# SAMUEL FRENCH SAMPLE PERUSAL

This sample is an excerpt - an appetiser, if you will - from a full Samuel French title.

This sample is just for you to try out, and it can't be used for performance, downloaded, printed or distributed in any way.

Take it for a whirl and see if it tickles your fancy!

**For more information about licensing this or other shows, or to browse thousands more plays and theatre books to buy please visit our website.**

**www.samuelfrench.co.uk**
**or, in the US www.samuelfrench.com**

SF PERUSALS

# LEND ME A TENOR

by Ken Ludwig

SAMUEL FRENCH

samuelfrench.co.uk

ISBN 978-0-573-01640-0

www.SamuelFrench.com
www.SamuelFrench.co.uk

**FOR PRODUCTION ENQUIRIES**

United States and Canada
Info@SamuelFrench.com
1-866-598-8449

United Kingdom and Europe
Plays@SamuelFrench.co.uk
020-7255-4302

Each title is subject to availability from Samuel French, depending upon country of performance. Please be aware that *LEND ME A TENOR* may not be licensed by Samuel French in your territory. Professional and amateur producers should contact the nearest Samuel French office or licensing partner to verify availability.

## MUSIC USE NOTE

Licensees are solely responsible for obtaining formal written permission from copyright owners to use copyrighted music in the performance of this play and are strongly cautioned to do so. If no such permission is obtained by the licensee, then the licensee must use only original music that the licensee owns and controls. Licensees are solely responsible and liable for all music clearances and shall indemnify the copyright owners of the play(s) and their licensing agent, Samuel French, against any costs, expenses, losses and liabilities arising from the use of music by licensees. Please contact the appropriate music licensing authority in your territory for the rights to any incidental music.

## IMPORTANT BILLING AND CREDIT REQUIREMENTS

If you have obtained performance rights to this title, please refer to your licensing agreement for important billing and credit requirements.

All producers of *LEND ME A TENOR* must give credit to the Author of the Play in all programs distributed in connection with performances of the Play, and in all instances in which the title of the Play appears for the purposes of advertising, publicizing, or otherwise exploiting the Play and/or a production. The name of the Author must appear on a separate line on which no other name appears, immediately above the title and must appear in size of type not less than seventy-five percent of the size of the title type. The title should read:

**KEN LUDWIG'S**
**LEND ME A TENOR**

***LEND ME A TENOR*** was first presented in New York City by Martin Starger and The Really Useful Theater Company at the Royale Theater on March 2, 1989. The performance was directed by Jerry Zaks, with sets by Tony Walton, costumes by William Ivey Long, lighting by Paul Gallo, sound by Aural Fixation, music coordination by Edward Strauss, and hair by Angela Gari. The Production Stage Manager was Steven Beckler. The cast was as follows:

**MAX** . . . . . Victor Garber
**MAGGIE** . . . . . J. Smith-Cameron
**SAUNDERS** . . . . . Philip Bosco
**TITO** . . . . . Ron Holgate
**MARIA** . . . . . Tovah Feldshuh
**BELLHOP** . . . . . Jeff Brooks
**DIANA** . . . . . Caroline Lagerfelt
**JULIA** . . . . . Jane Connell

***LEND ME A TENOR*** was previously presented by Andrew Lloyd Webber for The Really Useful Company at the Globe Theatre, London, on March 6, 1986. The director was David Gilmore, the setting and costumes were by Terry Parsons, the lighting was by Michael Northen, the stage manager was Peter Gardner; and the music coordinator was Rod Argent. The cast was as follows:

**MAX** . . . . . Denis Lawson
**MAGGIE** . . . . . Jan Francis
**SAUNDERS** . . . . . John Barron
**TITO** . . . . . Ron Holgate
**MARIA** . . . . . Anna Nicholas
**BELLHOP** . . . . . Edward Hibbert
**DIANA** . . . . . Gwendolyn Humble
**JULIA** . . . . . Josephine Blake

***LEND ME A TENOR*** was first presented at the American Stage Festival in Milford, New Hampshire on August 1, 1985. The director was Larry Carpenter, the setting was by John Falabella, the costumes were by David Murin, the lighting was by John Gisondi; and the music coordinator was John Clifton. The cast was as follows:

**MAX** . . . . . Walter Bobbie
**MAGGIE** . . . . . Christine Rose
**SAUNDERS** . . . . . George Ede
**TITO** . . . . . Ron Holgate
**MARIA** . . . . . Judith Roberts
**BELLHOP** . . . . . Joe Palmieri
**DIANA** . . . . . Linda Lee Johnson
**JULIA** . . . . . Bella Jarrett

## CHARACTERS

**MAX**

Assistant to Saunders

**MAGGIE**

Max's girlfriend

**SAUNDERS**

Maggie's father, Manager of the Cleveland Grand Opera Company

**TITO MERELLI**

A world famous tenor, known also to his fans as Il Stupendo

**MARIA**

Tito's wife

**BELLHOP**

A bellhop

**DIANA**

A soprano

**JULIA**

Chairman on the Opera Guild

## SETTING

The action takes place in a hotel suite in Cleveland, Ohio

## TIME

1934

**ACT I**

Scene One – Early afternoon on a Saturday in September
Scene Two – Four Hours later

**ACT II**

Scene One – That night, about eleven o'clock
Scene Two – Fifteen minutes later

## AUTHOR'S NOTES

It is Max's change in stature and the nature of his gestures and confidence that fuels the comedy and makes the deception successful. When Max tries to impersonate Tito, he is emulating everything about the man that he admires so greatly: Tito's size, his big heart, and his grandeur as an opera star. If Max is shorter than Tito (which is sometimes the case in the productions that I've seen) Max can wear lifts in his boots to make himself taller. The crux of the play is that Max is a shy soul who admires Tito, and when he gets the chance of a lifetime to emulate his hero in front of an adoring audience – and in front of the woman he loves – he takes the bit in his teeth, shows the world that there is more inside him than meets the eye, and changes his life.

My plays often do best when they are cast from the world of musical comedy. In casting the roles of Tito and Max, the actors should be able to sing to some degree to carry off the duet in the first act. Of course a fine singer in either role is all to the good. But provided that the actors have basically good voices, vocal coaching should do the trick. Because the songs are performed karaoke-style, using the musical accompaniment provided by Samuel French, the illusion of voices of operatic quality can easily be pulled off, particularly in light of the power of the music involved. This has certainly been the lesson of the productions of Tenor to date. All that said, my greatest hope is that everyone who performs a part in *Lend Me A Tenor*, be it onstage or back stage, behind the scenes or front of house, finds great joy in the experience.

# ACT ONE

## Scene 1

*(An elegant suite in a first-rate hotel in Cleveland, Ohio. Early afternoon on a Saturday in September, 1934.)*

*(Two rooms: a sitting room stage right and a bedroom stage left with a connecting door that swings open into the bedroom. Up center in each room is a door to the corridor. In the sitting room, a large window [facing a street, several stories below] and a door to the kitchenette. In the bedroom, two more doors, both along the outside wall, one [upstage] to the closet, the other [downstage] to the bathroom. Six doors in all.)*

*(The furniture consists, at a minimum, of a sofa, pouf, radio and coffee table in the sitting room; and a bed and bureau in the bedroom.)*

*(As the house lights go down, we hear music: a recording of "La Donna e Mobile" from Verdi's* Rigoletto, *sung thrillingly by a world-class tenor.)*

*(When the lights come up,* **MAGGIE**, *late twenties, pretty and quirky, is alone onstage, sitting on the pouf in the sitting room. She listens rapturously to the music, which by now is coming from the radio [and now sounds scratchy as an old recording]. She is entirely caught up in the sensual sound of the tenor's voice. She sways to the music and mouths the words.)*

*(After several seconds,* **MAX**, *mid-thirties and rumpled, enters the sitting room from the corridor. He wears glasses. He also wears a scarf, indicating that he's just been outdoors. He enters hurriedly, with urgency.)*

*(He looks around the room, confirming in an instant that* **TITO** *isn't there.)*

**MAX**. *(over the music)* Maggie – !

**MAGGIE**. Shhh!

**MAX**. Did he call?!

**MAGGIE**. No. Now will you wait!

*(***MAX** *sighs. He looks at his watch. Then he notices* **MAGGIE***'s reaction to the music; she's swaying in rapture. The aria ends and* **MAGGIE** *falls backward)*

**RADIO ANNOUNCER**. The magnificent voice of Tito Merelli, brought to you in honor of his live appearance this evening with the Cleveland Grand Opera Company-

*(***MAX** *turns off the radio.)*

**MAX**. He wasn't on the train.

**MAGGIE**. Oh my God. He is so wonderful. When he does that last note, I almost can't breathe.

**MAX**. Maggie, he wasn't there!

*(The phone rings.* **MAX** *grabs it.)*

Hello?!…No, sir, I couldn't find him.

**SAUNDERS**. *(through the phone) God dammit! Where the hell is he?!*

**MAX**. *(to* **MAGGIE***)* It's your father. *(into the phone)* I don't know! I looked everywhere. I asked the conductor. I had him paged. I – I – I'm sorry, I just –

*(the sound of* **SAUNDERS** *hanging up)*

Sir?…Sir? *(***MAX** *hangs up)* He's gonna kill me.

**MAGGIE**. He will not. He'd have nobody to yell at. At least nobody who takes it the way you do.

**MAX**. Maggie, the man is two hours late! The rehearsal starts in *ten minutes!*

**MAGGIE**. He'll be here, Max. This is Tito Merelli. He's a genius. They just don't think like other people.

**MAX**. So what are you saying? He's a grown man and he can't tell time?

**MAGGIE**. I'm just not worried, okay? *(pause)* Oh, Max, just think of it. Tonight. The curtain rises and he walks onstage. And suddenly there's nothing else in the world but that…that *voice*.

*(pause)*

**MAX**. I can sing too, you know.

**MAGGIE**. Oh, Max – *(She laughs out loud.)*

**MAX**. I can! What are you – "Oh, Max."

**MAGGIE**. You don't sing like Tito Merelli.

**MAX**. Not yet. Okay?

**MAGGIE**. You don't.

**MAX**. In your opinion. It's a matter of taste.

**MAGGIE**. It is not! I wish you wouldn't fool yourself. He's a star, Max. He sings all over the world. He's in *Life* magazine!

**MAX**. So is Mussolini.

**MAGGIE**. And he's very sensitive.

**MAX**. How do you know that?

*(Beat. She realizes she's caught.)*

**MAGGIE**. *(casually)* Because I met him. Last year.

**MAX**. You did? You never told me that.

**MAGGIE**. It was no big thing. When I was in Italy with Daddy, we went to La Scala and he was in *Aida*. Then afterwards we went backstage and…well, there he was, all by himself, behind the curtain. He was wearing a sort of…loincloth and his whole body was pouring with sweat. Anyway, he looked up and saw us and do you know what he did, Max. He kissed my palms.

**MAX**. Yeah. So what?

**MAGGIE**. It was romantic.

**MAX**. He's Italian! They kiss everything!

**MAGGIE**. Fine, forget it.

**MAX**. Meatballs. Cheese. Cold cuts.

**MAGGIE**. Max –

**MAX**. If it *moves*, they kiss it.

**MAGGIE**. *Max!*

**MAX**. So what else happened?

**MAGGIE**. Nothing. *(pause)* Of any importance.

**MAX**. Something else happened?

**MAGGIE**. Not really.

**MAX**. Something sort of happened.

**MAGGIE**. It wasn't important.

**MAX**. What happened!

**MAGGIE**. It was nothing! Oh – ! *(reluctantly, embarrassed)* …I fainted.

**MAX**. You fainted?

**MAGGIE**. It must have been the heat and all the excitement. I remember thinking suddenly, my God, it's like an oven back here. And we were talking and he sort of… stared right at me, and then I…blacked out.

**MAX**. Oh great. I mean this is terrific. My fiancée meets this – this sweaty Italian guy and she keels over.

**MAGGIE**. From the heat! And I'm not your fiancée, Max.

**MAX**. Wait a minute. Did I ask you to marry me or not? Huh? Remember that? What did you – you black out during the proposal?

**MAGGIE**. I heard it, Max, and I said no.

**MAX**. You said you'd think about it.

**MAGGIE**. *(taking his hand)* Max. I'm just not ready yet. I want something special first. Something wonderful and romantic.

**MAX**. I'm not romantic? I don't believe this. What do you call a rowboat at three a.m., huh? Moonlight shimmering on the water. Nobody for miles.

**MAGGIE**. You lost the oars.

**MAX**. But it was fun! It turned out fun!

**MAGGIE**. We spent thirty hours in a rowboat, Max.

**MAX**. That's not the point!

**MAGGIE**. I haven't had any flings, Max.

*(***MAGGIE** *spots the key to the room on the table next to her. Without them seeing it, she picks up the key and takes it with her, with her handbag.)*

**MAGGIE**. *(at the door, ignoring* **MAX***)* See you later…Daddy.

*(She exits to the corridor, closing the door behind her.* **MAX** *feels like a crumb.)*

**SAUNDERS**. I've got a thousand of Cleveland's so-called cognoscenti arriving at the theatre in six hours in black tie, a thirty-piece orchestra, twenty-four chorus, fifteen stagehands and eight principals. Backstage, I have approximately fifty pounds of rotting shrimp mayonnaise which, if consumed, could turn the Gala Be-A-Sponsor Buffet into a mass murder. All I don't have is a tenor. Time.

**MAX**. One-fifteen. *(pause)* I'm – I'm really sorry, sir. I wish there was something I could do to help.

**SAUNDERS**. It's not your fault, Max. I wish it was. The question now is what to do if that irresponsible Italian jackass doesn't arrive.

**MAX**. I – I have an idea about that, actually.

**SAUNDERS**. You do?

**MAX**. Yeah. I mean, sort of.

**SAUNDERS**. Well, spit it out, Max.

**MAX**. The thing is – I mean, I was just – just thinking that – well – I mean – I could do it.

**SAUNDERS**. Do what?

**MAX**. Sing it. *Pagliacci.* Sort of…step in. You see, I – I've been to all the rehearsals and I know the part and I – I mean, I could do it. I know I could.

**SAUNDERS**. Pagliacci? The Clown of Tragedy?

**MAX**. Yes, sir.

**SAUNDERS**. Pagliacci, Max. He's huge. He's larger than life. He loves with a passion that rocks the heavens. His jealousy is so terrible that we tremble with irrational fear for our very lives. His tragedy is the fate of

tortured greatness, facing the black and gaping abyss of insensible nothingness. It isn't you, Max.

**MAX**. It – it could be. I mean, if I had the chance.

**SAUNDERS**. *(turning directly front, addressing the audience)*: "Ladies and gentlemen. May I have your attention, please. I regret to inform you that Mr. Tito Merelli, the greatest tenor of our generation, scheduled to make his American debut with the Cleveland Grand Opera Company in honor of our tenth anniversary season, is regrettably indisposed this evening, but…BUT!…I have the privilege to announce that the leading role tonight will be sung by a somewhat gifted amateur making his very first appearance on this, or indeed any other stage, our company's very own factotum, gopher and all-purpose dogsbody…Max!" Do you see the problem?

**MAX**. I guess so.

**SAUNDERS**. Old women would be trampled to death in the stampede up the aisles.

**MAX**. I see what you mean.

**SAUNDERS**. Time.

**MAX**. One-twenty.

*(A depressed silence.* **SAUNDERS** *picks up a grape and starts chewing. Then he realizes and spits it out and starts stamping on it in his fury. Meanwhile, the phone rings.* **MAX** *picks it up.)*

Hello? What? Could you speak more slowly, please.

**SAUNDERS**. If it's Julia, tell her she can take the shrimp and stuff it up her –

**MAX**. *(to* **SAUNDERS***)* Sir! It's him! He's in the lobby!

*(***SAUNDERS** *runs to the phone and grabs it.)*

**SAUNDERS**. *(into the phone, all charm)* Signor Merelli! *Benvenuto a* Cleveland! I will be down *immediamente. Presto. (He hangs up.)* All right, Max. This is it. You have your instructions. Key word, Max.

**MAX**. Glue.

**SAUNDERS**. Glue. You will stick to him like

**MAX**. glue.

**SAUNDERS**. and you will not let him out of your

**MAX**. sight.

**SAUNDERS**. You will drive him to the rehearsal and then drive him back. You will give him whatever he wants except

**MAX**. liquor and women.

**SAUNDERS**. At the performance, you will lead a spontaneous

**MAX**. standing ovation

**SAUNDERS**. then return him to the reception, keeping him

**MAX**. sober

**SAUNDERS**. with his hands

**MAX**. to himself

**SAUNDERS**. at which point he can

**MAX**. drop dead

**SAUNDERS**. for all we care. Good.

**MAX**. Good.

*(Break.* **SAUNDERS** *crosses to the corridor door, pauses.)*

**SAUNDERS**. Max!

**MAX**. Sir?

**SAUNDERS**. Get rid of that fruit bowl.

*(***SAUNDERS** *exits, pulling the door closed behind him. Simultaneously,* **MAGGIE** *enters quickly through the bedroom/corridor door and closes it quietly. Then she darts to the bathroom and enters it, slamming the door behind her in her haste. As* **MAX** *is entering the kitchenette with the fruit, he hears the door slam and stops, puzzled. Still holding the fruit, he walks into the bedroom and looks around. He opens the closet door. No one there. He goes to the bathroom door, opens it, and* **MAGGIE***, who was holding the doorknob inside, is yanked into the room.)*

**MAX**. *(horrified)* Maggie!

**MAGGIE**. Is he here?

**MAX**. No! But he's coming up!

**MAGGIE**. *(excited)* Oh, Max!

**MAX**. Maggie, do you realize what this looks like? I mean, waiting for him in the bathroom!

*(a knock at the sitting room/corridor door)*

He's here!

**MAGGIE**. *(in raptures)* Oh, Max!

**MAX**. With your father!

**MAGGIE**. 'Bye, Max.

*(She steps back into the bathroom and closes the door.)*

**MAX**. Maggie!

**SAUNDERS**. *(offstage)* Ma-ax. The door is locked, Max.

**MAX**. Coming! *(He heads for the sitting room. Stops.)* Fruit! *(Which he is still holding. Back to the bathroom.)* Maggie! Door!

*(***MAGGIE** *comes out, annoyed.)*

**MAGGIE**. Max!

**MAX**. Fruit! *(he hands it to her)*

**MAGGIE**. *(touched, accepting it)* Thank you, Max.

*(She steps back in and* **MAX** *slams the door.)*

**SAUNDERS**. *(offstage)* Ma-ax! Open the door, please!

**MAX**. Coming!

*(He rushes into the sitting room, closing the connecting door. At the corridor door he stops abruptly. Adjusts himself. Opens the door.* **SAUNDERS** *enters.)*

**SAUNDERS**. *(offstage – then on)* MAX!!

**MAX**. Hi.

**SAUNDERS**. *(glaring murderously, then smiling broadly)*: Thank you.

*(He steps aside, permitting* **MARIA** *and* **TITO MERELLI** *to enter the sitting room.* **MARIA** *is the Sophia Loren type:*

# WAIT, THERE'S MORE!

Please visit our website to buy the full script, apply for a license to perform this show (if it's available), or to explore hundreds of similar titles.

**www.samuelfrench.co.uk**
**or, in the US www.samuelfrench.com**

To be the first to know about new books, licensing releases, and enjoy other theatre-related larks, do follow us on our spangley social media channels.

**Samuel French London**

**SamuelFrenchLtd**

SF **PERUSALS**