"Olympian Nights"

by

Ronald L. Meek.
"OLYMPIAN NIGHTS"

or

"The Wisdom of the Gods"

A MUSICAL WHIMSICALITY IN THREE PAROXYSMS

PERPETRATED BY

RONALD L. MEER

DRAMATIS PERSONAE:

A Polonian Watchman - A Roman in the 'gloamin'.

FARES:

Ariel - A Radio Fairy

Chloroform - An Aesthetic Fairy

Edina - A Flushing Fairy.

Asbestos - A Greek Fairy.

Cuspidor {

Toothpick - Just Fairies

Larynx

Gizzard

GODS

Scipio Abyssinius

Furius

Polainus

Stalinus

Denerius

Josephus

DEMI-GODS

Professor Bilious

Professor Piles

Professor Frown

Professor Cain

THE REPORTERS OF "VERITAS"

Mr. Snooper

Mr. Shuffler

Mr. Crawler

Mr. Creepert

Mr. Sniffer

Mr. Snuffer

The Emperor Asparagus

Vanilla, the Empress Asparagus

Citronella, the Princess Asparagus

The Minister of Eternal Affairs - A Chorus of Eunuchs

A Chorus of Ladies of the Court - Minions, Slaves & Spare Parts

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES:

Paroxysm I  The Hall of the Gods in the Roman City of Polonia
            Time - Midnight.

Paroxysm II  The Court of the Emperor Asparagus:
              Time - 10 p.m. on the following evening.

Paroxysm III The Court of the Emperor Asparagus:
              Time - 9 a.m. on the following morning.

Period - The Greek Kalends.
"OLYMPIAN NIGHTS"

ACT 1.

The curtain rises upon the exterior of the Hall of the Gods in the Roman City of Polonia. A modern impressionistic arch is set in the centre of the stage, between two large pillars, about twelve feet from the front of the stage. Upon the arch above the doorway is inscribed in quaint ancient characters the words "THE HALL OF THE GODS". Through the doorway can be seen the back wall of the interior, with a large Roman Window, curved at the top like the arch, through which a dim subdued light like moonlight is coming. This light must not be strong enough to illuminate the interior of the Hall, though a vague suggestion of dim, shadowy-white figures standing very still may be given. The interior of the Hall is hidden by dark, rich curtains, which extend from either side of the pillars.

Outside, upon a small stool, to the left of the stage, a Roman watchman, clad in armour, is discovered sleeping, breathing very heavily.

The orchestra strikes up suddenly "Steamboat Bill", and a male chorus of Fairies enters left. The Fairies are led by Ariel, and following him come Chloroform, Asbestos, Edina, Cuspidor, Gizzard, Larynx, and Toothpick.

The Fairies enter very noisily in time to the music (in the manner of the Pirates in Act 2 of "The Pirates of Penzance"), line up in front of the stage, and sing the following song. During the Chorus, they execute a short humourous ballet with elephantine grace.

FAIRIES' CHORUS

(Air - "Steamboat Bill").

We're dainty little Fairies prancing hand in hand;
We're dainty little Fairies come from Fairyland;
Our dancing is delightful and our singing sweet -
We are the nicest Fairies you are likely to meet!

CHORUS.

Oh, Fairies we!
Airy little wary Fairies,
Fairies we!
Our legs are rather hairy!
Chorus (Contd.)

Fairies we!
Ever singing, ever dancing,
Dainty little fairies come from Fairyland.

We gambol in the forests where the breezes blow,
We always wash in Lifebuoy and we don't get B.O.,
Our faces and our figures drive men half insane,
For our clothes are made of gossamer like cellophane!

Chorus

Oh, Fairies we!
Airy little wary Fairies,
Fairies we!
Indulging in vagaries!
Fairies we!
Ever singing, ever dancing,
Dainty little Fairies come from Fairyland.

(The Fairies line up in front of the stage facing
the audience, and address the audience in turn.)

Ariel: (To the audience) Ladies and gentlemen. As you have probably guessed, we are Fairies.

Fairies: We are!

Edina: Until recently, the Court Fairies of the Emperor Asparagus.

Chloroform But we have now got the sack -

Asbestos Because the Empress caught the Emperor -

Gizzard Kissing Toothpick (pointing to Toothpick) under the Empress's very nose.

Toothpick Pardon me - under my very nose!

Larynx So we are now living in a palace that Ariel built.

Ariel (Coming forward) I am Ariel.

Ariel (Impressively) It is my Palace of Mateful Tarts.

Fairies We are the mateful tarts!

Chloroform We have come at midnight to the Hall where the statues of the Roman Gods are kept -

Asbestos (Whispering) For a very secret purpose!

Ariel Hush, Asbestos! There may be near us some reporters from "Veritas" - on whom be peace!

(The Fairies crowd round in a semi-circle at the front of the stage, in a conspiratorial manner).

Ariel This is our plan -

Fairies (Solemnly) We are going to bring the Gods to life!

(They put their fingers to their lips and say "Shh!" very loudly. Then, stamping loudly, they march towards the entrance to the Hall, and station themselves in two diagonal lines on either side of it, pointing to the various statues as they described them).
Ariel  Pretty debauched looking lot, aren't they?

Edina  Funny how a nation's character is always mirrored in its Gods.

Chloroform  Won't Venus be wild when she wakes up and finds she's lost her arms!

Ariel  I don't think even that'll make her armless.

Asbestos  I don't think Bacchus looks a nice man, do you?

Gizzard  Now look at Appollo! Oh boy - what a figure!

Cuspidor  I say, how about changing these Roman Gods into the Gods of two thousand years hence?

Chloroform  And then bringing them to life?

Cuspidor  Why not? We know exactly what Venus'll do when she wakes up - but we don't even know what the future Gods will look like.

Ariel  Cuspidor - we'll try it!

(The already dim stage darkens perceptibly. The orchestra strikes up the melodramatic music of the "Gods' Chorus", at first very low. The Fairies dance clumsily round in a little circle, brandishing their wands and chanting raucously the following chorus).

CHANT

Pons asinorum!
Riddle-me-ree!
Hey cockalorum!
Mother Machree!
Fried fish and chips!
Sapientia magis!
Abracadabra!
Home brew and Scotch haggis!

(They continue round in a circle, faster and faster, repeating their chant faster still. Suddenly they halt, their wands uplifted. The stage becomes darker, and thunder is heard, very loud. The two curtains on either side of the pillars slowly draw apart, leaving the arch and pillars alone in the centre of the stage, and disclosing the interior of the Hall of the Gods. The light coming through the window slowly becomes brighter, illuminating the interior.

Several tall, white-robed figures are seen, standing motionless on pedestals.)

(The four Professors - Cain, Piles, Frown and Bilious - all have long beards, which disappear beneath their togas. Their hands are clasped in front of them and their heads are bent. Stalinus (Stalin) holds in one hand a hammer and in the other a sickle; Scipio Abyssinius (Mussolini) stands in a characteristic attitude with his arms folded; Polainus (Chamberlain) is standing very proudly; Furius (Hitler) has his arm raised in the Nazi salute; Josephus (Savage) and Denarius (Nash) are entirely insignificant and need no comment.

Each pedestal bears a card on which is written the name of the personage represented. All the figures wear white togas draped over themselves in characteristic Roman fashion.)
The Fairies enter through the arch and inspect the figures with interest. The melodramatic music continues softly.)

Ariel Not a bad lot, are they?
Edina Who are they all?

Ariel (Pointing to Furius) This gentleman - Furius - is one of the Big Three in European affairs.

Chloroform Who are the other two?

Ariel (Pointing to Scipio Abyssinius) This gentleman. These two insignificant creatures (pointing to Josephus and Denarius) are Josephus and Denarius, obscure rulers of Ao Tohera, a country fortunately as yet undiscovered. This is Stalminus and this Polainus - sworn enemies.

Gizzard (Inspecting Professors) Who are these ancient beings?
Ariel These are the student Gods - old as the hills and quite as changeless.

Larynx Well, how about bringing them to life?
Ariel O.K., Larynx. Come girls, let us dance!

(The Fairies dance round the arch and pillars, chanting as they go, faster and faster).

CHANT

Pons asinorum!
Riddle-me-reel!
Hey Cockalorum!
Mother Machree!
Fried fish and chips!
Sapientia magis!
Abracadabra!
Home brew and Scotch haggis!

(The chant is repeated. Suddenly the Fairies stop dancing, and stand motionless with their arms upraised. There is a loud peal of thunder, and the melodramatic music, which has been continuing, swells louder. The light grows stronger, and the statues are seen to have become animated.)

CHORUS OF THE GODS

Spectres from an unborn age,
Gods of nations yet unknown,
Take their place upon the stage -
Living men from lifeless stone!

(The Fairies crowd to the side of the stage and watch)

Countless millions owned our sway,
Praised our murder, blessed our crime:
Phantoms from a future day,
Wafted back on dreamless time!

(The white robes drop from their shoulders disclosing beneath a typical modern costume, characteristic of each God).

With honey'd words
We strive for peace,
While, slow but sure,
Our arms increase;
With mailed fist
And iron jaw,
Our watchword is
"Prepare for war! "
(The Gods step down from their pedestals)

Spectres from an unborn age,
Gods of nations yet unknown,
Take their place upon the stage -
Living men from lifeless stone!

(The Gods stand looking round in bewilderment. Then, suddenly, they recollect who they are. Each leaps again on his pedestal, and, taking a characteristic attitude, addresses the audience).

Stalineus Comrades!
Furius Heil!
Scipio People of Italy!
Polainus (Languidly) Ladies and gentlemen.
Josephus } (Together) There is no need for anyone to be in the
Denarius ) least alarmed.
Professors (Mildly) Students!
(The following five speeches are orated simultaneously)

Stalineus I am born again as Russia was born again! We shall rise to even greater heights -
Furius In this crisis we stand firmly together. Shall sons of Germania quail? They shall not -
Scipio From stone I have arisen - from death to life! Are you still with me, my people of Italy? -
Polainus I don't know who's done this, but, in the words of the poet, we are not amused.
Josephus } Don't be alarmed, please. We'll pull through all
Denarius ) right. Now then!
(The Gods stop suddenly, and look round embarrassed as they realise they are speaking to bare walls).

Furius There - there isn't anybody there!
Scipio Just force of habit!
Furius I say, haven't I met you somewhere before?
Scipio Munich, wasn't it?
Furius So it was! (They salute) We've been petrified so long I'd almost forgotten.
Stalineus How long have we been hibernating, comrades?
Polainus (In a horrible Oxford accent) Oh, yars and yars!
Furius (To Scipio) I say, who is this man?
(Scipio shrugs his shoulders)
Josephus (Drawling) May we tell you who we are?
Polainus These colonials - most uncouth!
Josephus (Impressively) I am Josephus, son of Mikki, and I rule the isle of Ao Toheroa. This is my colleague Denarius. Now then!

Furius (Unimpressed) I say, who is this man?

Scipio Where is Ao Toheroa?

Furius It's a kind of soup, isn't it?

Poleinus I see to remember a Mikki. He had a wife called Minni, did he not?

Denarius (To Stalinus) Tovarish! You remember me, surely.

Stalinus (Rushing over and embracing him) Of course, oh Denarius! (Pointing to Josephus) And this is comrade Josephus of whom you spoke?

Josephus (Vulgarily) How are you, old bean?

Furius Heil, young ladies! And comely young ladies, too! Who are you?

Ariel We are Fairies, oh Furius - willing to travel the friendly road with you, and to do anything you wish.

Stalinus Certain professions are still flourishing, I see.

Poleinus (Turning his back on the Fairies) My country refuses to negotiate with super-human beings.

Josephus (To Denarius) Do you believe in Fairies, Denarius?

Denarius Of course - I've been telling fairy tales for years.

Scipio How long have we been incarcerated in these statues? My style has been terribly cramped.

Ariel It is now the year 2000 B.M.

Stalinus B.M.?

Ariel Before Marx. You are in the City of Polonia, at present governed by the Emperor Asparagus.

Denarius (Incredulously) Have we gone backwards? This is as complicated as (topical).

Professor Piles It's - er - perfectly - er - easy. Einstein showed - er - that - er - time was - er - purely relative.

Prof. Cain (In a Scotch accent) This is a great opportunity to study the elements of Roman Law. Don't take that down.

Ariel I suppose you would like to see the Emperor?

Scipio We would!

Ariel To-morrow, then. In the meantime, we can put you up at our palace - the Palace of Mafeful Tarts.
Fairies We are the mateful tarts.

Ariel It exists only in the fourth dimension, but I'm sure you'll find it very comfortable.

Josephus I'm sure we will.

(The lights fade, and the melodramatic music swells out again.

The Fairies dance off, and the Gods turn to follow them as the two curtains on either side of the arch close in, hiding the interior of the Hall. The watchman stirs a little, and wakes. He suddenly dashes into the Hall, and reappears in a moment, his face white and his eyes staring.)

Watchman Gawd! They're all gone!

QUICK CURTAIN.
"OLYMPIAN NIGHTS"

ACT 2.

(The curtain rises upon the Court of the Emperor Asparagus. The setting is left entirely to the discretion of the producer, but it should be striking, simple, and modernistic, resembling as closely as possible a Roman interior. The only essentials are steps back centre leading to an alcove on which stands a richly-draped divan, and plenty of cushions strewn around the stage upon which the chorus may sit. The divan is hidden by curtains drawn across the alcove. At the back of the alcove is a curtained door. The curtains in front of the alcove must be able to be drawn apart from off stage. A large notice is pinned to these curtains - "ENGAGED - DO NOT DISTURB". A Chorus of Ladies of the Court bearing flowers and Eunuchs dressed in typical Roman costume, enters, and performs a short ballet, singing the following chorus. The Eunuchs sing soprano.

CHORUS - LADIES AND EUNUCHS

(Air - "The Woman Of The Wisest Wit" - Princess Ida.)

All

Oh, foreign princes daily bring
A hundred precious argosies;
There isn't any other king
As great as Asparagus is!

Eunuchs

We'd die for you, oh mighty king,
Of measles or pneumonia,
Or any other horrid thing -
The Eunuchs of Polonia!

All

Polonia!
Polonia!
The Eunuchs of Polonia!

To Asparagus, mighty king,
Oh let us sing - like anything!
And blow the trumpets loud and long,
And welcome him with joyous song!
To Asparagus, mighty king,
Oh let us sing - like anything!

All

Our learned king in everything
A veritable argus is;
There isn't any other king
As great as Asparagus is!
Ladies

The lilac and the rose we bring -
The tulip and begonia;
Accept these tributes from, of king,
The ladies of Polonia!

All

Polonia!
Polonia!
The ladies of Polonia!
To Asparagus, mighty king,
Oh let us sing - like anything!
And blow the trumpets loud and long,
And welcome him with joyous song!
To Asparagus, mighty king,
Oh let us sing - like anything!

(At the conclusion of the ballet, the Chorus turn towards the alcove and raise their right arms in salute. The curtains slowly part, to disclose the Emperor Asparagus sitting on the divan, closely embracing an attractive Roman maiden. He is dressed in ornate Court dress; on his cheek is a large red lipstick mark. He looks up startled)

The Eunuch  The - the Empress is on her way here, my Lord!

Asparagus  (Visibly blanching) Zeus! (To the maiden) Scram, you!
(The maiden scurries hurriedly). Mirror someone, quick, (A Eunuch hands him a mirror) The Empress—Zeus's trowsers! (He looks in the mirror and dabs at the red mark on his cheek) That cursed girl's bitten me!

(The Emperor skips unmajestically down the steps, and comes to the front of the stage.)

SONG - THE EMPEROR ASPARAGUS, WITH CHORUS

(Air - "In Enterprise of Martial Kind" - The Condoliers.)

In governing Polonia
He has no superiors;
He's cruder than Caligula,
And lewder than Tiberius.
With rapture great he'll liquidate
The enemies who mark us —
That meretricious Superstitious Rather vicious Libertine —
The Emperor Asparagus!

Chorus

His enemies he'll slay, ha ha,
If they get in his way, ha ha,
That meretricious Superstitious Rather vicious Libertine —
The Emperor Asparagus!
He leads his army to the war
The tumult is exciting,
But joins the general staff before
His soldiers start the fighting.
He sits behind the lines and drinks
A lot of wines and lagers
That military
necessary
Very wary -
Warrior -
The Emperor Asparagus!

Chorus

His military zest, ha ha,
Is totally non est, ha ha,
That military
necessary
Very wary
Warrior -
The Emperor Asparagus!

The maids with whom he's wont to mate
Are lovely and delightful.
Though their geography is great
Their history is frightful.
But if the Empress finds him out
The wolves will have his carcasse -
That adolescent
Effervescent
Most unpleasant
Nobleman -
The Emperor Asparagus!

Chorus

She makes the king obey, ha ha,
And rules him night and day, ha ha,
That adolescent
Effervescent
Most unpleasant
Nobleman -
The Emperor Asparagus!

(Vanilla, the Empress Asparagus, sweeps in left. She is dressed in a purple toga, and is a caricature of Aunt Daisy.)

Vanilla Good morning, everybody! Such a beautiful morning. (Malevolently, to the Emperor) Isn't it, my dear?

Asparagus (Imitating her - meekly) Yes, my love - beautiful. But it isn't morning, my dear.

Vanilla Every evening will feel like a morning if you take Bidomac regularly. You look pale, Asparagus. Did you have your Milo this morning? Milo - M.I.L.O. - the tonic drink? It's beautiful!

Asparagus Yes, my love - beautiful! (Aside) Ugh!

(A clock begins to strike ten)

Vanilla Take Milo and you'll look like Venus de Milo! There you are - it's ten o'clock. The Lloyd's chiming clock never fails. Lloyd's - L.L.O.Y.D. apostrophe S. Such a beautiful chime, isn't it? Can't you hear it striking ten - T.E.N.?
(The Minister of Eternal Affairs enters left, accompanied by Ariel).

Minister My Lord, Ariel has an announcement to make.

Vanilla Didn't I tell you to liquidate those fairies - with Weedex - the weed-killer which never fails?

Asparagus (Flustered) Appollo's suspenders! The liquidation will take place shortly, my dear. Ariel has to get his balance sheets in order first.

Ariel Beloved Emperor, I know how you appreciate those little acts of kindness which make this life of ours run smoothly. We fairies delight in such kindnesses, and -

Asparagus Right-oh, Ariel - we'll cut the sob-stuff. What's the matter?

Ariel (His manner changing) We've been to the Hall of the Gods, oh Asparagus, and we have brought the Gods to life - the Gods of 2000 years hence! Bring 'em in, girls!

(The Emperor retires with the Empress to the divan. The Eunuchs are on one side of the stage and the ladies on the other. The Minister of Eternal Affairs and Ariel stand on either side of the divan. The piano plays the first few bars of the "Red Flag". Cuspidor escorts Stalinus into the room and presents him to the Emperor.)

Stalinus Good morning, comrades. (Aside to Cuspidor) Comrade Cuspidor, I do not like Emperors!

Vanilla You should use Palmolive Shaving Cream, young man - Palmolive.

(Chloroform leads in Furius. The piano plays "Deutschland Uber Alles")

Furius (Saluting) Heil.

(Asbestos leads in Scipio Abyssiniius. The piano plays "Giovenezza")

Scipio (Saluting) At your service.

Vanilla You should use Hemlock hair-restorer - Hemlock. It's beautiful.

(Edina leads in Polainus. The piano plays "Rule Britannia").

Polainus How d' you do?

Vanilla I say, what a nice young man!

(Gizzard and Larynx lead in Josephus and Danarius. The piano plays ------ (topical tune).

Josephus } Gooday, pal. How goes it?

Danarius )

(Toothpick leads in the four Professors. The piano plays "Gaudeamus Igitur").
Professors: Good morning.

Prof. Cain: Your toga is wrong. For ceremonial occasions that fold should always be there. Don't take that down.

Prof. Frown: The Latin pronunciation in Polonia is entirely out-of-date.

Ariel: Well, my lord, are they not a promising lot?

Asparagus: Yes Ariel - always promising ... but never fulfilling their promises. Well, gentlemen of the future - this is a very anomalous position. These fairies had no authority to bring you into existence so prematurely.

Vanilla: Now, my dear - don't be biological!

Stalinus: May I ask you if you are familiar with Marx?

Asparagus: I'm afraid not.

Vanilla: I'll have you know I'm familiar with no man!

Stalinus: Because our future plans will definitely be in accordance with Marx's writings.

Furius: They will not!

Scipio: They will definitely not!

Polainus: Really, I must object.

Stalinus: Well, whatever happens, we can't have an Emperor on the throne while we're around. It wouldn't be natural.

Asparagus: Don't you think I'm a fit person to govern Polonia? I've got an illustrious family tree, you know.

Josephus: (Rudely) Yes - I suppose you're the sap! Now then!

Asparagus: And the fairies have been very kind.

(Josephus and Denarius nudge one another and giggle.)

Ariel: We love to help you on your way And brighten up Life's fast fading day. To stop you getting in a groove And make the wheels of Life run much more smooth.

Isn't that a nice thought?

Asparagus: Well, gentlemen, I suppose you wish to discuss your plans for the future.

Polainus: A Conference is certainly desirable.

Asparagus: (To the Minister) Clear the Court! The room is yours, gentlemen. I suppose it will be a somewhat lengthy Conference?

(The Minister ushers the Ladies, fairies, and eunuchs out of the room.)

Scipio: Of course. And utterly useless. But we must have a conference.

Polainus: Just to keep up the old traditions.
Asparagus Come, Vanilla, let us leave them. They're just dying to fly at each other's throats.

(Exit Asparagus and Vanilla right. The Gods arrange the cushions on the floor in two diagonal lines radiating from the centre of the stage. One cushion is placed between the two rows at the back, and on this Scipio Abyssiniius sits. All the Gods sit down cross-legged on the cushions. Scipio rises)

Scipio Gentlemen: We face a very serious crisis in the world's history, and we are gathered here to solve it. The fact that we are theoretically as yet unborn is an insignificant fact that will certainly not deter us.

All Hear hear! Certainly not! etc.

Scipio Look at Polonia - a defenceless, weak State - surrounded by potential enemies straining at her boundaries - ruled by a cheap mountebank. Is it not our duty to conquer this State, to increase the territory of our nations - if only to protect it from invasion and ignominious downfall?

Furius Heil!

Josephus But our own nations aren't in existence yet!

Scipio Who is this man?

Josephus As for my voice at this Conference, John the Baptist won't be in it.

Scipio Are we to let a slight difficulty like that deter us?

All Never! Never!

Polainus (Languidly) Never!

Scipio Good. And now for some points on which we are all bound to agree. Firstly, we believe in international co-operation - among the well-armed nations only.

All We do!

Scipio Secondly, we all have due respect for force in the dealings of civilized peoples with one another.

All We have!

Scipio Thirdly, we believe in the sanctity of treaties and international law - when they do not interfere with the actual conduct of the well-armed nations.

All (Except Professor Cain) We do!

Prof. Cain Pardon me - I have a great respect for International Law and must protest strongly. Don't take that down!

Scipio (Drawing a revolver) Shall we eliminate this subversive, radical, snake-in-the-grass?

Furius No, Scipio. He will be useful to us when we want to condemn breaches of International Law on the part of Polonia.

All We do!

Scipio And lastly, we believe in peace - beautiful, everlasting, perpetual peace -

All (Sighing) Ah, beautiful peace!
Only when the well-armed nations are not quite prepared for War. Gentlemen, we are agreed?

Scipio: We are!

Scipio: And we are agreed that Polonia must be subjugated?

All: We are!

Furius: (Rising — shouting) To maintain collective security!

Hell! Polainus: (Rising) To make the world safe for communism!

Stalinus: (Rising) To preserve the balance of power!

Scipio: To bring the delights of modern civilization to the benighted Polonians!

Denarius: To maintain peace, security and 'appiness!

Professors: (Rising) Hang the Kaiser!

All: (Except Josephus, who remains sitting) Hurrah!

Scipio: (Indicating Josephus) Our insignificant friend here does not think much of our proposals?

Josephus: (Impressively) Well, comrades, if you want my candid opinion, I've never seen such a collection of bunkum in all my life! Now then!

Scipio: For once, Josephus, you are perfectly correct.

Scipio: Gentlemen! I presume that it will be necessary for Polonia to join the League of Nations before she can by International Law be validly attacked?

Stalinus: Certainly.

Furius: Pardon me — but what is this League of Nations?

Scipio: You know — that little place at Geneva where we used to go before we got more sense.

Furius: Oh yes — we used to hold German — Italian conferences there, didn't we? It was great fun.

Josephus: I suppose, comrades, you realise that we can't take Polonia without an army. At present, we 'aven't the strength to pull a herring off a gridiron. Now then!

Scipio: Then we will raise an army — we will make the populace rebel — we will convert the people to our creed —

Denarius: Whose creed?

(There is dead silence for a moment or two )

Professors: (Together) That is the question.

Stalinus: (Rising excitedly) There can be no creed but that of the venerable Marx, as interpreted by Lenin.

Scipio: (Gesticulating ferociously) There can be no creed but that of the Fascist State! — the creed of me!

Furius: (Jumping up) There can be no creed but Nazi terrorism!
Polainus (Rising languidly) There can be no creed but anti-Red insular conservatism.

Stalinus Lenin!

Scipio Me!

Furius Me!

Polainus (Slowly) Anti-Red insular conservatism.

Josephus (To Denarius) Who is this Lenin?

Denarius (To Josephus) You know - that bird who lives in a glass case in the Red Square.

Scipio And what creed do the Ao Tohrooans profess?

Josephus Oh, we don't exactly know. We're not actually red, you know - just a bit pinkish! Now then!

Scipio Of course, not one of you has the sense of the most unintelligent domestic animal!

Stalinus (To Denarius) Always talking about women, isn't he?

Furius Before we proceed further, shouldn't we have some reporters here? Our ultimatum must be presented to the Polonians as soon as possible.

Stalinus Ariel mentioned something about some reporters, didn't he?

Denarius Yes - a paper called "Veritas".

Josephus Ariel called it lots of other things.

Scipio Well, let us summons Ariel. Ariel, my dear, come!

(He claps his hands, and looks from side to side. Ariel, ungracefully flapping arms, legs, and wings, descends from the flies on the end of a thick rope, landing on top of Scipio.)

Ariel You summoned me, and I am here - With pleasing grace I immediately appear! How can I help you, tell me pray, To ease Life's hard and very stony way?

(Ariel unhooks himself. The rope slowly wrinkles up out of sight.)

Isn't that a beautiful thought?

Furius Ariel - I believe you know of some efficient reporters?

Ariel The reporters of "Veritas" - on whom be peace? They're much too efficient.

Scipio Could you call them in for us?

Ariel They're bound to be about somewhere if I'm here.

(to the audience - in a stage whisper) You people say that Truth is at the bottom of a well - I wish to Heaven it was!

Furius Where are these men?

Ariel They are without, Furius. But I must not be here when they come. (The rope descends from the flies) I must
ascend to the ethereal and empyrean heights. (He attaches the rope to himself and is raised into the air) I go! Come, Reporters of "Veritas" - on whom be peace!

(Ariel disappears into the flies. Enter a Chorus of "Veritas" reporters, to the tune of their song. They are little men, wearing black togas and bowler hats. Each has a little black Hitler moustache, and extremely furtive expression, and a large notebook and pencil. They line up in front of the Gods and sing their Chorus, doing a humorous melodramatic ballet.)

CHORUS AND BALLET - "VERITAS" REPORTERS

Mr. Crawler
Our reputation is horrible
Among the upper class -
We're ostracised
If it's surmised
We work for "Veritas".

Mr. Creeper
Our reputation is horrible -
We've got a morbid streak
But learn the truth,
We're not uncouth,
But virtuous and meek!

All
We revel in divorces
And we speculate on horses,
And we love a little murder now and then;
We're most severe on vandals
And we rouse ancient scandals,
But we're really inoffensive little men!

Inoffensive little men,
Temperance supporters!
Innocent and charming folk -
"Veritas" reporters!

We diligently study
Every murder good and bloody -
(For we love a little murder now and then)
And we publish lots of trash on
What we call a "crime of passion" -
But we're really inoffensive little men!

Inoffensive little men,
Not like you have thought us!
Innocent and charming folk -
"Veritas" reporters!

A shattered reputation
Has a fatal fascination.
And we love a little murder now and then;
And we often sit and wonder
How, despite our "blood and thunder",
We remain such inoffensive little men!

Inoffensive little men,
Cast on troubled waters!
Innocent and charming folk -
"Veritas" reporters!
Furius Gentlemen! We have summoned you here because we want you to publish our message to the Polones. (Impressively) We are going to subjugate Polonia!

Mr. Creeper Oh, I wouldn't do that!

Furius Why not?

Mr. Creeper Polonia's a terrible place. Immoral. Corrupt. Horrible!

Mr. Creeper The numbers of abortions is shocking.

Mr. Snuffer And millions of copies of filthy magazines are polluting the Polones.

Mr. Snuffer The Emperor's goings on are simply appalling. We make astounding disclosures about them each week.

Mr. Snuffer Murder!

Mr. Snoop Arson!

Mr. Creeper Rape!

Mr. Snuffer The most amazing and exclusive disclosures!

Mr. Snuffer Riots!

Mr. Snoop Communists!

Mr. Creeper Sudden death!

Mr. Snuffer The most illuminative and exclusive disclosures! With illustrations.

(Silence for a moment. The Reporters' manner changes).

Mr. Creeper And yet we are proud of Polonia!

Mr. Creeper We uphold the rights of citizens!

Mr. Snuffer We mercilessly expose corruption and vice!

Mr. Snoop We stand for the right, the unconquerable right!

Mr. Creeper And we deplore the Left!

Reporters God save the King!

Scipio Gentlemen, please be seated. The Conference must go on!

(The "Veritas" reporters draw cushions up, sitting cross-legged in a row behind the Gods, their pencils poised above their open notebooks)

We had reached the stage, gentlemen, when we were discussing whose creed would be preached to the proposed rebel Polones. I suppose we are agreed, however, that the monarchy is to be abolished?

Stalinus Assuredly!

Furius Positively!

Josephus Too right!
Polainus: We English have no difficulty whatsoever in removing our kings if we don't like them.

Furius: And we are agreed that all who oppose us shall be mercilessly slain, whatever their age or sex?

Mr. Crawler: (To the reporters) Sex, boys!

Reporters: (Scribbling furiously) Sex!

Golds: We are agreed, Furius!

Josephus: But, comrades, it doesn't look as if we'll get far at this rate. We've got to get an army — and money to run it with.

Josephus: Now then!

Denarius: Now then!

Stalinus: And you can't get blood out of a stone.

Denarius: No, comrades — but you can have a bloody good try! I've tried!

Josephus: Why not form a coalition?

Scipio: (Shocked) It's unprecedented!

Furius: (Also shocked) Unheard of!

Stalinus: (More shocked) Impossible!

Josephus: (Rebelliously) Well, I think it's a damn good idea! Now then!

Scipio: Wait a minute! There may be something in this. Why shouldn't we make a Pact?

Furius: Of course, there will have to be a clause providing that we may disregard the Pact at any time.

Scipio: That's understood, of course.

Stalinus: There is a provision to that effect implied in every modern Pact.

Polainus: Certainly! That's what is known as a gentlemen's agreement.

Scipio: (Suddenly) But another question arises — an insuperable question!

Josephus: (Vulgarly) What's biting you, comrade?

Scipio: (Impressively) What colour shirts will we and our army wear?

Professors: That is the question!

Stalinus: Red, of course. It's the only logical colour.

Furius: Brown, or I withdraw from the Pact.

Scipio: Black, or the negotiations are at an end.

Stalinus: Red!

Furius: Brown!

Scipio: Black!
Polainus: We English scorn all shirts! It is unsafe to wear a shirt at all in England!

(Polainus opens his vest, disclosing that his magnificent shirt front is a mere dickey — the rest being bare flesh).

Scipio: (To the Professors) And what do you gentlemen think?

Professors: (Together) We refuse to attempt to grapple with any modern problem.

Scipio: (To Josephus) And you, Josephus?

Josephus: Well, Scipio old bean, all the people in Ao Toheroa have lost their shirts. I suggest that we don't wear any shirts at all!

Professors: (Together) That would be indecent!

Scipio: A splendid idea! The United No-shirts — that's what we'll call ourselves!

All: The United No-shirts!

(The Gods remove their shirts. Furius has a large swastika tattooed on his chest, Scipio the Roman Fasces, and Stalinus the Hammer and Sickle. The "Veritas" reporters jump up and watch open-mouthed)

Mr. Crawler: Boys! Get a special edition out at once!

Mr. Creeper: With huge headlines!

Mr. Crawler: Astounding disclosures!

Mr. Creeper: Exclusive reports!

Mr. Crawler: "The Gods go Nudist!"

Mr. Creeper: "Nudist Colony Formed at Palace!"

Mr. Crawler: Disgusting orgies!

Mr. Creeper: "Olympian Nudists' First Meeting".

Mr. Crawler: Away, boys!

Reporters: Away!

(The "Veritas" reporters rush off left, scribbling furiously as they go.)

Furius: Well, having laid out a plan, what's the next step?

Denarius: To lay out the Emperor!

Furius: Good. I suppose the old gentleman has gone to bed. Does he sleep alone?

Stalinus: I doubt it very much, knowing Emperors.

Polainus: The reporters of "Veritas" would doubtless be able to give you complete and exclusive information.

Denarius: With illustrations.

Scipio: His bedroom is through those curtains there.

(He opens the curtains, disclosing the divan and the curtained door at the back.)
Furius The Empress is going to be hard to deal with. It's my opinion she wasn't born, but quarried!

(The Princess Citronella Asparagus, a beautiful Roman girl dressed in a ravishing nightdress, has come through the curtained door behind the divan, and watches the argument in an amused manner. When the Gods see her, they are somewhat staggered at her beauty.)

Citronella May I be of any assistance?
Furius Hail! Who are you, fair Polony?
Prof. Cain Don't - don't take those down!
Citronella I am Citronella, the Princess Asparagus.
Scipio (In a stage whisper) Do you realise that we shall have to pass this lady before we can get at the Emperor?
Polainus Can't we attack her and place her hors de combat?
Furius Never! We could not descend to such violence - to a lady!
Denarius We'll 'ave to put 'er out of the way somehow.
Josephus I know! Let's put 'er to sleep. Now then!
Furius Brilliant! But how?
Josephus Someone shall sing her a lullaby.
Scipio But who can do it? I am used to patting little children on the head, but lullabies aren't included in a Dictator's repertoire.
Stalinus I shall try, then.

(He diffidently approaches the Princess, who is lounging on the divan smiling broadly. Stalinus sings the following, to the tune of "Alabama Coon", in a guttural and totally unmusical voice).

Go to sleep, my little Bolshie baby,
Trotsky will attack you if you don't,
Hushaby, Lullaby, little Bolshie baby,

(The Princess gives a loud guffaw)

Please don't laugh! This is extremely serious!

Citronella That's just the funniest thing about you all - your intense seriousness.

Josephus Let me try. Now then!

(He sings) Hush-a-by baby, on the tree top,
When we're in power your finances will rock,
But if we go out, and Adam gets in -

(The Princess again guffaws)

It's hopeless, comrades.

Citronella Couldn't I sing the lullaby for you.
Furius That's a splendid idea!
Scipio That'll save us the trouble. Go ahead, Citronella.
SONG - CITRONELLA

(Air - "Silent Night").

Go to sleep!
Go to sleep!
Dream, my pretty ones, sleep, oh sleep!
Dream of your rifles and swords - they will rust;
Dream of your empires - they'll crumble to dust;
Dream of your greed and your lust - oh,
Sleep my pretty ones, sleep!

(During this verse, the Gods sit down on their cushions, begin to nod their heads sleepily, and rub their eyes. As Citronella sings the next verse, they gradually lie down, resting their heads on each others' anatomies. At the end of the verse, they are all fast asleep, breathing heavily and rhythmically.)

Go to sleep!
Go to sleep!
Dream, my pretty ones, sleep, oh sleep!
Dream of your conquests, the battles you've won;
Dream of your own little "place in the sun";
Dream of the murder you've done - oh,
Sleep my pretty ones, sleep!

(The Empress and the Emperor come out through the centre door. The Princess looks at them, and lays her finger on her lips. The three look at the sleeping Gods, and suddenly burst into silent laughter.)

SLOW CURTAIN.
"OLYMPIAN NIGHTS".

ACT III.

(The curtain rises to disclose the Gods slumbering peacefully in the attitudes taken at the close of Act II. A cock crows. The orchestra strikes up very softly the air of the "Veritas" reporter's chorus. The "Veritas" reporters enter left melodramatically in single file, on tip toe, and in time to the music. The foremost carries a large camera and tripod, which he sets up on the stage facing the sleeping Gods. The other reporters cluster round excitedly. The bulb is squeezed).

Mr. Shuffler (in a very loud whisper) Alter the headlines, boys!
Mr. Crawler "Gods' Midnight Orgy".
Mr. Creeper "Nudists Sleep After All-Night Debauch".
Mr. Snooper Exclusive photographs.
Mr. Sniffer Intimate photographs!
Mr. Sniffer Away, boys!
Reporters Away!

(The Reporters form up in single file, and, to the tune of their Chorus played very softly, commence to walk out melodramatically. The Emperor, the Empress and Citronella enter right. The "Veritas" Reporters stop suddenly in their tracks).

Vanilla Good morning, everybody! Such a nice morning!
Reporters Good morning, Vanilla.
Vanilla Have you had your Milo this morning?
Reporters We have, Vanilla.
Vanilla And have you washed with Lifebuoy this morning?
Reporters We have, Vanilla.
Asparagus (To the Reporters) But what are you boys doing here?
Mr. Crawler Photographing the Gods, Asparagus.
Mr. Creeper To incorporate in our special edition, Asparagus.
Asparagus Venus's undies! You can't do that.
Citronella Certainly not!
Asparagus Such a thing would lower the prestige of the monarchy.

(The Reporters all produce red spotted handkerchiefs from their pockets, and weep bitterly).

Mr. Crawler (Weeping) It was going to be such a lovely article.
Mr. Creeper (Weeping) So beautifully intimate.
Asparagus Well, I'll compromise. I'll tell you a real life story that you can pint instead. You'll love it.
Mr. Creeper  Is it intimate?
Asparagus  Listen, and you'll see!

(Asparagus comes to the front of the stage. The "Veritas" reporters move to the extreme right where they stand with pencils and notebooks poised. Vanilla and Citronella stand on the extreme left. As Asparagus begins to sing, the Gods wake up and join in the Chorus. During the Chorus the Ladies of the Court enter, and standing behind Asparagus, perform a tap ballet.)

**SONG - ASPARAGUS WITH CHORUS**

"Rollo the Ravaging Roman".

She was a sweet little woiling goil
Who lived in a house by the Tiber;
She was so innocent, pretty, and pure,
I'm quite at a loss to describe her.
But she met, at a gladiatorial show,
A handsome young Roman — and how could she know

**Chorus**

That he was a villain, a bounder, a cad,
He couldn't recall all the wives that he'd had,
And dozens of kiddies all called him their Dad —
He was Rollo, the Ravaging Roman.

He took this sweet little woiling goil,
Home when the combat was over.
He told her he loved her — she said "Get away!"
But she fell for the wicked young rover.
He swore that he'd die if they ever should part —
For years he had known this effusion by heart!

**Chorus**

For he was a villain, etc.,

He took this sweet little woiling goil,
Woiling one night by the Tiber —
He said "Won't you leave me — oh won't you be mine!"
With kisses attempting to bribe her.
She said "Show me how!" — he responded "O.K."
And proceeded to show her the Appian Way!

**Chorus**

For he was a villain, etc.,

He asked this sweet little woiling goil
To come round one night to his villa;
He kissed and caressed her, and whispered his ferv,
And with liquor proceeded to fill her.
She fainted at last, overcome by the brew,
But when he retired, the young lady came to!

**Chorus**

For he was a villain, etc.

He told this sweet little woiling goil
To go to the Wars he must leave her,
But instead he repaired to a mistress in France,
And thence to a wife in Geneva!
She waited for years, in her sorrow and shame,
With her poor little baby what hadn't a name!
Chorus

For he was a villain, etc.,

(Very slow)  They took this sweet little wailing foil,
And buried her close by the Tiber,
In her coffin she looked so appealing and pure,
I'm quite at a loss to describe her!

(Fast again)  She rested in peace— but the baby she had
Turned out in the end even worse than his Dad!

Chorus.

For he was a villain, etc.,

(During the last chorus, the Ladies of the Court and the "Veritas" reporters dance out. The Gods group themselves into a semi-circle at the left of the stage; Asparagus, Vanilla and Citronella watch them from the right.

Asparagus  Do you Gods wish to continue your Conference? If so, my state room is at your service.

Scipio     Thank you. Where is it?

Asparagus First turning to the left.

Josephus  O.K. boys— let's go!

(The Gods exit left.)

Vanilla (calling as they go) I'll send you some Milo for break-fast! It's beautiful!

(Enter the Minister of Eternal Affairs, right).

Asparagus This is getting serious. Vanilla. These Gods will have to be eliminated.

Vanilla    Use FLIT— F.L.I.T. — it kills all insects and parasites.

Asparagus No, my dear. It's not as simple as that. These Gods are really unborn yet— they're alive two thousand years before their time. They can't be killed by ordinary weapons.

Citronella Well, what are we going to do?

Asparagus The only thing is to persuade them to go back to their pedestals voluntarily.

Citronella But they won't do that! Take Polainus, for instance. Now there—

(Ariel's voice comes from above, and he swims down through the air on the end of his rope).

Ariel     If you get to know a fellow, and you understand his ways,
And you do him little kindesses, you'll find it always pays.

Asparagus Splendid sentiment, Ariel— but what bearing has it on the present problem?
Ariel Just bring Polainus in and I'll show you.
(He begins to ascend to the flies).
Asparagus (To the Minister) Go and get him.
(The Minister exits left).
Ariel If you bring Polainus in, my little scheme I'll try - For Polainus cannot exist without his Old School Tie!
(Ariel disappears into the flies)
Vanilla I say, what is Ariel burbling about?
Asparagus Apparently he's got some plan to make Polainus go back to his pedestal voluntarily.
Citronella Shh! Here he is!
(Enter Polainus, accompanied by the Minister. Polainus is shirtless, but his Old School Tie is tied round his bare neck).
Polainus (Horribly Oxford) You wish to see me?
Asparagus (Confused - looking upwards) I - well - that is to say -
(Ariel swoops down from the flies, removes Polainus' Old School Tie in the twinkling of an eye, gives a demoniac laugh and disappears upwards).
Polainus (Looking upwards) I say, you cad! (Pause) I say, damn it all, this isn't cricket, you know. (Pause) What am I going to do? I say, you bounder, bring my tie back! (Bursting into tears) Oh, where shall I find another?
Asparagus Not in Polonia, I'm afraid.
Polainus (Weeping bitterly) Life is impossible without my Old School Tie. I must go back - back to lifeless stone.
(Gizzard flies in from the wings, landing with a bump on the stage).
Gizzard May I escort you? Come!
(Exit Gizzard and Polainus, right).
Vanilla That young man needed some Clementi's Tonic - Clementi's!
Asparagus Well, that's one.
Vanilla It's got phosphorus in it - phosphorus - builds up your bones and teeth.
Asparagus But what about the others?
Vanilla And the vitamins - yes - the vitamins - they're beautiful!
(Enter left, en masse, Furius, Scipio, Josephus and Denarius and Stalinus).
Scipio Sir! The Conference has reached unanimity!
Asparagus Marvellous!
Furius destroyed. We have decided that the Royal Family must be
Asparagus (Bored) Zeus's combinations! You amaze me!

Stalinus But we do not want to destroy Citronella.

Gods (Together - appealingly to Citronella) Because - we love you!

Josephus And the only way out of the dilemma is for you to marry one of us.

Citronella But what about the Professors? They're nice clean old gentlemen.

Scipio Realising their impotence, the Professors have formed a non-intervention Committee.

Furius Which means, of course, that they'll intervene as soon as possible.

Asparagus (To Vanilla) Well, my dear, as these gentlemen seem to be about to make a collective proposal to our daughter, we had better retire.

Vanilla (Going) And if she refuses you, don't forget that Lifebuoy often restores a shattered romance.

(Asparagus, Vanilla, and the Minister exit right).

Sextette - Furius, Scipio, Josephus, Denarius, Stalinus and Citronella

"If You Will Marry Me"

Air - "When I Go Out Of Door" - Patience -

(Note: During each verse of this song the particular God who is singing dances with Citronella. During the chorus, the other Gods dance together hand in hand, very despondently).

Scipio

If you will marry me,
We'll go across the sea -
Where even the rashest
Speak well of a Fascist,
In beautiful Italy.

We'll train the soldiery,
And give them guns at three;
And sooner or later,
Though I'm a dictator,
I know you'll dictate to me!

Chorus

If you will marry me,
We'll found a family tree.
When all we are doing
Is billing and cooing
How wonderful it will be!

Josephus and Denarius

If you will marry me,
How lovely it will be!
We'll travel to my land -
A nice little island -
A jewel in the Southern Sea!
In Ao Toheroa
We'll chase the wily moa,
We'll live with the Maoris,
And hunt in the kauris,
And follow the kiwi's spoor!

Chorus

If you will marry me, etc.

Stalinus.

If you will marry me,
How happy we will be!
You're worth any ten in
The country of Lenin,
Oh, flower of the bourgeoisie!
The Kremlin we will view,
The Volgar boatmen too—
We'll put on the spotty
The traitorous Trotsky
By means of the G.P.U.

Chorus

If you will marry me, etc.

Furius

If you will marry me,
We'll go to Germany.
It will not be boring
For Goebells and Goering
Can govern instead of me!
And we will blast the hopes
Of Doctor Marie Stopes—
We'll build lots of spacious
And well-equipped creches
On Berchtesgaden's slopes!

Chorus

If you will marry me, etc.

Citronella
Well, gentlemen, I'm overwhelmed by all these proposals.
But you see — I am betrothed!

Gods
Betrothed! Oh, horror!

Citronella
To Ariel!

Scipio
But isn't Ariel a female fairy?

Citronella
Being a fairy, Ariel can assume either sex at will.

Josephus
How extremely convenient!

Scipio
This development needs further consideration. Come!

Gods.
Come!

(The Gods exit left. Asparagus and the Minister enter right).

Asparagus
(To the Minister) You go and fetch them — and I'll deal with them.

(The Minister exits left).
Citronella. Well, I refused them all. They were simply heartbroken!

Asparagus. Splendid! And I’ve got a little scheme I’m going to try on the Ao Therocons.

Citronella. To turn them back to statues?

Asparagus. Exactly! But here they are!

(Josephus and Denarius enter, accompanied by the Minister).

Josephus. Good day, comrade. What’s biting you?

Asparagus. Gentlemen. I have a very unpleasant duty to perform. I have to tell you one of the most important facts of life.

Josephus. (To Denarius) We know most of them, don’t we?

Asparagus. Ah, but this is very delicate and difficult. Have you ever thought of how a birdie comes into the world?

Josephus. Go on – tell us about bees and pollen now!

Asparagus. Or how a litter of puppies is born?

Denarius. Well, we have a vague idea.

Asparagus. Good – I will go even further. You know, those stories about storks and gooseberry bushes aren’t really true.

Josephus. Go on!

Asparagus. You are sure you can bear this revelation?

Denarius. Go ahead – we can take it.

Asparagus. (Dramatically) Very well then. Gentlemen – there is no Santa Claus!

(Josephus and Denarius give a wail of anguish and cling to one another for support).

Josephus. (Sobbing) My childhood dream is shattered!

Denarius. (Sobbing) My faith in human nature is destroyed!

Josephus. Life is impossible when such a cherished belief is shown to be an illusion!

Denarius. Let us go back – back to lifeless stone!

(Larynx and Asbestos fly in, one on each side of the stage, landing with a bump on the stage).

Larynx. May we escort you? Come!

(Asbestos)

(Larynx, Asbestos, Josephus and Denarius exit right).

Asparagus. (Wiping his brow) That’s three! And now for Furius. Ariel – Ariel – where are you?

(He gazes up into the flies. Ariel enters unexpectedly, left from the wings).

Oh, there you are. Can you suggest anything for getting rid of Furius?
Ariel  I shall weave a subtle spell – a terrible spell.

Asparagus  Is it guaranteed to do the trick?

Ariel  Certainly. Just watch!

(Ariel dances clumsily, repeating the Fairies' chant of Act I. At the end cymbals clash violently)

Pons asinorum!
Riddle-me-ree!
Hey cockalorum!
Mother Machree!
Fried fish and chips!
Sapientia magis!
Abracadabra!
Home brew and Scotch haggis!

(The rope descends and Ariel attaches himself to it)

Asparagus  (After a pause) Nothing's happened!

Ariel  Just go and apply your eye to the keyhole of your state room, Asparagus, and see whether anything's happened.

Asparagus  I can't do that – I'm a king, not a commoner.

Ariel  Anybody could see just by looking at you that you couldn't be any commoner!

Asparagus  Bah! (To the Minister) Come!

(They exit left. Citronella and Ariel remain).

Ariel  My loved one!

Citronella  (Rushing to his arms) My precious! We are alone. (Pause) But are we alone? Where are the reporters from "Veritas" –

Ariel  (Hastily) On whom be peace? (Melodramatically) Ha ha! I put Epsom salts in their morning tea!

Citronella  My precious! How cute!

Ariel.  My loved one!

(They commence a languorous embrace, during which Ariel's rope is raised slowly, so that at the end of the kiss Ariel is right up in the air. They disengage themselves, and Ariel floats down to the stage)

DUET – ARIEL AND CITRONELLA

"The Rule of Three"

Ariel

I'm a seeker after truth –
(And "Truth" seeks after me! ).
I search for Light
With phrases trite,
And bad philosophy!
I'm not an Einstein or a Planck,
But wooden as can be –
Yet one mistake
These Scholars make
Is very plain to see –
Chorus - Ariel

One and one make two, they say,
But when you marry me,
A year or so
Will plainly show
That one and one make three!
When birdies mate
They soon make eight,
And bunnies even more —
But we'll have fun
If one and one
Add up to three — or four!

Citronella

Mathematics is a bore —
It's much too deep for me!
I was at school
An utter fool
At plane geometry!
At Euclid I was hopeless, but,
One thing is clear to me —
That there's one rule
Not taught at school,
And that's the Rule of Three!

Chorus - Citronella

One and one make two, etc.

Chorus - Ariel and Citronella

One and one make two, etc.

(At the conclusion of the song, Furius, still shirtless, comes rushing in, followed closely by Asparagus, the Minister and Vanilla. Furius' nose has grown considerably, and his appearance is very Jewish. His voice is also semitic).

Furius (Aughished) Vot is the matter with my nose? Vot have you done to my nose?

Asparagus (Aside to Vanilla) Zeus's nightshirt! Ariel's turned him into a Jew!

Furius (Over-hearing - his voice rising) Vot did you say? A Jew? I am not a Jew! I hate Jews! (He feels his nose) I won't be a Jew — I won't! (He feels it again) But I am — I am! (Pause; he chuckles) Did you hear the story of Abe and Ikey? Ikey met Abe one day — Oh! (He gives a howl of anguish) I cannot understand it! I cannot stand it! I must go back — back to lifeless stone!

(Cuspidor flies in left, landing with a bump on the stage).

Cuspidor May I escort you? Come!

(Furius and Cuspidor exit right)

Asparagus That's four!

Citronella And now there's Stalinus and Scipio. They're going to be very difficult.

Asparagus Very difficult indeed — I think you'd better leave them to me.
Citronella (Anxiously) Don't do anything wrong, Daddy, will you?

Asparagus A King can do no wrong, my dear.

Vanilla No? (Meaningly) But I've got an idea you've tried a few times.

(Exit Vanilla, the Minister and Citronella right. Ariel disappears into the flies. Asparagus retires to the divan. Stalinus and Scipio rush in left with drawn swords, and stand one on each side of the divan, one foot on the bottom step, and with their swords pointing at Asparagus).

Scipio This is the end, Asparagus.

Stalinus You're going to die, Asparagus.

Asparagus (bored) So it appears. Well, get it over.
(Pause—nothing happens) Shall I tell you why you won't strike? Because you're afraid—terribly afraid of one another.

Scipio That nonsense won't get you anywhere.

Asparagus You lie in your teeth!

Stalinus False!

Asparagus Undoubtedly, but you still lie in them!

Asparagus Polonia? You see—if I die, which of you is going to rule?

Stalinus We have entered into a Pact—a gentlemen's agreement.

Asparagus Don't make me laugh. Pacts aren't proof against undying hatred. You know that you can't bear the sight of one another and that you cannot exist together.

Scipio (Blustering) Cold steel might make you see sense.

Asparagus Each of you, in your own petty little way, trying to impose your will on the world—you (to Scipio) with castor oil and clubs—you (to Stalinus) with famine and revolution—Venus's vest! It's funny! And your world thinks that it's got to choose between you. Why should it?

Stalinus The man's nuts!

Asparagus The fault isn't really in your miserable little systems—but in you and the millions you will sway. But those systems can't co-exist—can they, Stalinus?

Stalinus (Menacingly to Scipio) No, Scipio, they cannot.

Scipio You're right, they cannot!

(The two Gods turn their swords from Asparagus, and, after a preliminary flourish, thrust them into each other's bodies. The Gods, however, do not fall)

Asparagus Death won't solve your problems this time, clever ones! You're not born yet—you can't kill one another.

Stalinus (Desperately) But what are we to do?

Scipio We cannot both live.

Asparagus Well, gentlemen—there are your pedestals in the Hall of the Gods—
Stalinus (In complete despair) There's nothing we can do. We must go back - back to lifeless stone.

(Edina and Toothpick fly down, landing with a bump on each side of the stage).

Edina (Toothpick) May we escort you? Come!

(Edina and Toothpick take their arms, and lead Stalinus and Scipio, with bowed heads and in utter despair, out right. Vanilla, Citronella and the Minister enter left)

Asparagus (Wiping his brow) Well, it's all right. They've gone.

Vanilla You look pale, my dear - have an Aspro - A.S.P.R.O. - yes, they're beautiful!

(She gives him one. He throws it over his shoulder when she is not looking and pretends to be swallowing it when she looks back).

Asparagus (Triumphantly) The Gods have gone back! Polonia is free!

(The orchestra strikes up suddenly the air of the Final Chorus. The Ladies of the Court dance in left, and the Eunuchs right. Ariel descends from the flies into Citronella's arms. Asparagus retires to the divan. The "Veritas" reporters dance in melodramatically, left, with their notebooks and pencils waving. Tableau. The orchestra quietens a little)

Asparagus (Rising) Poloneys! Your country is free! (Pause - then suddenly) Bacchus's braces!

Ariel What is it, Asparagus?

Asparagus I've forgotten all about the Professors! They're still here!

Ariel (Calling) Oh, Asparagus, do not fear! Come girls - bring the Professors here!

(Enter the Fairies, left, leading the four Professors. The Professors have turned into Fairies - they wear diaphanous draperies and brassieres, but they still have their long beards. They attempt clumsily to dance. Tableau).

**FINAL CHORUS**

(To be written as near as possible to date of production to the tune of the latest dance hit.)

**CURTAIN.**