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And They Pranced

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And They Pranced
A play for actors and singers by John Steven Paul
A re-imagining of the Soul Purpose play “And They Danced” for the retirement ceremony of
Rev. David H. Kehret in 2003

Cast

JAKOB/ONE	Rinderknecht
TWO	Larson
THREE	Sele
FOUR	Glenn
FIVE	Vergara
SIX	Hinck
SEVEN	Plamann

JAKOB enters and flops into an easy chair. He switches on the TV. Up comes The Food Channel. The chef of the hour is “Sir Richard”¹

TV CHEF

(Reading the recipe instructions preparing the dish)

“Four double handfuls of bulgar wheat,
Steamed until it cracks open.
A measure of flour.
A pinch of salt.
A pinch of dried herbs, rubbed together
and sprinkled into the mixture.
One egg, beaten.

Enough broth to give it moisture.
Mix together.

Prepare another bowl
Glazed for use by the fire.

Rub around with olive oil.
Press a clove of garlic into the surface.
Place first mixture into the new bowl, firm down.
Sprinkle bread crumbs over the top, pat in.
Place a damp towel over bowl.”

¹ Who sounds surprisingly like the late great Welsh actor Sir Richard Burton.

JAKOB impatiently switches off the TV. He begins to recite his own recipe. (It is incomprehensibly complicated.) In the process, he falls asleep. He rises – a sleepwalker – and begins to act out the recipe instructions.

FIVE

Jakob! Wipe off your hands and brush off your apron.

TWO

Pick up your casserole and go out your front door to the Chapel.

TWO & THREE now come down stage and take positions extreme down right and extreme down left.

THREE

Walk down four or five houses and across.

FIVE

Stop at that door.

JAKOB

Sue? Barbara?

SUE (TWO) comes to the door.

Oh, Sue, I, I knew you'd be having all sorts of visitors these days--some folks even from a distance out of town and I knew how things get short. I just wanted to bring over a little something here to help out. You can set it by the fire to warm and just use it whenever you happen to need it.

JAKOB “hands” SUE his covered hot dish and turns away from the door. Then he turns back.

And, uhm, Sue, I just wanted to say how sorry we all are about Pastor Dave. We had hoped and prayed like you and Barb did that he would change his mind. But with Pastor Dave making up his mind so fast—

FOUR

Well, he thought about it for a year...

JAKOB

Shhhhh. And going so quickly—

SEVEN

Well, he stayed around to help for a year!

JAKOB

Shhhhhhhhhhhhhhh! We just want you to know we're so sorry -- we're so sorry.

SIX

Pastor Dave was . . . retired.

FIVE

Against everybody's hopes . . .

CHORUS

Pastor Dave was retired.

TWO

O Jakob, if only you had been here, my boss wouldn't have retired.

THREE

(with anger in her voice)

Oh Jakob, if only you had been here, Pastor Kehret wouldn't have retired.

TWO & THREE

Oh Jakob, if only you had been here . . .

CHORUS

Pastor Dave wouldn't have retired.

SIX

(to the Chorus)

You can't be serious.

SEVEN

Wrong play!

JAKOB

What was the reason then?

FOUR

Blame the wireless microphone system?

FIVE

The ushers were slow?

THREE

The staff broke down?

CHORUS

We forgot to tell him we loved him?

SEVEN

Hardly.

FIVE

Pastor Dave knew we loved him, but he, well...Pastor Dave.

SIX

Okay, let's be honest – Pastor Dave just couldn't get the Nebraska Cornhuskers football games on cable here and--

SEVEN

You CAN'T be serious.

SIX

Of course, I'm not serious; this is Jakob's nightmare.

SEVEN

Oh. For a minute there--

CHORUS

When we got there it would be too late.

TWO & THREE

There would be no Vera Cruz chronicles when the students got there.

FIVE

There would be no just-in-the-nick-of-time-and-everything-ready-for-Sunday that day.

TWO

Jakob would not be led to a home

THREE

but to a retirement home with a satellite system.

CHORUS

There he would stand in front of a room...

FOUR separates himself from the Players and takes a position off stage.

SIX

(with great emotion)

... full of dozing sexagenarians.

JAKOB

Hey, everybody, are you listening to me? [*pause*] Pastor Dave, come forth!

CHORUS

(hesitantly, hoping, doubting)

Pastor Dave, come forth!

FIVE

(rapidly, with great excitement)

Suddenly there would erupt in that dayroom the greatest gift unwrapping this town has ever seen.

TWO

Bathrobe and slippers torn and ripped,

THREE

pulled this way and that.

FOUR

Poor Pastor Dave blinking his eyes in the bright light

TWO

his face smothered with tears

TWO & THREE

and kisses

FIVE & SIX

and hugs from the administrative assistants and everybody around

ONE, TWO, THREE, FIVE, & SIX

yelping and screaming and crying

CHORUS

and shouting all at the same time.

FOUR

And suddenly Pastor Dave would find himself lifted up on strong shoulders . . .

*FIVE and SIX boost FOUR up high on their shoulders and
process upstage as far as possible.*

TWO & THREE

. . . with Sue and Barbara tagging on behind as they start on the way out of the retirement village.

FOUR

. . . and the retirement party in reverse would make its way from rest home back to campus.

THREE

As if seeing the action from afar

Along the way a couple of crucifers would go off to the side down over the hill, down to a flock of sheep, and they would get the biggest ewe they could find, and they would butcher the ewe and clean her out there in the union and bring her into the chapel

FIVE

. . . just as the fire that the acolytes started in the narthex was dying down to very hot coals.

THREE

Now . . .

TWO

they're putting the lamb on a spit on a rack

THREE

and starting to burn it over the fire.

FIVE

In short order *this* chapel will be transformed.

THREE

Jakob would be coming out of the sacristy wondering

ONE

What in the world is going on?

And now it dawns on JAKOB just who is standing in front of her. She looks at SUE and BARBARA who assure her that this is indeed PASTOR DAVE. JAKOB runs to hug him.

TWO

and he would soon know . . .

CHORUS

and every chapel rat would know . . .

Now the preparations for a great celebration begin -- the kind of celebration that a community might have when one of their number comes back from the dead. The celebration of new life is the centerpiece of the play and must be wonderful!

SEVEN

tables, chairs, and pews and pews and pews and pews from every corner of the nave, and down from the gallery, filling the Chapel plaza. . . and pizza . . . boxes and boxes of pizza

THREE

Now Jakob's "Kehret cake"

TWO

will be the centerpiece for the head table!

ONE

Then

FIVE

the lamb would be done

TWO

and the wine skins would come out -

FIVE

SORRY, dry campus.

CHORUS

and everybody

ONE

Would eat

ONE & TWO

and drink

ONE through THREE

and laugh

ONE through FOUR

and cry

ONE through FIVE

and talk

CHORUS

until they had their fill.

FIVE

And when the sun dipped further below the horizon, another transformation would begin to take place in the chapel. Pascal candles would be brought out and placed

ONE

forty, fifty candles there flickering around the village square.

FOUR, FIVE, & SIX

And the pews would all be pulled back off to the side

MEN

You CAN'T be serious!

By now the players have dressed for the party to celebrate PASTOR DAVE'S return from the "dead". Each of them, including PASTOR DAVE, has, with exaggerated enthusiasm, taken and put on three items of party clothing which have been situated on the chairs from the beginning: a crazy hat, a colorful vest, and, perhaps, a long scarf.

TWO

and down at one end... twelve acolytes

THREE

Eleven assisting ministers

FOUR

Ten flaming torches

FIVE

Nine liturgical dancers

SIX

Eight handbell ringers

SEVEN

Seven swinging banners

JAKOB

Six massive choirs

CHORUS

Five endless readings...

Four processional crosses...

Three German organs...

Two campus pastors...

And a God in Trinity...

Placed in a row.

FIVE

And in from Gloria Christi would come the choirs:

TWO

Chorale

THREE

University Singers

FOUR

Gospel Choir

FIVE

Kantorei

SIX

Dayspring

SEVEN

Sweet Wine

JAKOB

And the ushers would herd the congregation into the pews and the procession would step forward into the aisle.

TWO

Then the music would start (the CHORUS begins to hum “Siyahamba”)

and the ministers would process...faster and faster and faster on into the chancel. And there would be Pastor Dave in the middle of them, his hands in the air, directing the acolytes to every step that they could NOT remember, his vestments swinging with his body while incense wafted over the whole affair.

FIVE

And then the music would change (to “Shine, Jesus, Shine) and one by one the ministers would draw back off to the side and find a place to sit on a bench or on a pew until there were just two figures left standing on the chancel steps. And Jakob and Pastor Dave would grasp hands together...and they would prance!

JAKOB and number FOUR begin a liturgical dance with increasing joy and abandon and then suddenly the music and the dancing stop and the two men embrace each other for a long moment.

Now LIV, JAKOB’S housemate comes in and interrupts JAKOB’S dancing.

LIV

Jakob! Wake up, you’re sleep-processing again..

JAKOB

But Pastor Dave was there; we processed and we were prancing—I mean dancing in the chancel.

LIV

But Jakob, none of that could have happened...

JAKOB

None of that could have happened?

LIV

Remember this so you'll never forget it.

CHORUS

None of this would have happened.

THREE

Mark this indelibly in your memory

TWO through SEVEN

None of *this* would have been at all possible.

JAKOB

(BIG and slow)

The eating, the gifting, the speaking, the singing, the expressions of undying gratitude and affection?

CHORUS

None of this would have happened. . .

SIX

. . . except first Pastor Dave had retired.

CHORUS

All of us have experienced at some time in our life the letting go of one life for a new one.

TWO

Some of us know how terribly hard these changes are, how so unbelievably hard they are that sometimes we find it just impossible to let go and cling for dear life to things and people, unable to take our hands off of them.

CHORUS

Those of us . . .

TWO

Who will miss Vera Cruz

THREE

And Folk Service

FOUR

And Easter Vigil raps

FIVE

And “Siya Hamba”

SIX

And the *irony*

SEVEN

And the reminders to take ourselves not QUITE so seriously!

JAKOB

(hysterical)

It's too scary!

(General hugging and consoling)

CHORUS

So now here's THANKS from ... ALL OF US

SIX

For whom Jesus Christ and his Gospel came alive in your stories.

CHORUS

ALL OF US...

SEVEN

Whom you led in worship.

CHORUS

ALL OF US

TWO

Whose joys, and sorrows, and deepest daily concerns you lifted up in prayer.

CHORUS

ALL OF US

THREE

Whose eyes we opened to see communities in need beyond the campus and around the world

FOUR

There are also those among us – more than a hundred -- who have had the privilege of acting out your stories in churches around the country for the past fifteen years, and whom you have served as pastor, poet, and inspiration.

JAKOB

SOUL PURPOSE wants to thank you again,

ONE & TWO

And again

ONE through FOUR

and again

ONE through FIVE

and again

CHORUS

and again and again.

SEVEN

And until we meet again, we'd like to extend to you, Pastor Dave and Helen and _____, THE PEACE OF THE LORD and leave you with a song from

ONE

From Jakob

FIVE

And Chris

SIX

And Peter

FOUR

And Jon

THREE

And Traci

TWO

And Liv

ONE

And Melissa

CHORUS

(to the audience) And all of us.

“God Be With You ‘Til We Meet Again”

END