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Big Love

by CHARLES L. MEE

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Lydia
Olympia
Thyona
Bella/Eleanor
Piero/Leo

Giuliano
Constantine
Oed
Nikos

Begin Scene

Blackout.

Full volume: wedding processional music:
the triumphant music at the end of Scene 13, Act III,
of Mozart's Marriage of Figaro.

Lydia walks up the aisle,
looking somewhat disoriented,
carrying a wedding bouquet,
in a white wedding dress that is disheveled,
a little torn in places, dirty in spots.

She steps up onto the stage,
goes to the bathtub,
drops the bouquet on the floor,

takes off all her clothes,
or simply walks out of them,
steps into the tub,
leans her head back against the rim, exhausted,
and closes her eyes,
her arms thrown back out of the tub as though she were crucified,
as we listen to the music finish playing.

Now, quietly, sweetly, restfully,
Pachelbel's Canon in D
is heard,
and Giuliano steps onto the stage,
a glass of wine in his hand.

He is a young Italian man, handsome, agreeable,
weak and useless.
He seems a little surprised to see Lydia there
apparently napping in the tub.

This is Italy:
rose and white.

If Emanuel Ungaro had a villa on the west coast of Italy, this would be it:
we are outdoors,
on the terrace or in the garden,
facing the ocean:

wrought iron
white muslin
flowers
a tree
an arbor
an outdoor dinner table with chairs for six
a white marble balustrade
elegant
simple
basic
eternal.

But the setting for the piece should not be real, or naturalistic.
It should not be a set for the piece to play within
but rather something against which the piece can resonate:
something on the order of a bathtub, 100 olive trees,
and 300 wine glasses half-full of red wine.

More an installation than a set.

It is midsummer evening—the long, long golden twilight.

Giuliano and Lydia speak, quietly, and with many silences between their words, as
the music continues under the dialogue.

[Note: there are lots of Italians in this play,
but I don't think the actors should speak in Italian accents—
with the sole exception of Bella—
any more than they would if they were doing Romeo and Juliet
or the Merchant of Venice.
Except for Bella, these are English-speaking international travelers.]

GIULIANO

Hello.

[she opens her eyes]

LYDIA

Hello.

GIULIANO

I'm Giuliano.

LYDIA

Hello, Giuliano.

GIULIANO

And you are....

LYDIA

Lydia.

GIULIANO

Lydia.

I don't think we've met.

LYDIA

No.

GIULIANO

You've just—arrived.

LYDIA

Yes.

GIULIANO

That's your boat offshore?

LYDIA

Yes.

GIULIANO

A big boat.

LYDIA

Well...it belongs to my family.

GIULIANO

You've come for the weekend?

LYDIA

Yes, oh, yes, at least.

GIULIANO

You're friends of my sister.

LYDIA

Your sister?

GIULIANO
My uncle?

LYDIA
Your uncle?

[silence]

GIULIANO
I don't mean to be rude, but...

[with a smile]

who was it invited you?

LYDIA
Invited us?

GIULIANO
You didn't come to the party?
You mean: you're not a guest.

LYDIA
Oh, you mean, this is your home.
I'm in your home.

GIULIANO
Yes.
Well, it's my uncle's house.

LYDIA
It's so big.
I thought it was a hotel.

GIULIANO
We have a big family.

LYDIA
I'm sorry I just...

GIULIANO
It's OK.

Where do you come from?

LYDIA
Greece.

GIULIANO
Greece. You mean
just now?

LYDIA
Yes.

My sisters and I.
We were to be married to our cousins, and
well, we didn't want to, but
we had to, so
when the wedding day came
we just got on our boat and left
so
here we are.

GIULIANO
Just like that.

LYDIA
Yes.

GIULIANO
Just walked away from the altar
and sailed away from Greece.

LYDIA
Yes.
Where are we?

GIULIANO
Italy.
This is Italy.

LYDIA
Oh. Italy.
I love Italy.

GIULIANO
It's...well...yes. So do I.

And your sisters are still on the boat?

LYDIA
Yes, most of them.
We came....
[looking around]
at least, some of us came ashore.

There are fifty of us all together.

GIULIANO
Fifteen?

LYDIA
Fifty.
Fifty sisters.

GIULIANO [laughing awkwardly]
I...
I don't think even I know anyone who has fifty sisters.

And you were all to get married to your cousins?

LYDIA
Yes.

GIULIANO
To your cousins?

LYDIA

Yes.

We're looking for asylum.

We want to be taken in here
so we don't have to marry our cousins.

GIULIANO

You want to be taken in as immigrants?

LYDIA

As refugees.

GIULIANO

Refugees.

LYDIA

Yes.

GIULIANO

From...

LYDIA

From Greece.

GIULIANO

I mean, from, you know:
political oppression, or war....

LYDIA

Or kidnapping. Or rape.

GIULIANO

From rape.

LYDIA

By our cousins.

GIULIANO

Well, marriage really.

LYDIA

Not if we can help it.

[silence]

GIULIANO

I see.

LYDIA

You seem like a good person, Giuliano.

We need your help.

[silence]

GIULIANO

I think you should talk to my uncle.

Piero, he has...connections.

Just stay right here.

If you'll wait here,

I'll bring him out.

LYDIA

Thank you.

[the conversation ends just a few moments
before the end of the 4:58 of the Pachelbel Canon in D;
Giuliano leaves, and
she weeps and weeps while the music finishes.

End Scene

Suddenly, Clarke's Trumpet Voluntary announces the entrance
of two more young women in wedding dresses:
OLYMPIA and THYONA.

Their wedding dresses, too, are of course white,
but in different styles,
and in varying states of disrepair—