. It will give me great pleasure to share your meal.

EUGENIE. We have already supped, my lord. But there is a trout. Would you honor us by eating it?

(AUGUSTE *places helmet on shelf over fireplace.*)

HANS. With the greatest pleasure.

EUGENIE. (*Placing gloves by helmet*) Would you like it broiled or fried?

HANS. Poached, if you please.

(AUGUSTE and EUGENIE *make a gesture of fear.*)

EUGENIE. Poached? I really do them best sauté, meunière, with a little white butter. It's very good.

HANS. Since you ask my preference—

AUGUSTE. Gratinée, perhaps with fresh cream?

HANS. When we say poached—that's when the fish is thrown into the boiling water alive?

EUGENIE. Yes. Alive.

HANS. So that the fish retains all its tenderness because the boiling water surprises it?

AUGUSTE. Surprises is the word, my lord.

HANS. Then that's it. I'll have it poached.

BOTH. Broiled—

AUGUSTE. They're very nice—

EUGENIE. —with a slice of lemon—

HANS. Poached, if you please.

(EUGENIE *shrugs and goes into the kitchen.*)

I'm happy to see, Auguste, that knights-errant are not unwelcome in these parts—?

AUGUSTE. (*Helping HANS remove Right elbow-piece*) Much more welcome than armies, my lord. When the

winter is over, the robins come; when the wars are over, the knights. A knight-errant is a sign of peace.

HANS. I love war.

AUGUSTE. (*Setting elbow-piece on floor above fireplace*) Each man to his taste, my lord.

HANS. Don't misunderstand me. (*Expansively*) If I love war, it's because by nature I'm a friendly person. I love company. Now in a war, you always have someone to talk to. If your comrades don't feel like chatting, there's always the enemy—you can always get yourself a prisoner. But a knight-errant—! Would you believe it, in all the month I've spent riding about this enchanted forest, I haven't so much as heard a human voice.

AUGUSTE. (*Working on Left elbow-piece*) But isn't it true that knights-errant can understand the language of animals?

HANS. Ah, yes, that's true enough—they speak to us, the animals. And we understand them very well. But it's not quite what you think, the language of the animals. For us every animal is a symbol, and its message is written indelibly on our souls. But that's it, you see, the animals write—they don't speak.

AUGUSTE. They don't speak?

HANS. They speak without speaking. What they say is important, of course. The stag speaks to us of nobility. The unicorn, of chastity. The lion, of courage. It's stimulating—but you don't call that a conversation.

AUGUSTE. But the birds—?

HANS. To tell you the truth, Auguste, I'm a little disappointed in the birds. They chatter incessantly. But they're not good listeners.

AUGUSTE. (*Setting second elbow-piece beside first*) Well then, if I may ask, what sent you into the black forest?

HANS. What do you suppose? A woman.

AUGUSTE. (*Wiping off leg and foot armor pieces with a rag*) I ask no more questions, my lord.

HANS. Please, Auguste. It's thirty days since I've said

a word about her to a living soul. No, no, ask me questions. Ask me anything. Ask me her name.

AUGUSTE. My lord—I wouldn't dare.

HANS. Ask me. Ask me.

AUGUSTE. What is her name, my lord?

HANS. Bertha. The Princess Bertha! Tell me, fisherman, have you ever heard such a beautiful name as Bertha?

AUGUSTE. (*Rises; crosses to Left of HANS; kneels, wiping other leg*) It's beautiful, my lord.

HANS. Anybody can be called Angelica, Diana, Violante. But she alone deserves a name so solemn, vibrating, passionate. Bertha!

(*EUGENIE comes in with a large tablecloth.*)

And now, Eugenie, you will ask me is she beautiful?

EUGENIE. Is she beautiful?

AUGUSTE. We are speaking of Bertha, the Princess Bertha, Eugenie.

EUGENIE. (*The tablecloth reaches floor on all sides.*) Ah, yes, of course. And is she beautiful?

HANS. Eugenie, it is I who am entrusted with the purchase of horses for the king. You understand, then, my eye is sharp. No blemish, however slight, ever escapes me. The Angelica in question is not bad, but she has a ridge in her left thumb-nail. Violante has a fleck of gold in her eyes. Bertha is flawless.

AUGUSTE. That must be a lovely thing to see, a fleck of gold—

EUGENIE. Stick to your fishing!

HANS. Don't deceive yourself, my dear fellow. That might amuse you, for a day or two, a fleck of gold, but—

AUGUSTE. What is it like, exactly?

HANS. Well, it sparkles.

AUGUSTE. Like a grain of mica?

EUGENIE. Come, Auguste—you're getting on our nerves with your gold and your mica. Let the knight speak.

(*AUGUSTE rises from his knees, crosses Left. During next speech, he moves up to door.*)

HANS. Yes, my dear Auguste, why this sudden partiality for Violante? Violante, when she joins with us in the hunt, crowns a white mare. And it's a pretty sight, a redhaired girl on a white mare, there's no denying it. And Violante, when she brings the queen the three-branched candlestick, always bears it high in both hands, like the celebrant approaching the altar. But Violante, when the old Duke takes her hand and tells her a spicy story, never laughs. She cries.

AUGUSTE. Violante cries?

HANS. I know. You are going to ask me what happens to these flecks of gold when they are bathed in tears—

EUGENIE. (*Starting out to kitchen, up Right*) He's surely thinking of it, my lord. Once he gets his mind on anything—!

HANS. Yes, he will think of it till the day when he sees Bertha. For you shall certainly come to our wedding, both of you. You are invited.

AUGUSTE. (*Crossing Right as she goes off*) You hear that, Eugenie!

HANS. The condition Bertha made to our marriage was that I should come to her after spending a month in the forest. And if I do come back, it will be thanks to you, my friends.* And so, you shall see your Violante, fisherman. You shall see what effect she makes next to my great dark angel!

(*MUSIC CUE #4.)

(*LIGHTNING. The door† opens slowly. ONDINE appears on the threshold. She stands there motionless for a moment.*)

AUGUSTE. Ondine!

ONDINE. How beautiful he is!

AUGUSTE. What did she say?

ONDINE. I said, how beautiful he is!

†The door is double hinged and can open either way—Right or Left. For ONDINE it always opens by the Right hinge. For all others, by the Left. At this point, it is opened by a property man hidden behind the wall of the hut by means of a long hook that fits into a slot on the upstage side of the door. AUGUSTE's last move to the door was to prepare for this move.

AUGUSTE. It is our daughter, my lord. She has no manners.

ONDINE. It's thrilling to know that men are so beautiful. My heart is racing.

AUGUSTE. Will you keep still?

ONDINE. I'm trembling from head to foot.

AUGUSTE. She's only sixteen, my lord.

ONDINE. I knew there must be some reason for being a girl. The reason is that men are so beautiful.

AUGUSTE. You are embarrassing our guest, Ondine.

ONDINE. I'm not embarrassing him. He likes me. What's your name?

AUGUSTE. That's not the way to speak to a knight, my child.

ONDINE. (*Moves down to behind HANS.*) How handsome he is! Look at his ear, Father. It's a perfect little shell. Do you expect me to treat it like a stranger? To whom do you belong, little shell? What is his name?

HANS. His name is Hans.

ONDINE. (*Crosses Left.*) Hans! I should have guessed. When people are happy and they open their mouths, they say Hans.

HANS. (*Rises; clicks heels.*) Hans von Wittenstein.

ONDINE. When there is sun in the morning, and the cloud of sadness lifts from your soul, when you sigh, you say Hans.

HANS. Hans von Wittenstein zu Wittenstein.

ONDINE. How lovely when a name makes its own echo! Why have you come, Hans? To take me away?

AUGUSTE. That will do, Ondine. Go to your room now.

ONDINE. (*To HANS.*) Very well, take me. Take me with you.

EUGENIE. (*Comes in with the trout on a platter; places it on table.*) Here is your trout, my lord.

HANS. It looks magnificent.

ONDINE. His trout! Mother! You dared to poach a trout!

EUGENIE. Be quiet. In any case, it's done.

ONDINE. (*Kneels at table.*) Oh, my poor darling! What have they done to you?

AUGUSTE. You're not going to make a scene before our guest, Ondine?

HANS. It was I, my girl, who asked them to do it.

ONDINE. (*Rises; crosses to his Left.*) You? I should have known. When one looks closely at your face, it all becomes clear. You're not very bright, are you? No.

EUGENIE. She doesn't know what she's saying, my lord.

ONDINE. That's chivalry! That's courage! You run about looking for giants who don't exist, and when you come upon a little creature springing joyously in the clear water, you boil it alive.

HANS. (*Crosses to up of table.*) And I eat it. And I find it delicious.

ONDINE. You shall see how delicious it is! (*She snatches up the fish and throws it out of the window.*)

AUGUSTE AND EUGENIE. Ondine!

ONDINE. Now eat it! (*She runs to the door.*)

EUGENIE. Where are you going, child?

ONDINE. There is someone out there who knows about men. Now I shall listen to him.

AUGUSTE. Ondine—!

ONDINE. I shall know what they are, what they do, what they become. And so much the worse for you!

AUGUSTE. (*Moves up to door.*) You're not going out.

(*She springs aside.*)

ONDINE. (*Crossing to HANS*) I already know that they lie, that their beauty is ugly, and that their courage is cowardice. And I already know that I hate them. (*Runs to door.*)

HANS. And they already know that they love you.

ONDINE. (*Stops at the door, without turning.*) What did he say?

HANS. Nothing.

ONDINE. Say it once more, just to see.

HANS. They already know that they love you.

ONDINE. I hate them! (*She runs out into the darkness.*)
(*MUSIC CUE #5, or roll of THUNDER.*)
(*LIGHTNING.*)

HANS. Congratulations! You've brought her up well.

AUGUSTE. God knows I scold her often enough.

HANS. (*Sits on bench above table.*) You should beat her.

EUGENIE. Beat her? Try and catch her.

HANS. You should send her to bed without supper.

AUGUSTE. What good would that do? She's never hungry.

HANS. She's lucky there. I'm starved.

AUGUSTE. (*Crosses Right, down of table, takes platter.*)
That was the last of the trout, my lord. But we have a smoked ham.

EUGENIE. (*Goes off Right.*) I'll go down and cut you some slices.

HANS. Then she permits you to kill her poor darling pigs?

AUGUSTE. Ondine has no interest in pigs.

HANS. That's a mercy.

AUGUSTE. You are annoyed with the girl, my lord.

HANS. I'm annoyed because I'm vain, just as she said. When she said I was handsome, though I know I'm not handsome, I was pleased. And when she said I was a coward, though I know I'm no coward, I was hurt. I'm annoyed with myself.

AUGUSTE. You're very kind to take it so well.

HANS. Oh, I don't take it well at all. I'm furious.

EUGENIE. (*Calling from off up Right.*) Where is the ham, Auguste? I can't find it.

AUGUSTE. The ham? Why, the ham is hanging in the cellar.

EUGENIE. I can't find it; I've looked everywhere.

AUGUSTE. Excuse me, my lord, I'll go and get it. (*He goes out.*)

(ONDINE comes in noiselessly. She sits on stool Left of table.)

(LIGHT CUE #3C.)

ONDINE. My name is Ondine.

HANS. (*Without turning.*) It's a pretty name.

ONDINE. Hans and Ondine. There are no more beautiful names in the world, are there?

HANS. Yes. Ondine and Hans.

ONDINE. Oh no. Hans first. He is the man. He commands. Ondine is the girl. She is always one step behind. She keeps quiet.

HANS. She keeps quiet?

ONDINE. Hans is always one step ahead. In the processions—before the king—before all the world, he goes first. He is the first to age. He is the first to die. (*Rises.*) It's terrible! But Ondine follows at once. She kills herself.

HANS. What are you talking about?

ONDINE. There is the little moment of agony to live through. The moment that comes after the death of Hans. But it is short.

HANS. At your age, luckily, it doesn't mean much to talk about it.

ONDINE. At my age? Is that what you think? Very well, try— (*She pulls his dagger from its sheath.*) Here, kill yourself. You'll see if I am not dead the next moment.

HANS. (*Takes the dagger from her hand.*) I never felt less like killing myself.

ONDINE. Say you don't love me. You'll see if I don't die.

HANS. Fifteen minutes ago, you didn't even know I existed. And now you want to kill yourself on my account. I thought we had quarreled on account of the trout.

ONDINE. (*Sits Left of table.*) Oh, I can't be bothered with the trout. They're not very clever, the trout. If they don't like to be caught, all they have to do is to keep away from me. It's different with me. I want to be caught.

HANS. In spite of what your mysterious friend outside just told you about men?

ONDINE. (*Crossing up to door, Left*) I learned nothing from him that I didn't already know.

HANS. Naturally not. You asked the questions. You gave the answers.

ONDINE. Don't joke. He's very near. And he's very dangerous.

HANS. Who?

ONDINE. The Old One. The King of the Sea.

HANS. The King of the Sea?

ONDINE. I'm afraid, Hans.

HANS. (*Smiles.*) You're afraid of what?

ONDINE. I'm afraid you will deceive me. That's what he said. But he lied. He also said you were not handsome. And you are.

HANS. Do you know that you're beautiful?

ONDINE. No. I don't know it yet. I would like to be beautiful. But I can be beautiful only if I love you.

HANS. You're a little liar. You were just as beautiful a moment ago when you hated me. Is that all he told you?

ONDINE. He said that if ever I kissed you, I would be lost. That was silly of him. Because I hadn't ever thought of it till then.

HANS. And now you are thinking of it?

ONDINE. Very much.

HANS. It does no harm to think.

ONDINE. Oh no. It's good to think about it. Of course, in the end I shall do it. But first we shall wait a long time, as long as possible. We shall wait an hour. Then in after years we shall have this hour always to remember. The hour before you kissed me.

HANS. My little Ondine—

ONDINE. The hour before you said you loved me. (*Breaks down Left. Squats on her heels.*) Hans, I can't wait an hour. There isn't time. Tell me now. Say it.

HANS. You think that's something one just says—like that?

ONDINE. (*Rises; crosses Right to fireplace.*) No? Well, then speak, command. What must I do? What is the appropriate posture? Do I sit in your lap, is that it?

HANS. In my lap in full armor?

ONDINE. Oh. Take it off quickly.

HANS. Quickly! Do you know what you're saying? It takes me fifteen minutes to unbolt the shoulder-plates alone.

ONDINE. (*Standing in front of table.*) I have a way of removing armor.†

(*MUSIC CUE #6. LIGHT CUE #3D.*)
(*The armor falls into trap under table.*)

HANS. (*He breaks down Left, throwing cape over heavy chair.*) Well! Well! Well!

ONDINE. Sit down.

HANS. (*He sits.*) You're mad, Ondine!

ONDINE. (*Moving towards him.*) Yes. That's what he said.

HANS. And my arms—do you think they open to the first-comer?

ONDINE. I have a way of opening arms—

(*HANS opens his arms, with an expression of surprise.*)

(*She springs into his lap.*)* And of closing them.

(**MUSIC CUE #7.*)
(*He closes them. A WOMAN'S VOICE is heard outside.*)

THE VOICE. Ondine!

ONDINE. (*Turns furiously to the window.*) Go away. Nobody called you.

THE VOICE. Ondine! Be careful!

ONDINE. Do I meddle in your affairs? Did you consult me about your husband?

†The trap is placed directly under the table. EUGENIE has masked the downstage end and sides of the table with the cloth. When HANS sits on the bench upstage of the table, he further masks with his cape. As soon as he sits, the trap lowers, a property man steps on it and starts removing his leg armor. The body armor is constructed so that, although solid in front, it is held at the back by steel springs which release when jerked downward by the property man on cue. This trap also serves for the entrance of VENUS in the Second Act.

THE VOICE. Ondine!

ONDINE. A fine handsome husband you found yourself, wasn't it? A seal with no nose. He gave you a string of pearls and you were his. And not even matched pearls.

HANS. To whom are you speaking, Ondine?

ONDINE. Oh, one of the neighbors.

HANS. Do you have neighbors?

ONDINE. Thousands. And all jealous.

THREE VOICES. Ondine!

HANS. Their voices are charming.

ONDINE. My name is charming, not their voices. Kiss me, Hans. Kiss me.

A MAN'S VOICE. Ondine!

ONDINE. It's too late, Old One. Let me alone.

HANS. Is that the friend?

ONDINE. I'm sitting in his lap. He loves me.

THE MAN'S VOICE. Ondine!

ONDINE. It's too late, I say. It's finished.* I'm already his mistress. Yes, his mistress. You don't understand? That's another word they have for wife.

(*CUT MUSIC.)

(There is a NOISE at the kitchen door.)

AUGUSTE. *(Off.)* How in the world did it ever get up there, Eugenie?

HANS. *(Pushing ONDINE gently from his lap.)* That's your father, Ondine.

ONDINE. *(She drops, cross-legged, to the floor.)* Oh.

HANS. What?

ONDINE. I didn't think I had taught you that?

HANS. What?

ONDINE. My way of opening arms.

(AUGUSTE comes in Right.)

EUGENIE. *(Off.)* Your supper is almost ready, my lord.

AUGUSTE. I can't imagine who put the ham in the attic.

ONDINE. I did. So I could be alone with Hans.

AUGUSTE. Ondine! Have you no shame?

ONDINE. I've not wasted my time. He's going to marry me.

AUGUSTE. You might help your mother lay the table instead of talking nonsense.

ONDINE. (*Rises; crosses to fireplace.*) You're right. From now on, it's I who will serve Hans.

AUGUSTE. I brought up a bottle of wine, my lord. If you permit, we shall drink a glass with you.

HANS. Thank you.

AUGUSTE. The glasses, Ondine.

ONDINE. (*Setting glass, plate, silver before HANS.*) You will have to teach me everything, my lord Hans. From morning to night, I shall be your handmaid. In the morning, I shall wake you—

HANS. You won't find that easy. I sleep very soundly.

ONDINE. (*Kneels at Right end of table and looks at him closely.*) Tell me, what does one do to awaken you?

(*EUGENIE comes out with a platter. AUGUSTE takes it.*)

EUGENIE. (*Sitting on stool down of fireplace.*) The silver, Ondine.

ONDINE. Oh, Father, you set the table. Hans is teaching me how to awaken him. Let's see, Hans. Make believe you're asleep.

HANS. With this wonderful cooking? Out of the question.

ONDINE. Wake up, little Hans. It's dawn. Take this kiss in your darkness and this in your day—

HANS. (*Accepting a slice of ham from AUGUSTE.*) Thank you.

AUGUSTE. Pay no attention to the child, my lord. She doesn't know what she's saying.

ONDINE. I love you.

EUGENIE. (*Knitting.*) She's young. She becomes attached— It's nothing.

ONDINE. I love you, Hans.

HANS. (*Eating.*) This is what I call ham!

AUGUSTE. It's smoked with juniper.

HANS. Marvelous.

ONDINE. You don't want to be loved, you want to be stuffed.

HANS. Everything in its place, my dear.

EUGENIE. Ah, you'd make a fine wife, you would!

ONDINE. I?

AUGUSTE. (*Upstage of table.*) Silence, Ondine. I want to say a word. (*He lifts his glass.*)

ONDINE. I shall certainly make a fine wife. You think you're a wife because you know how to cook a ham? That's not being a wife.

HANS. No? What else is it?

ONDINE. It's to be everything your husband is and everything he loves. It's to be the humblest part of him and the noblest. I shall be the shoes on your feet, my husband. I shall be the breath of your lungs. I shall be the hilt of your sword and the pommel of your saddle. I shall be your tears, your laughter and your dreams.

(AUGUSTE clears his throat.)

EUGENIE. Quiet, Ondine! Your father wishes to speak.

AUGUSTE. (*Lifting his glass again.*) My lord, since you are doing us the honor of spending the night under our humble roof—

ONDINE. A hundred nights. A thousand nights—

AUGUSTE. Permit me to drink to the lady of your heart.

ONDINE. How nice of you, Father!

AUGUSTE. She who is even now trembling for your safety—

ONDINE. She's not trembling now. He's safe enough.

AUGUSTE. She whom you rightly call the most beautiful of women, although for my part, I am a little partial to Violante on account of—

EUGENIE. Yes, yes, we know. Go on.

AUGUSTE. I drink, then, to the most beautiful and noblest of women, to your dark angel, to your betrothed, the Princess Bertha.

ONDINE. What name did you say?

AUGUSTE. The name the knight told me.

ONDINE. Since when am I called Bertha?

EUGENIE. We were not speaking of you, dear.

AUGUSTE. The knight is going to marry the Princess Bertha, Ondine, as soon as he returns to court. Isn't that so, my lord?

ONDINE. It's not so at all!

HANS. My little Ondine—

ONDINE. (*Rising.*) Ah, he's emerging from the ham at last, that one. Well, speak, since your mouth is no longer full—is there a Bertha? Yes or no?

HANS. Let me explain—

ONDINE. Is there a Bertha? Yes or no?

HANS. (*Rises.*) Yes. There is a Bertha. No. There was a Bertha.

ONDINE. So it's true, what he told me about men! They're all deceivers. They draw you to them with a thousand tricks, they seat you in their laps, they kiss you till you can't breathe—and all the time they are thinking of a dark angel called Bertha!

HANS. I did nothing like that to you, Ondine!

ONDINE. You did. Don't you dare deny it. (*She bites her arm.*) Look at that, Father. See how he bit me? Let him deny it, if he dares!

HANS. You don't believe all this nonsense, I hope?

ONDINE. (*Crosses to down Left.*) I shall be the humblest part of you and the noblest, he said. I am your bare feet. I am the wine you drink and the bread you eat. Those were his words, Mother! And the things one has to do for him! One has to spend the whole morning waking him up. One has to kill oneself the moment he dies. Yes. And all the time, in their secret hearts, they are nursing the thought of a dark angel called Bertha!

HANS. Ondine, on my word—

ONDINE. Don't come near me! (*She opens the door.* It is raining heavily.*) (*MUSIC CUE #8.)

HANS. Ondine, really!

ONDINE. So! Her name is Bertha!

HANS. I think there is no longer any Bertha, Ondine.

ONDINE. Leave this house at once, or I shall never enter it again! (*She turns suddenly.*) What did you say?

HANS. I said, I think there is no longer any Bertha, Ondine.

ONDINE. You lie! Farewell.

(*She runs out into the rain. The VOICES shriek for joy.*)

HANS. Ondine!* (*He runs to the door.*)

(*FADE MUSIC SLOWLY.)

AUGUSTE. My lord, my lord—you'll get drenched!

EUGENIE. (*Rises.*) There's a pretty kettle of fish.

AUGUSTE. I might as well tell him everything now.

EUGENIE. Yes, you might as well tell him everything.

HANS. (*Turns.*) She's not your daughter, is she?

EUGENIE. No, my lord.

AUGUSTE. We had a daughter.

EUGENIE. She was stolen—

AUGUSTE. From the cradle.

HANS. And who left Ondine with you?

AUGUSTE. We found her at the edge of the lake the day our daughter disappeared.

HANS. These things happen only in fairy tales.

AUGUSTE. Yes, my lord. But it happened to us.

HANS. (*Closing door.*) It is you who must be asked for her hand?

AUGUSTE. She calls us her parents, my lord.

HANS. (*Bows to them.*) Then, my friends, I have the honor of asking you for the hand of Ondine.

AUGUSTE. My lord, are you in your right mind?

HANS. I have never been more serious in my life. I ask you for the hand of Ondine with nothing in mind but the hand of Ondine. I want to hold this hand in mine. I want it to lead me to church, to war, and when the time comes, to death.

AUGUSTE. But, my lord, you already have a hand for that.

HANS. A hand? Whose hand?

AUGUSTE. The lady Bertha.

HANS. Bertha? Do you know Bertha? I know her. I know her, that is, now that I know Ondine—

EUGENIE. You are making a mistake, my lord.

HANS. (*By window.*) No! Eugenie— There was once a knight and his quest was to find something wonderful. And one night in a forest on the edge of a lake, he found a girl. In her hands, tin turned to gold and water to jewels. Her eyes were full of joy and her manner was royal. And not only was she the most wonderful creature he had ever seen, but he knew also that she would bring him all the delight and tenderness he would ever know in this world. Her name was Ondine! Whereupon he bowed to her and went off to marry a girl called Bertha. Tell me, Eugenie, what sort of knight was this? (*Sits chair down Left.*)

AUGUSTE. You don't put the question properly, my lord.

HANS. I ask you what sort of knight this would be. You don't dare to answer, but you know as well as I do. He would be a sort of idiot, would he not?

EUGENIE. But, my lord, since you have given your word to another—

HANS. He would be an idiot!

EUGENIE. Speak, Auguste.

HANS. Yes, speak. If there is any reason why I should not have Ondine, tell it to me now.

AUGUSTE. (*Moves toward him.*) My lord, you are asking us for the hand of Ondine. It's a great honor for us—but, she's not ours to give.

HANS. You must have some idea who her parents may be?

AUGUSTE. With Ondine it's not a question of parents. Ondine is strange, my lord. You saw her tonight in the storm. You understand, my lord, it's not that she's in the storm. She is the storm. There's no denying she's a beautiful child, my lord. But there is more than beauty in Ondine. There is power.

HANS. It's because she's young.

EUGENIE. (*Moves in.*) It's true, she's young—

AUGUSTE. When I first married you, you too were young. But your youth had no effect on the lake. You were beautiful. But the lake remained what it had always been, selfish and rude. But since Ondine came to live with us, everything has changed. The water has become gentle.

HANS. It's because you're old.

AUGUSTE. It's true I'm not young. But a lake that counts out into your net day by day exactly twelve fish,—a lake that never enters your boat, not even if it happens to have a hole in the bottom. I think you will agree that is a remarkably courteous lake.

HANS. What do you suggest? That I apply to the lake for permission to marry Ondine?

AUGUSTE. I wouldn't joke about the lake. The lake has ears.

HANS. And what's it to me if the lake has ears? I have no designs on the lake.

AUGUSTE. We are speaking of Ondine, my lord. Ondine belongs to the lake. Ondine is the lake, my lord.

HANS. Then I shall gladly take the lake to my bosom, and with it all the water in the world. The rivers shall be my brothers, the sea my mother, and the ocean itself, my father-in-law.

AUGUSTE. Beware of the water, my lord!

HANS. But I love the water! Oh Auguste, give me Ondine!

AUGUSTE. Give you Ondine! And who am I to give you Ondine? We shall never see her again.

EUGENIE. (*Crossing Right, clears table cloth and platter from table.*) Come, Auguste. It's time you came to bed.

AUGUSTE. (*Gathers up glasses, dishes.*) Do you remember the morning we found her, Eugenie?

EUGENIE. (*At door Right.*) Permit us to retire, my lord.

AUGUSTE. (*By table.*) There wasn't a mark on the sand, not a footprint, nothing, to show how the child got there.

Only the wind and the sun and the lake staring at us fixedly with its eye—

EUGENIE. (*Going off.*) Tomorrow we shall speak of Ondine.

AUGUSTE. (*Going off.*) If there is an Ondine. But—
(*He shakes his head.*)

EUGENIE. Good night, my lord.

HANS. Good night.* Good night. (*MUSIC CUE #9.)

(AUGUSTE and EUGENIE go out. LIGHT CUE #4. HANS moves to door Left as the LIGHTS fade and the wall of the hut slowly becomes transparent, and through it appear the lake and the forest. In the half-light at back in the forest there rise the nude figures of THREE ONDINES who sing first verse of their song as lights change.)

FIRST ONDINE. (*Appears down Right.*) Take me, handsome knight.

HANS. (*Looking up with a start.*) What?

FIRST ONDINE. Kiss me.

HANS. I beg pardon?

SECOND ONDINE. (*Appears down Left.*) Don't look at me, handsome knight.

HANS. Why not?

SECOND ONDINE. Don't come near me. If you touch me, I'll scream.

HANS. Don't worry.

FIRST ONDINE. (*Down Right. LIGHT CUE #5.*) Take me. Kiss me.

HANS. What are you talking about?

FIRST ONDINE. Am I being too bold, handsome knight? Do I frighten you?

HANS. Not in the least.

FIRST ONDINE. Would you rather I were clothed? Shall I put on a dress?

HANS. A dress? What for?

FIRST ONDINE. Come to me. Take me. I am yours.

(*LIGHT CUE #6. She vanishes. SECOND ONDINE appears. She is down Left.*)

SECOND ONDINE. Don't come close to me! If you touch my hair, if you touch my breasts, if you kiss my lips, I swear, I'll kill myself. I will not take off my dress!

HANS. No?

SECOND ONDINE. Don't come out, handsome knight. Don't come near me. I am not for you, handsome knight. (*She vanishes.*)

(*HANS shrugs his shoulders. The Two ONDINES appear together.*)

FIRST ONDINE. Take me.

SECOND ONDINE. Don't touch me.

FIRST ONDINE. I am yours.

SECOND ONDINE. Keep your distance.

FIRST ONDINE. I want you.

SECOND ONDINE. You frighten me.

ONDINE.† Oh how silly you look, both of you!

(*LIGHT CUE #7. The Two ONDINES vanish.*)

HANS. (*Takes ONDINE in his arms.*) Little Ondine! What is this nonsense? Who are those women?

ONDINE. My friends. They don't want me to love you. They say anyone can have you for the asking. But they're wrong.

HANS. They're quite attractive, your friends. Are those the prettiest?

ONDINE. No. The cleverest. Kiss me, Hans.

FIRST ONDINE. (*LIGHT CUE #8. Reappears down Right.*) Kiss me, Hans—

ONDINE. Look at that fool! Oh, how silly a woman looks when she offers herself! Go away! Don't you know when you've lost?—Hans—

SECOND ONDINE. (*Appears again.*) Hans—

†She has appeared, sitting on bench above table, arrived there by the trap.

ONDINE. Go away, I say!

THIRD ONDINE.* (*Appears down Left, next to SECOND ONDINE.*) Hans— (*FADE OUT MUSIC #9.)

(SEGUE TO MUSIC CUE #10.)

ONDINE.* It's not fair! No! (*MUSIC CUE #10.)

HANS. Let them speak, Ondine.

ONDINE. No. It's the Song of the Three Sisters. I'm afraid.

HANS. Afraid? Of them?

ONDINE. Cover your ears, Hans.

HANS. But I love music.

FIRST ONDINE. (*Sings.*)

Hans Wittenstein zu Wittenstein,

Without you life is but a fever.

Alles was ist mein ist dein,

Love me always, leave me never.

(HARP CONTINUES.)

HANS. Bravo! That's charming.

ONDINE. In what way is that charming?

HANS. It's simple. It's direct. It's charming. The song of the sirens must have been about like that.

ONDINE. It was exactly like that. They copied it. They're going to sing again. Don't listen.

THE THREE ONDINES. (MUSIC CUE #11.)

Come and take your fill of pleasure,

Taste delight and drink it deep.

We shall give you beyond measure

Joy and love and rest and sleep.

(HARP CONTINUES.)

HANS. The tune is not bad—

ONDINE. (*To him.*) Don't you understand? They don't mean a word of it. They're just trying to take you away from me.

FIRST ONDINE. You've lost, Ondine, you've lost!

(CUT MUSIC #11. SEGUE TO MUSIC #12.)

HANS. What have you lost?

ONDINE. Nonsense! Your song means nothing to him!

FIRST ONDINE. He holds you in his arms, Ondine, but he looks at me!

SECOND ONDINE. He speaks your name, Ondine, but he thinks of me!

THIRD ONDINE. He kisses your lips, Ondine, but he smiles at me!

THE THREE ONDINES. He deceives you! He deceives you! He deceives you! (*LIGHT CUE #9.*)

ONDINE. He may look at you and smile at you and think of you as much as he pleases. He loves me. And I shall marry him.

THE FIRST ONDINE. Then you agree?

(*Echoes "agree."*)

You make the pact?

HANS. What pact?

ONDINE. (*Down Center, calling up.*) Yes. I agree. I make the pact.

FIRST ONDINE. Are we to tell them? (*Echoes "tell them."*)

ONDINE. Yes. Tell them. Tell them all. Those who sit and those who swim, those who float in the sunlight and those who crawl in darkness on the ocean floor.

HANS. What are you saying?

ONDINE. Tell them I said yes.

THE THREE ONDINES.* (*Echo Yes. Yes. Yes.*)

FIRST ONDINE. And the Old One?* Shall I tell him also? (**ADD MUSIC CUE #12B.*)

ONDINE. Tell him I hate him!

THREE ONDINES. Yes?

ONDINE. Tell him he lies!

ONDINES. Lies! Lies! Lies! Lies!

(*LIGHT CUE #10. ONDINES vanish. FADE MUSIC #12 and #12B.*)

HANS. What a fuss! What a racket!

ONDINE. Naturally. It's the family.

(*The wall of the hut regains its solidity. ONDINE sits on bench, HANS beside her.*)

You're caught, my little Hans?

HANS. Body and soul.

ONDINE. You don't wish to struggle a little more? Just a little more?

HANS. I'm too happy to struggle.

ONDINE. So it takes twenty minutes to catch a man. It takes longer to catch a bass.

HANS. Don't flatter yourself. It took twenty years to catch me. All my life. Ever since I was a child, I've felt something drawing me toward this forest and this lake. It was you?

ONDINE. Yes. And now after twenty years, would it be too much if you told me at last that you love me?

HANS. I love you.

ONDINE. You say it easily. You've said it before.

HANS. I've said something like it that meant something else.

ONDINE. You've said it often?

HANS. I've said it to every woman I didn't love. And now at last I know what it means.

ONDINE. Why didn't you love them? Were they ugly?

HANS. No. They were beautiful. But they no longer exist.

ONDINE. Oh, Hans, I meant to give you everything in the world, and I begin by taking everything away. Some day you will hate me for it.

HANS. Never, Ondine.

ONDINE. Shall I ever see them, these women you don't love?

HANS. Of course.

ONDINE. Where?

HANS. Everywhere. In their castles. In their gardens. At the court.

ONDINE. At the court? I?

OANS. Of course. We leave in the morning.

ONDINE. Oh, Hans, am I to leave my lake so soon?

HANS. I want to show the world the most perfect thing it possesses. Did you know you were the most perfect thing the world possessed?

ONDINE. I suspected it. But will they know it? Will the world have eyes to see it?

HANS. When the world sees you, it will know. It's really very nice, Ondine, the world.

ONDINE. Tell me, Hans. In this world of yours, do lovers live together always?

HANS. Together? Of course.

ONDINE. No. You don't understand. When a man and a woman love each other are they ever separate?

HANS. Separate? Of course.

ONDINE. No, you still don't understand. Take the dogfish, for instance. Not that I'm especially fond of dogfish, mind you. But, once the dogfish couples with its mate, he never leaves her, never as long as he lives, did you know that? Through storm and calm they swim together, thousands and thousands of miles, side by side, two fingers apart, as if an invisible link held them together. They are no longer two. They become one.

HANS. Well?

ONDINE. Do lovers live like that in your world?

HANS. It would be a little difficult for lovers to live like that in our world, Ondine. In our world each has his work—his play—

ONDINE. But the dogfish too have their work and their play. They have to hunt, you know, in order to live. And sometimes they come upon a school of herrings which scatter before them in a thousand flashes, and they have a thousand reasons to lose each other. But they never do. As long as they live, not even a sardine can come between them.

HANS. In our world, Ondine, a whale can come between a husband and wife twenty times a day.

ONDINE. I was afraid of that.

HANS. That merely proves that men and fish are not the same.

ONDINE. And you and I, we are the same?

HANS. Oh yes, Ondine.

ONDINE. And you swear that you will never leave me, not even for a moment?

HANS. Yes, Ondine.

ONDINE. Because now that I love you, two steps away from you my loneliness begins.

HANS. I will never leave you, Ondine.

ONDINE. Hans, listen to me seriously. I know someone who can join us forever, someone very powerful. And if I ask him, he will solder us together with a band of flesh, so that nothing but death can separate us. Would you like me to call him?

HANS. No, Ondine.

ONDINE. (*Rises; moves to down Right of table.*) I know what you're thinking. Of course, she's right, you're thinking, the little Ondine, and naturally I shall be with her always, but once in a while, for just a little moment perhaps I shall go and take a turn by myself, I shall go and visit my friend.

HANS. Or my horse.

ONDINE. Or your horse! When this angel falls asleep, you're thinking, this angel whom I shall never leave not even for a moment; at last I shall have a chance to go and spend a good half hour with my horse. (*Sits stool Left of table.*)

HANS. (*Rises; crosses to chair down Left; picks up cape.*) As a matter of fact, I had better go and have a look at him now, don't you think? We're leaving at dawn, you know, and I ought to see if he's bedded properly. Besides I always tell him everything.

ONDINE. Ah yes. Well, tonight you shall tell him nothing.

HANS. (*Crossing up to door.*) But why, Ondine?

ONDINE. Because tonight my little Hans you're going to sleep!* (*And with a gesture, she throws sleep into his eyes. LIGHT CUE #11.*) Good night, my love.

(*MUSIC CUE #13.)

(*He falls asleep with his head in her lap.*)

FIRST ONDINE. (*Off. Her voice seems very far away.*) Goodbye, Ondine.

ONDINE. Look after my lake!

SECOND ONDINE. (*Off.*) Goodbye, Ondine.

ONDINE. Take care of my stream!

THE KING OF THE SEA. (*Off.*) Ondine!

ONDINE. Farewell, Old One.

THE KING OF THE SEA. Don't leave us, Ondine.

ONDINE. I have left you, Old One.

THE KING OF THE SEA. The world of men is not your world, Ondine. It will bring you sorrow.

ONDINE. It will bring me joy.

THE KING OF THE SEA. The man will deceive you. He will abandon you.

ONDINE. Never! Never!

THE KING OF THE SEA. And when he deceives you? When he abandons you? You will remember our pact?

ONDINE. I shall remember our pact.

THE KING OF THE SEA. (*His voice recedes.*) Remember, Ondine.

THE ONDINES. (*Their voices are like the murmur of water.*) Remember, Ondine.

HANS. (*Turning in his sleep.*) Remember, Ondine—

ONDINE. Oh dear, from this time on, how much I shall have to remember!

(*CRESCENDO MUSIC #13 AND ADD #13B.*)

SLOW CURTAIN

(*As Curtain hits floor, cut MUSIC #13 and #13B.*)

ACT TWO

(BEHIND CURTAIN MUSIC CUE #14.)

SCENE: *The Curtain rises on the hall of honor of the king's palace. It is a large vaulted loggia of Gothic design. The roof is supported by columns. The upstage side opens on the palace gardens, in which may be seen three jets of water playing in marble basins in the sunshine. There are arched doorways, Right and Left. The upstage side consists of a large raised platform on which may be seen a fountain playing in the sunshine. Semi-circular steps provide access to the platform, Right and Left, from the stage floor. Upstage entrances, Right and Left, are on ramps at the platform level. Opaque drapes, slit where necessary for entrances, run from the platform to the set-line, Right and Left. Five chairs are placed below the platform. The Center chair is the KING'S.*

AT RISE: *VIOLANTE, ANGELIQUE and some of the COURT at Left. The LORD CHAMBERLAIN and the SUPERINTENDENT of the Royal Theatres are engaged in a conference. To one side stand respectfully the TRAINER OF THE SEALS, down Left, and the ILLUSIONIST, down Right.*

LORD CHAMBERLAIN. My dear Superintendent, this is a matter that will require all your skill. And all your inventiveness. The Knight of Wittenstein has at last been persuaded to present his bride at court. His Majesty has asked me to provide an amusing interlude with which to grace the occasion.* But the reception is to take place immediately.

(*MUSIC CUE #15.)

SUPERINTENDENT. The time is short, my lord Chamberlain.

LORD CHAMBERLAIN. It couldn't be shorter. Well? As Superintendent of the Royal Theatres, what do you propose?

SUPERINTENDENT. (*Gestures upstage.*) Salammbo.

(*MUSIC CUE #16A.*)

(*MATHO and SALAMMBO appear on platform.*)

LORD CHAMBERLAIN. But you played *Salammbo* only last night for the Margrave's birthday. Besides, *Salammbo* is sad.

SUPERINTENDENT. It's sad. But it's ready.

(*MUSIC CUE #16B.*)

(*MATHO and SALAMMBO move down steps.*)

LORD CHAMBERLAIN. I don't see why it is any more ready than *Orpheus*, which has only one character. Or the *Interlude of Adam and Eve*, which requires no costumes.

SUPERINTENDENT. Excellency, my success in the theatre is based solely on the discovery that each particular stage has its likes and dislikes which it is useless to combat.

LORD CHAMBERLAIN. Time presses, my good man.

SUPERINTENDENT. Each theatre, Excellency, is built for one play and one play only. The whole secret of management is to discover what play that is. It's not easy, especially when the play is not yet written. And so, a thousand disasters—until that happy day when the play for which it was intended comes to its proper theatre and gives it its life, its soul, and, if I may say so, its sex.

LORD CHAMBERLAIN. Superintendent—

SUPERINTENDENT. For years I managed a theatre which bumbled along miserably with the classics until suddenly one night it found its joy in a bawdy farce with sailors. It was a female theatre. I knew another which tolerated only *Hamlet*. It was male. Last year I was forced to close the Royal Ballet. Impossible to determine its sex.

LORD CHAMBERLAIN. And you believe the Royal Auditorium—

SUPERINTENDENT. Exists only for *Salammbo*, yes, your

Excellency. At the word *Salamambo*, the tightness of throat, with which the royal chorus is normally afflicted, suddenly relaxes, and the hall is rich with voices full of resonance and joy. Did you ever hear of anyone forgetting a line or missing a cue in *Salamambo*?

LORD CHAMBERLAIN. But all the same—

SUPERINTENDENT. I tell you, my lord Chamberlain, sometimes when I play a German opera, I notice one of my singers, brimming with happiness, making magnificent gestures, sending out full-throated tones which fill the audience with such joy and comfort that it breaks into spontaneous applause— Why? Because among his fellow-actors, who are merely grinding out their parts by rote, this actor in the general confusion is blissfully singing his role in *Salamambo*.

LORD CHAMBERLAIN. No! It would hardly do to entertain a newly-married couple with a tragedy of unhappy love. *Salamambo* is out!

(MATHO and SALAMMBO leave by platform.)

(He turns to the TRAINER OF SEALS.) Who are you?

TRAINER. (Down Left.) I am the Trainer of Seals, Your Excellency.

LORD CHAMBERLAIN. What do they do, your seals?

TRAINER. They don't sing *Salamambo*.

LORD CHAMBERLAIN. That's a pity. A chorus of seals singing *Salamambo* would constitute a very appropriate entertainment. Besides, I am told that your head seal has a beard that makes him look like his Majesty's father-in-law. Is that true?

TRAINER. I could shave him, Excellency.

LORD CHAMBERLAIN. By a regrettable coincidence, his Majesty's father-in-law shaved his beard only yesterday. We had best avoid even the shadow of scandal.* And who are you?

(*MUSIC CUE #17.)

ILLUSIONIST. (Advancing from down Right.) I am an illusionist, Excellency.

LORD CHAMBERLAIN. Where is your apparatus?

ILLUSIONIST. I am an illusionist without apparatus.

LORD CHAMBERLAIN. Now what do you take us for?

You don't produce claps of thunder and lightning without apparatus.

ILLUSIONIST. Yes! (MUSIC CUE #17A.)

(*There is a clap of THUNDER AND LIGHTNING.*)

LORD CHAMBERLAIN. Nonsense. You don't produce sudden clouds of smoke which leave the stage covered with flowers without apparatus?

(*FLASH POT. *There is a sudden cloud of SMOKE, and FLOWERS fall from the ceiling.*)

(*MUSIC CUE #17B.)

ILLUSIONIST. Yes!

LORD CHAMBERLAIN. What stubbornness!

BERTRAM. (COUNT BERTRAM *comes in Right.*) Your Excellency—

LORD CHAMBERLAIN. Just a moment. You don't suddenly produce before the eyes of the Lord Chamberlain, Venus completely nude—

BERTRAM. Excellency!

LORD CHAMBERLAIN. —without apparatus.

ILLUSIONIST. Yes! (MUSIC CUE #18A.)

BERTRAM. —Oh!

(*A nude VENUS appears from trap.*)

(BERTRAM *bows.*) Madame.

(*CUT MUSIC #18A. SEGUE TO #18B.*)

(*VENUS disappears down Left.*)

LORD CHAMBERLAIN. I've always wondered who these Venuses are, that magicians produce out of thin air? Relatives?

ILLUSIONIST. Or Venus herself. It depends on the magician.

BERTRAM. Excellency, His Majesty is unavoidably detained by the African envoy. The reception is postponed.

LORD CHAMBERLAIN. Excellent. That gives us time to think of something. (*To the SUPERINTENDENT.*) Have you thought of something?

SUPERINTENDENT. Yes, Excellency.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Ah. Splendid. What?

SUPERINTENDENT. *Salammbô*.

LORD CHAMBERLAIN. (*To the ILLUSIONIST.*) No! And how do you propose to amuse His Majesty?

ILLUSIONIST. If Your Excellency permits, I shall do what the occasion inspires.

LORD CHAMBERLAIN. That's asking a great deal. After all, we have never seen your work.

ILLUSIONIST. I shall be happy, while we are waiting, to offer a little private entertainment by way of demonstration.

LORD CHAMBERLAIN. Ah. Very good.

ILLUSIONIST. What would Your Excellency like to see?

LORD CHAMBERLAIN. I should very much like to see—

ILLUSIONIST. Splendid. I shall bring them together at once.

(*The COURT laughs.*)

LORD CHAMBERLAIN. You are also a mind-reader?

ILLUSIONIST. Yes, Excellency, I can, if you wish, bring together before your eyes a man and a woman who have been carefully avoiding each other for the past three months.

LORD CHAMBERLAIN. Here? Now?

ILLUSIONIST. Here and now. If you will be so good as to conceal yourselves—

LORD CHAMBERLAIN. (*Left Center.*) But it's impossible, my dear fellow. Consider that the gentleman in question is at this very moment in the royal apartments supervising the last details of his wife's costumes. A tornado could not draw him from her. The injured lady, on the other hand, is locked up in her room. She has sworn she will under no circumstances appear. These two cannot possibly meet.

ILLUSIONIST. Yes. But suppose that a dog were to steal the bride's glove and run out into the garden with it? And suppose that the lady's pet bullfinch should fly out

of its cage and come to perch on the edge of the fountain?

LORD CHAMBERLAIN. That will get you nowhere. It is the halbardier's high duty to divert all dogs from the royal apartments. And as for the bird—the king has just loosed a falcon in the garden. It is hovering over the bullfinch's cage.

ILLUSIONIST. Yes. But suppose that the halbardier slips on a banana peel? Suppose a gazelle distracts the falcon's attention?

LORD CHAMBERLAIN. Bananas and gazelles are unknown in these parts.

ILLUSIONIST. Yes. But the African envoy peeled a banana while waiting for his morning audience. And among the gifts sent by his government, there was a gazelle.

LORD CHAMBERLAIN. (*Crossing down Right.*) Quite resourceful, you magicians!

ILLUSIONIST. Yes. Take your places. In a moment you shall see the Princess Bertha and the Knight of Wittenstein come together in this hall.

ALL. Really?

BERTRAM. (*Steps to Left Center.*) But, Excellency, why are we doing this evil thing?

LORD CHAMBERLAIN. Sooner or later it would have to happen. That's life.

BERTRAM. Then why not let life take its course?

LORD CHAMBERLAIN. (*To Right Center.*) My dear Bertram, you are young and you are a poet. When you have reached my age, you will understand that life is a very poorly constructed play. As a rule, the curtain goes up in the wrong places, the climaxes don't come off, the denouement is interminably postponed. If this excellent illusionist can make us see life unfold for once with the concision and logic that a good play requires— (*To the ILLUSIONIST.*) Can you?

ILLUSIONIST. Perhaps.

LORD CHAMBERLAIN. Just one little scene, then. Just one little scene.

BERTRAM. But, Excellency, the poor girl—

LORD CHAMBERLAIN. The girl has caused a knight to be false to his word. She deserves to suffer.

BERTRAM. But why should we—?

LORD CHAMBERLAIN. Don't excite yourself, my boy. Sooner or later in the normal course of events, Hans and Bertha would meet. Six months after that, they would kiss. A year after that, beyond a shadow of a doubt, they would—it's inevitable. And if we spare ourselves these delays, and bring their hands together at once; and, ten minutes later, their lips; and five minutes after that, whatever else is necessary—will we be changing their story, really, in any way? Not a bit. We shall just be giving it a little pace, a little tempo. Magician—

(*NOISE off.*)

What's that noise?

TRAINER. The halbardier. He slipped on a banana peel.

LORD CHAMBERLAIN. Splendid.

BERTRAM. Excellency, I beg of you, let's carry this no further. It's a mischievous thing. Left to themselves, perhaps these two would never meet again.

(*There is a SCREAM from the garden.*)

VIOLANTE. What's that scream?

SUPERINTENDENT. The gazelle. The falcon struck it.

LORD CHAMBERLAIN. Perfect. You think you can bring off the whole thing at this pace, Magician?

ILLUSIONIST. Perhaps. (*MUSIC CUE #19*)

(*LIGHT CUE #2, DIM. The bird appears, perched on the fountain. SPECTATORS hide in the shadows.*)

ALL. The bird!

ALL. (*Looking out into the garden.*) The dog!

ALL. The knight!

(*HANS is seen running after the dog in the garden.*)

ALL. The lady!

(BERTHA *runs across. Each goes off without seeing the other.* LIGHT CUE #3, RESTORE. The SPECTATORS poke their heads out from their hiding places. ALL hiss.*)

(*CUT MUSIC #19.)

BERTRAM. (*Sighs with relief.*) Thank heaven!

LORD CHAMBERLAIN. What's this, Magician! Are you making fun of us?

ILLUSIONIST. Sorry, sir. A fault in direction.

LORD CHAMBERLAIN. Are they going to meet or are they not?

ILLUSIONIST. They are going to meet. And this time there will be no mistake about it. I'll knock their heads together. (MUSIC CUE #20.)

(LIGHT CUE #4, DIM. SPECTATORS *hide once more in the shadows.*)

Now!

(BERTHA *runs in from the Right on platform and catches the bird by the fountain.*)

BERTHA. Again! What a bad bird you are!

HANS. Again! What an obstinate beast! (*He enters on platform with the glove in his hand, just as BERTHA runs up with the bird.*)

(*They collide.* HANS takes her hands to keep her from falling. They recognize each other.*)

Oh! I beg your pardon, Bertha. (CUT MUSIC #20.)

BERTHA. Oh! I'm sorry, Hans.

HANS. Did I hurt you?

BERTHA. Not a bit.

HANS. I'm a clumsy beast, Bertha.

BERTHA. Yes. You are.

(*There is a moment of embarrassed silence. Then each turns and walks off slowly.*)

(BERTHA *stops.*) Pleasant honeymoon?

(MUSIC CUE #21—CAN BE OMITTED.)

HANS. Marvelous.

BERTHA. A blonde, I believe?

HANS. Blonde, like the sun.

BERTHA. Sunlit nights! I prefer the darkness.

HANS. Each to his taste. (*FADE MUSIC SLOWLY.*)

BERTHA. I was happy in your arms that night under the oak tree, where long ago I had carved your name. I thought it was for always. (*MUSIC OUT.*)

HANS. And so it could have been, had you not insisted on sending me into the forest on a wild goose chase.

BERTHA. I thought that in the darkness of the forest, you would see my face in every shadow. How could I have known that in those shadows you would come one night upon a head of gold?

HANS. How could anyone have known it?

BERTHA. I thought it was a woman's glory to lead her lover not only to his table and his bed, but to whatever in the world is hardest to find and most difficult to conquer. I was wrong.

HANS. Why didn't you keep me with you, if you wanted me?

BERTHA. One takes off a ring sometimes to show to one's friends. Even an engagement ring.

HANS. I'm sorry. The ring didn't understand.

BERTHA. No. And so it rolled, as rings do, under the nearest bed.

HANS. I beg your pardon!

BERTHA. Forgive me. I shouldn't have mentioned a bed. Among peasants, you sleep in the straw, I believe? You pick it out of your hair the morning after. Is it fun?

HANS. One day you will see.

BERTHA. No, I don't think so. Black hair and straw don't go well together. That sort of thing is for blondes.

HANS. You may be right. Although in love, these details don't seem to matter. But, of course, you've never had that experience.

BERTHA. You think?

HANS. When you're in love, you don't think of yourself so much. You think of the other. Take my advice. When you meet the man you love, pocket your pride,

throw your arms around his neck and tell him, before all the world, that you love him.

BERTHA. (*She throws her arms around his neck.*) I love you.

(*She kisses him, then tries to run off. But he holds her by the hands.*)

HANS. Bertha!

BERTHA. Let me go, Hans.

HANS. What game are you playing with me now, Bertha?

BERTHA. Be careful, Hans. I have a bird in my hand.

HANS. I love another woman, Bertha.

BERTHA. The bird!

HANS. You should have done that before, Bertha.

BERTHA. Hans, don't squeeze my hand so. You're going to kill it.

HANS. Let the bird go, Bertha.

BERTHA. No. Its little heart is beating with fear. And just now I need this little heart next to mine.

HANS. What is it you want of me, Bertha?

BERTHA. Hans— Oh! (*Opening her hand and showing the bird.*) There. You've killed it.

HANS. (*Taking the bird.*) Forgive me, Bertha. Forgive me.

(*BERTHA looks at him a long moment. He is completely contrite.*)

BERTHA. I want nothing of you now, Hans. But once, I wanted something for you, and that was my mistake. Here! Give it to me. I'll take the poor little thing away.

HANS. Forgive me, Bertha!

(*They cross.*)

BERTHA. I shall carve no more initials on the bark of oak trees. A man alone in a dream of glory—it's already

foolish. But a woman alone in a dream of glory—is completely ridiculous. Farewell.

HANS. Forgive me, Bertha.

BERTHA. Farewell, Hans.

(He goes, off Left. She drops the bird into the fountain and goes off Right. LIGHT CUE #5—RESTORE.)

LORD CHAMBERLAIN. *(From down Right to Center.)* Bravo! Bravo! Bravo! Bravo! Go on! Go on!

BERTRAM. *(Down Left.)* No! No! Stop! I beg you!

ALL. More! More! More!

ILLUSIONIST. *(Mounting platform.)* There it is. The scene that would have taken place next winter. You have heard it. It has happened!

BERTRAM. Please! Excellency, please! Let's stop!

LORD CHAMBERLAIN. No! No! No! Go on, Magician, go on! We're dying to see the next!

ILLUSIONIST. *(Center.)* The next scene?

ALL. The next!

ILLUSIONIST. At your service, ladies. Which one?

VIOLANTE. *(Left.)* The one in which Hans looks at the knight he has killed and it is the Lady Bertha—?

ILLUSIONIST. That scene is in another play, Mademoiselle.

SUPERINTENDENT. *(Right.)* The scene in which the knight in the nick of time saves the lady from the dragon?

ILLUSIONIST. Please!

TRAINER. *(Down Left.)* The scene in which the knight while twirling a ball on his nose—

ILLUSIONIST. Please— Please—

LORD CHAMBERLAIN. The scene in which Bertha and Hans first speak of Ondine.

ILLUSIONIST. Very well, Excellency. That takes place next spring.

(MUSIC CUE #24.)

(LIGHT CUE #6—DIM.)

LORD CHAMBERLAIN. *(Going off down Right.)* So much the better. I love the spring.

(CUT MUSIC.)

(ALL *disappear*. As MUSIC cuts, BERTHA and HANS come in slowly on platform from opposite directions, calling each other: "Bertha!" "Hans!" "Bertha!" "Hans!")

BERTHA. I was looking for you, Hans.

HANS. I was looking for you, Bertha.

BERTHA. Hans, must there be this awful cloud between us? Can't we be friends?

HANS. I wish we could be, Bertha. But—

LORD CHAMBERLAIN. (*Appears down Right. He is wearing a beard.*) Magician!

(HANS and BERTHA jreeze.)

What have you done to me?

ILLUSIONIST. (*Appears up Right.*) It's one of the inconveniences of my system. You have grown an eight months beard. You see—it is now next spring!

ALL. (*Off stage.*) O-ho!

(LORD CHAMBERLAIN and ILLUSIONIST *disappear*.)

BERTHA. I know. We can't be friends without Ondine. But it's your fault, Hans. You haven't let me see her, since that awful day of the king's reception. And that's eight months ago, and quite forgotten. Send her to me this evening, Hans. I am illuminating a manuscript of the *Aeneid* for the king. Ondine can draw in the letters.

HANS. Thanks, Bertha. But I doubt very much—

BERTHA. Ondine doesn't letter?

HANS. Ondine doesn't write.

BERTHA. How lucky she is! When you write, it takes away half the pleasure of reading. She has a charming voice. I'm sure she reads aloud beautifully?

HANS. Ondine doesn't read.

BERTHA. How I envy her! How wonderful among all these pedants to be able to give oneself up to the luxury of not reading. But she dances, I know—

HANS. Never.

BERTHA. You're joking, Hans!

HANS. No!

BERTHA. You don't mean to say that she neither reads—

HANS. No!

BERTHA. Nor writes—

HANS. No.

BERTHA. —nor dances?

HANS. Yes. And she doesn't recite. And she doesn't play the rote. Nor the harp, nor the lute. And she won't go hunting. She can't bear to see things killed.

BERTHA. But in heaven's name then, what does she do?

HANS. Oh, she swims. Occasionally.

BERTHA. That's nice. Though it's not by swimming that a girl advances her husband's interests at court. And yet, let's be just, Hans. After all, these accomplishments mean nothing. A pretty woman has the right to be ignorant of everything, provided she knows when to keep still.

HANS. It is this point precisely, Bertha, that worries me the most. Ondine does not know when to keep still. Quite the contrary. She says whatever comes into her head—and the things that come into that girl's head! Bertha, you know, the jousting season opens this week. And the thought of the phrases which will issue from Ondine as she watches these tournaments in which every step and pass-at-arms has its appropriate term—it makes me shudder.

BERTHA. She can learn.

HANS. I spent the morning trying to teach her the rudiments. Each time I give her a new term, she thanks me with a kiss. Now in the first position of the horseman alone there are thirty-three points to identify—

BERTHA. Thirty-six.

HANS. God, that's true! Thirty-six! What am I thinking of? I tell you, I'm losing my wits, Bertha!

BERTHA. Send her to me, Hans. I'll see that she learns what she needs to know.

HANS. Thanks. But what she needs to know above all are the special signs and prerogatives of the Wittenstein. And those are a family secret.

BERTHA. You forget, Hans. I was almost one of the Wittenstein. Ask me a question.

HANS. If you can answer this, I shall owe you a forfeit. What device does a Wittenstein bear on his shield when he enters the lists?

BERTHA. On a field azure, a squirrel passant, gules.

HANS. Does he bear this device into combat?

BERTHA. Never. At the moment he lowers his visor, his squire hands him a shield on which are emblazoned three lions rampant or, on a field sable. This is his device of war.

HANS. Bertha! You're incredible! And how does a Wittenstein approach the barrier?

BERTHA. Lance squared, charger collected, slow trot.

HANS. Ah, Bertha, what a lucky man the knight will be who marries you! (MUSIC CUE #25.)

(They go off together, still talking, and the COURT enters.
LIGHT CUE #7—RESTORE.)

LORD CHAMBERLAIN. (*Appearing down Right to Center without beard.*) Bravo! Bravo! Bravo! And how right he is! The Princess Bertha knows everything. She does everything. She is the ideal woman, beyond a doubt. You have us on pins and needles, Magician. The third scene! Quickly. The first quarrel of Hans and Ondine.

BERTRAM. Couldn't we let that, at least, take care of itself?

LORD CHAMBERLAIN. No, no. We'd never get to see it. Magician—

BERTRAM. But Excellency. His Majesty will be here in a moment.

LORD CHAMBERLAIN. By heaven, that's true. I will just have time to give this young lady the customary words of advice before the reception begins. You're not planning to do anything more till I get back, Magician?

ILLUSIONIST. (*Up Right.*) Just one tiny scene, perhaps.

LORD CHAMBERLAIN. In connection with what?

ILLUSIONIST. In connection with nothing at all. Just a

trifle to please an old fisherman whom I love. But Your Excellency needn't leave.

LORD CHAMBERLAIN. Oh no, I must

ILLUSIONIST. If Your Excellency wishes, I can save you the trouble of going. Take your place and you shall see yourself speaking to her.

LORD CHAMBERLAIN. Oh! But you can't do it.

ILLUSIONIST. Nothing simpler.

LORD CHAMBERLAIN. (*Going off down Right.*) What an extraordinary illusion!

ILLUSIONIST. Yes! But first, the Lady Violante—*

(*VIOLANTE steps forward. AUGUSTE walks in from the garden on the platform.*)

The fleck of gold. (*MUSIC CUE #26.)

AUGUSTE. (*Crosses to her.*) Are you the Lady Violante?

VIOLANTE. Yes. What do you wish?

AUGUSTE. (*Looking into her eyes.*) I was right. It's marvelous! (END MUSIC #26.)

EUGENIE. (*Off stage.*) Auguste! Stick to your fishing!

(*He goes off down Left.*)

ILLUSIONIST. Thank you, my lady. Look, Your Excellency. Here you come!

(*VIOLANTE goes behind the column.*)

ONDINE. (*Off stage.*) But it would be so simple and so easy, Your Excellency!

LORD CHAMBERLAINE. (*Off stage.*) Please!

ONDINE. And so restful!

LORD CHAMBERLAINE. (*Appears on platform—up Right.*) Absolutely out of the question, dear lady!

ONDINE. (*Beside him.*) But it would make me so happy—

LORD CHAMBERLAIN. I regret deeply. To change the court reception, third class, into a water festival is entirely out of the question. Every time we turn the water into the pool, it costs us a fortune.

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