



Jun-2009

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Recommended Citation

Levine, Stephen (2009). A Contemporary Poetic Play. *Bridgewater Review*, 28(1), 28-29.

Available at: http://vc.bridgew.edu/br_rev/vol28/iss1/13

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As anyone who has read Shakespeare knows, the print version of a poetic play is very different from a poem. I'm obviously no Shakespeare, but I have written a contemporary poetic play, and reading it requires the same kind of visual and auditory leap of imagination from page to stage as a four hundred year old masterpiece. In order to understand this simple dialogue, one must imagine it as an audience member close to an intimately small stage, with vibrant human actors speaking, singing and dancing, colorful flowing costumes, brilliant lighting, and a heart-felt musical underscore.

To aid this imagination, allow me to set the stage, so to speak, for the selection that will follow. The scene in question is next to last in *The Insect Comedy*, which I have written based on a ninety year old work by Czech brothers, Joseph and Karel Capek, (pronounced "chahpek"). The play begins with a prologue seen from a normal human perspective. In a meadow near woods, a drunken homeless Man is alone, pondering his existence, when he is interrupted by a biology Professor hunting butterflies to pin and exhibit for nature lovers. She notes that the butterflies are in mating season and attracted to the man because he smells putrified with sweat and dirt. He decides to watch the butterflies in their mating to amuse himself. He exits the stage, but his enormous face and booming voice occasionally comment on the insects he is observing. In the first full scene of the play, the butterflies enter, behaving like beautiful, young, love-struck, fickle and unfaithful individuals performed by normal-sized human actors in contemporary colorful dress subtly suggesting bodies and wings. The second scene features the Man observing insects closer to the earth, such as a trio of very wealthy tuxedoed and designer-dressed dung-beetles, who push and covet their treasure in the form of an enormous ball of dung, and perceive its loss as tragic.

They are constantly interrupted by a Chrysalis, who from her closed cocoon proclaims the entire world will change when she is born. There are also contemporarily dressed actors portraying an Ichneumon fly as a "working girl" and her adorable child Larvae (in a fleece pajama snuggly) whose hunger drives her single mom to capture a pair of crickets to feed to her baby. The Crickets are a musical pair who were imminently expecting their own large brood. The final character is a Parasite, depicted as a contemporary street beggar. The last full scene features innumerable Ants who convert from an endless line of paper pushing Workers to an endless line of Soldiers, waging war against ants of a different color. The Man ends the war, and then observes the scene printed below, wherein the Chrysalis emerges from her cocoon as a Mayfly to join the others of her kind who only fly and live one day. The word "Coda" is not spoken in performance, but is a musical term meaning a short ending piece after the main body of work. The Mayflies are in contemporary dancewear with sheer flowing silk scarves suggesting the movement of wings, and they revolve attracted to the brightest light from above. The musical underscore is a live, offstage solo voice singing the melody line from the haunting *Bachianas Brasileiras No. 5* by Heter Villalobos.

Please note that punctuation in a playscript is not for grammatical purposes at all, but rather a code to guide actors in performance, comparable to musical notation for a singer. In this case, the exclamation points indicate sequentially rising intensity of vocal inflection as well as gesture and facial expression, beyond what is natural in realistic conversation.

Coda

(Light slowly brightens. MAYFLIES enter from all corners of the stage, dancing with sheer scarves of silk toward the light above. The MAYFLY CHRYSALIS is in her cocoon above the audience.)

MAYFLY CHRYSALIS: (Bright spotlight, she begins to open her cocoon.) *I am ready to escape my prison! I will live forever! Now that I am chosen to be born!*

CHORUS: (ALL enter.) *The world loves us! Mayflies have the gift of life! A lifelong love!*

CHRYSALIS: (Spreading her wings.) *Who's singing out to me?*

CHORUS: *Come with us! Fly around the light of life! A gift of love!*

MAYFLY CHRYSALIS: *I am the one to be born now! I'm entering a world of hope!*
(She joins the other Mayflies dancing.)

CHORUS: *Come with us! Whirling, twirling, swirling, curling round eternal light!*

MAYFLY 1: *My wings are made of light! Fly with me! Reach up for life's essence! Fly! And dance forever! High above the earth! Up to the light! Until I die!* (She dies.)

CHORUS: *All that we have is life! Come with us! Whirling, twirling, swirling, curling round eternal light!*

MAYFLY 2: *Let me fly up! Let me become a lifelong fire above the cares of every day! So let me live with you! Let us live long as I can love!* (She dies.)

CHORUS: *All that we have is life! Come with us! Whirling, twirling, swirling, curling round eternal light!*

MAYFLY 3: *The world is blest to see life last forever! I will dance with you as long as I'm alive! Come sing with me as long as we're together!* (She dies.)

CHORUS: *Live! All that we have is life! Come with us! Whirling, twirling, swirling, curling round eternal light!*

MAYFLY 4: *Our wings are made to last one Mayfly day. If I can find love without end, then I can live forever! Stay, life, stay!* (He dies.)

CHORUS: *All that we have is life! Come with us! Whirling, twirling, swirling, curling round eternal light!* (They die.)

MAYFLY CHRYSALIS: (Dancing. The light becomes blindingly bright.) *The whole world comes alive in me! To be is to fly up into the light! And feel the ecstasy! Feel the eternal mystery! I can reveal the secret of life's meaning! Listen to me! Will you hear my voice before I die? Life is! Before I die!* (She dies. Sudden blackout as music swells.)