THESPIS or THE GODS GROWN OLD

Libretto by William S. Gilbert Music by Arthur S. Sullivan and Colin Johnson

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

GODS

JUPITER, Aged Deity	Bass-Baritone Baritone
Apollo, Aged Deity	BARITONE
	MEZZO-SOPRANO
DIANA, Aged Deity	
Mercury	Soprano
THESPIANS	
Thespis	Baritone
Sparkeion	Tenor
NICEMIS	Soprano
Daphne	Soprano
Sillimon	Tenor
Timidon	BARITONE
Tipseion	(Speaking role)
Preposteros	(Speaking role)
Stupidas	(Speaking role)
Pretteia	(Speaking role)
Cymon	(SPEAKING ROLE)

Overture

















Act One

Scene.— The ruins of The Temple of the Gods on summit of Mount Olympus. Picturesque shattered columns, overgrown with ivy, etc., R. and L., with entrances to temple (ruined) R. Fallen columns on the stage. Three broken pillars 2 R. E. At the back of stage is the approach from the summit of the mountain. This should be "practicable" to enable large numbers of people to ascend and descend. In the distance are the summits of adjacent mountains. At first all this is concealed by a thick fog, which clears presently. Enter (through fog) Chorus of Stars coming off duty, as fatigued with their night's work.

No 1. Opening Chorus and Solo: "Throughout the Night" The Star, Men and Women

pp poco piu animato (🌡 cresc.



















DIANA (*shuddering*). Ugh! How cold the nights are! I don't know how it is, but I seem to feel the night air a great deal more than I used to. But it is time for the sun to be rising. (*Calls*.) Apollo.

APOLLO (within) Hollo!

DIANA I've come off duty—It's time for you to be getting up.

Enter APOLLO. He is an elderly "buck" with an air of assumed juvenility, and is dressed in dressing gown and smoking cap.

- APOLLO (yawning) I shan't go out to-day. I was out yesterday and the day before and I want a little rest. I don't know how it is, but I seem to feel my work a great deal more than I used to.
 - DIANA I'm sure these short days can't hurt you. Why, you don't rise till six and you're in bed again by five: you should have a turn at my work and see how you like that—out all night!
- APOLLO My dear sister, I don't envy you—though I remember when I did—but that was when I was a younger sun. I don't think I'm quite well. Perhaps a little change of air will do me good. I've a great mind to show myself in London this winter, they'll be very glad to see me. No! I shan't go out to-day. I shall send them this fine, thick wholesome fog and they won't miss me. It's the best substitute for a blazing sun—and like most substitutes, nothing at all like the real thing. (*To fog.*) Be off with you.

[Fog clears away and discovers the scene described.

Nº 1a. Hurried Music

MERCURY shoots up from behind precipice at the back of stage. He carries several parcels afterwards described. He sits down, very much fatigued.



MERCURY Home at last. A nice time I've had of it.

DIANA You young scamp you've been down all night again. This is the third time you've been out this week.

MERCURY Well you're a nice one to blow me up for that.

DIANA I can't help being out all night.

MERCURY And I can't help being down all night. The nature of Mercury requires that he should go down when the sun sets, and rise again when the sun rises.

DIANA And what have you been doing?

MERCURY Stealing on commission. There's a set of false teeth and a box of Life Pills—that's

for Jupiter—An invisible peruke and a bottle of hair dye—that's for Apollo—A respirator and a pair of goloshes—that's for Cupid—A full bottomed chignon, some auricomous fluid, a box of pearl-powder, a pot of rouge, and a hare's foot—that's

for Venus.

DIANA Stealing! You ought to be ashamed of yourself!

MERCURY Oh, as the god of thieves I must do something to justify my position.

DIANA & APOLLO (contemptuously). Your position!

MERCURY Oh I know it's nothing to boast of, even on earth. Up here, it's simply contemptible. Now that you gods are too old for your work, you've made me the miserable drudge of Olympus—groom, valet, postman, butler, commissionaire, maid of all work,

parish beadle, and original dustman.

APOLLO Your Christmas boxes ought to be something considerable.

MERCURY They ought to be but they're not. I'm treated abominably. I make everybody and I'm nobody—I go everywhere and I'm nowhere—I do everything and I'm nothing—I've made thunder for Jupiter, odes for Apollo, battles for Mars, and love for Venus.

I've married couples for Hymon and six weeks afterwords. I've diverged them for

I've married couples for Hymen and six weeks afterwards, I've divorced them for Cupid—and in return I get all the kicks while they pocket the halfpence. And in compensation for robbing me of the halfpence in question, what have they done for

me?

APOLLO Why they've—ha! ha! they've made you the god of thieves!

MERCURY Very self-denying of them—There isn't one of them who hasn't a better claim to

the distinction than I have.

No 2. Song: "Oh, I'm the Celestial Drudge" Mercury













Nº 2a. Majestic Music

DIANA, MERCURY (looking off) Why, who's this? Jupiter, by Jove!



Enter JUPITER, an extremely old man, very decrepit, with very thin straggling white beard, he wears a long braided dressinggown, handsomely trimmed, and a silk night-cap on his head. MERCURY falls back respectfully as he enters.





JUPITER Good day, Diana—ah Apollo—Well, well, well, what's the matter? What's the matter?

DIANA Why, that young scamp Mercury says that we do nothing, and leave all the duties of Olympus to him! Will you believe it, he actually says that our influence on earth is dropping down to *nil*.

Well, well—don't be hard on the lad—to tell you the truth, I'm not sure that he's very far wrong. Don't let it go any further, but, between ourselves, the sacrifices and votive offerings have fallen off terribly of late. Why, I can remember the time when people offered us human sacrifices—no mistake about it—human sacrifices! Think of that!

DIANA Ah! Those good old days!

JUPITER Then it fell off to oxen, pigs, and sheep.

APOLLO Well, there are worse things than oxen, pigs and sheep.

JUPITER So I've found to my cost. My dear sir—between ourselves, it's dropped off from one thing to another until it has positively dwindled down to preserved Australian

beef! What do you think of that?

APOLLO I don't like it at all.

JUPITER You won't mention it—It might go further—

DIANA It couldn't fare worse.

JUPITER In short, matters have come to such a crisis that there's no mistake about it—something must be done to restore our influence, the only question is, *What?*

Enter mars

No 3. Quintet: "Oh Incident Unprecedented" Mercury, Jupiter, Apollo, Mars, Diana



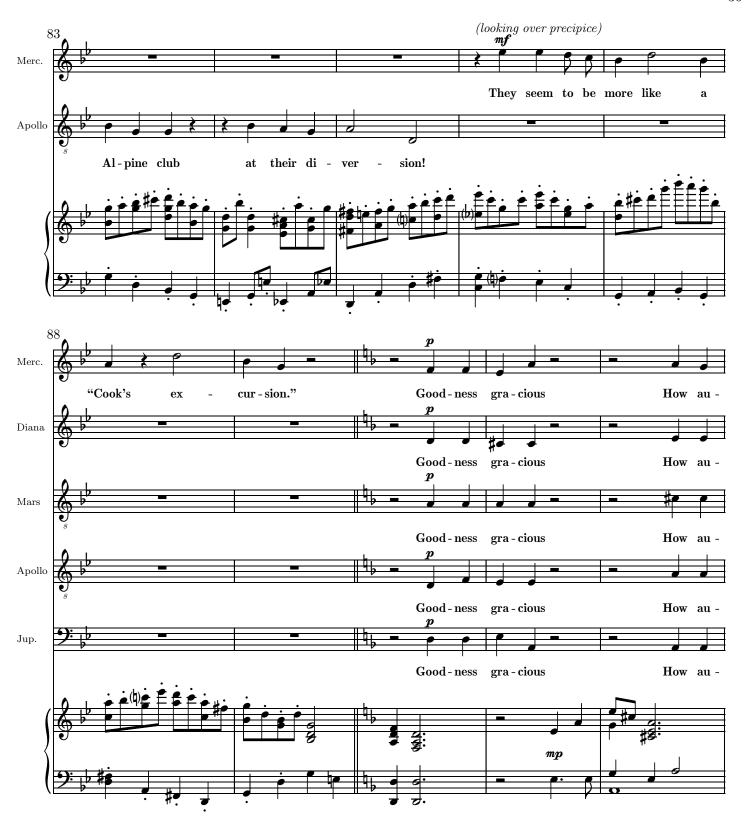












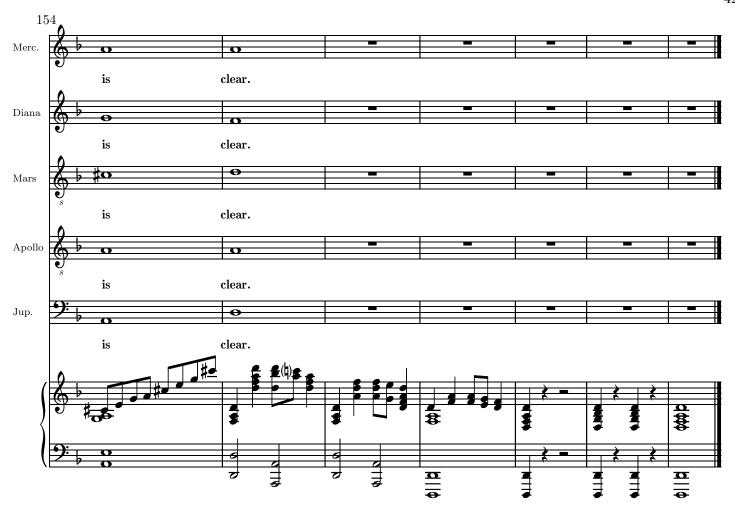












[Exeunt Jupiter, Apollo, Diana, and Mercury into ruined temple.

Enter sparkeion and nicemis climbing mountain at back.

SPARKEION Here we are at last on the very summit, and we've left the others ever so far behind! Why, what's this?

NICEMIS A ruined palace! A palace on the top of a mountain. I wonder who lives here? Some mighty king, I dare say, with wealth beyond all counting, who came to live up here—

SPARKEION To avoid his creditors! It's a lovely situation for a country house though it's very much out of repair.

NICEMIS Very inconvenient situation.

SPARKEION Inconvenient?

NICEMIS Yes—how are you to get butter, milk, and eggs up here? No pigs—no poultry—no postman. Why, I should go mad.

SPARKEION What a dear little practical mind it is! What a wife you will make!

NICEMIS Don't be too sure—we are only partly married—the marriage ceremony lasts all day.

SPARKEION I've no doubt at all about it. We shall be as happy as a king and queen, though we are only a strolling actor and actress.

NICEMIS It's very kind of Thespis to celebrate our marriage day by giving the company a pic-nic on this lovely mountain.

SPARKEION And still more kind to allow us to get so much ahead of all the others. Discreet Thespis! (Kissing her.)

NICEMIS There now, get away, do! Remember the marriage ceremony is not yet completed.

SPARKEION But it would be ungrateful to Thespis's discretion not to take advantage of it by improving the opportunity.

NICEMIS Certainly not; get away.

SPARKEION On second thoughts the opportunity's so good it don't admit of improvement. There! (Kisses her.)

NICEMIS How dare you kiss me before we are quite married?

SPARKEION Attribute it to the intoxicating influence of the mountain air.

NICEMIS Then we had better go down again. It is not right to expose ourselves to influences over which we have no control.

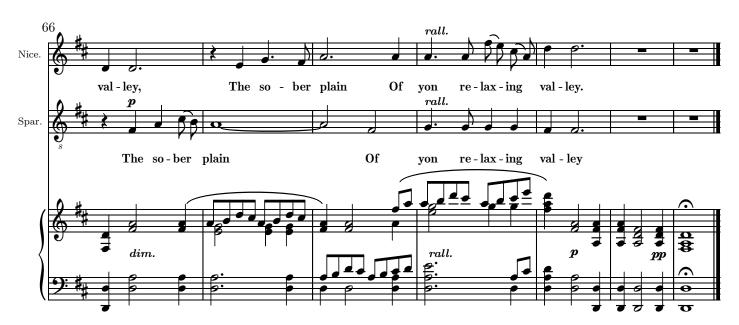
No 4. Duet: "Here Far Away" Sparkeion and Nicemis











SPARKEION Very well—if you won't have anything to say to me, I know who will.

NICEMIS Who will?

SPARKEION Daphne will.

NICEMIS Daphne would flirt with anybody.

SPARKEION Anybody would flirt with Daphne. She is quite as pretty as you and has twice as much back-hair.

NICEMIS She has twice as much money, which may account for it.

SPARKEION At all events, she has appreciation. She likes good looks.

NICEMIS We all like what we haven't got.

SPARKEION She keeps her eyes open.

NICEMIS Yes—one of them.

SPARKEION Which one?

NICEMIS The one she doesn't wink with.

SPARKEION Well, I was engaged to her for six months and if she still makes eyes at me, you must attribute it to force of habit. Besides—remember—we are only half-married at present.

NICEMIS I suppose you mean that you are going to treat me as shamefully as you treated her. Very well, break it off if you like. I shall not offer any objection. Thespis used to be very attentive to me. I'd just as soon be a man-ager's wife as a fifth-rate actor's!

No 5. Chorus and Solos: "Climbing Over Rocky Mountain" Men and Women

Chorus heard, at first below, then enter DAPHNE, PRETTEIA, PREPOSTEROS, STUPIDAS, TIPSEION, CYMON, and other members of THESPIS' company climbing over rock at back. All carry small baskets.





























Enter THESPIS climbing over rocks

THESPIS Bless you, my people, bless you. Let the revels commence. After all, for thorough,

unconstrained unconventional enjoyment give me a pic-nic.

PREPOSTEROS (very gloomily). Give him a pic-nic somebody!

THESPIS Be quiet, Preposteros—don't interrupt.

PREPOSTEROS Ha! Ha! Shut up again! But no matter.

STUPIDAS endeavours, in pantomime, to reconcile him. Throughout the scene PREPOSTEROS shows symptoms of breaking out into a furious passion, and STUPIDAS does all he can to pacify and restrain him.

THESPIS The best of a pic-nic is that everybody contributes what he pleases, and nobody

knows what anybody else has brought till the last moment. Now, unpack everybody

and let's see what there is for everybody.

NICEMIS I have brought you—a bottle of soda water—for the claret-cup.

DAPHNE I have brought you—lettuce for the lobster salad.

SPARKEION A piece of ice—for the claret-cup.

PRETTEIA A bottle of vinegar—for the lobster salad.

CYMON A bunch of burrage for the claret-cup!

TIPSEION A hard boiled egg—for the lobster salad!

STUPIDAS One lump of sugar for the claret-cup!

PREPOSTEROS He has brought one lump of sugar for the claret-cup? Ha! Ha! Ha!

[Laughing melodramatically.

STUPIDAS Well, Preposteros, what have you brought?

PREPOSTEROS I have brought two lumps of the very best salt for the lobster salad.

THESPIS Oh—is that all?

PREPOSTEROS All! Ha! He asks if it is all!

[STUPIDAS consoles him.

THESPIS But, I say—this is capital so far as it goes - nothing could be better, but it doesn't

go far enough. The claret, for instance! I don't insist on claret—or a lobster—I don't insist on lobster, but a lobster salad without a lobster, why it isn't lobster

salad. Here, Tipseion!

TIPSEION (a very drunken bloated fellow, dressed, however, with scrupulous accuracy and

wearing a large medal round his neck) My master?

[Falls on his knees to thespis and kisses his robe.

THESPIS Get up—don't be a fool. Where's the claret? We arranged last week that you were to see to that?

TIPSEION True, dear master. But then I was a drunkard!

THESPIS You were.

TIPSEION You engaged me to play convivial parts on the strength of my personal appearance.

THESPIS I did.

TIPSEION Then you found that my habits interfered with my duties as low comedian.

THESPIS True—

TIPSEION You said yesterday that unless I took the pledge you would dismiss me from your company.

THESPIS Quite so.

TIPSEION Good. I have taken it. It is all I have taken since yesterday. My preserver!

[Embraces him.

THESPIS Yes, but where's the wine?

TIPSEION I left it behind that I might not be tempted to violate my pledge.

PREPOSTEROS Minion!

Attempts to get at him, is restrained by STUPIDAS.

THESPIS Now, Preposteros, what is the matter with you?

PREPOSTEROS It is enough that I am down-trodden in my profession. I will not submit to imposition out of it. It is enough that as your heavy villain I get the worst of it every night in a combat of six. I will *not* submit to insult in the day time. I have come out, Ha! Ha! to enjoy myself!

THESPIS But look here, you know—virtue only triumphs at night from seven to ten—vice gets the best of it during the other twenty-three hours. Won't that satisfy you?

STUPIDAS endeavours to pacify him.

PREPOSTEROS (irritated to STUPIDAS). Ye are odious to my sight! Get out of it!

STUPIDAS (in great terror). What have I done?

THESPIS Now what is it, Preposteros, what is it?

PREPOSTEROS I a-hate him and would have his life!

THESPIS (to STUPIDAS). That's it—he hates you and would have your life. Now go and be merry.

STUPIDAS Yes, but why does he hate me?

THESPIS Oh—exactly. (to PREPOSTEROS). Why do you hate him?

PREPOSTEROS Because he is a minion!

THESPIS He hates you because you are a minion. It explains itself. Now go and enjoy yourselves. Ha! Ha! It is well for those who can laugh—let them do so—there is no extra charge. The light-hearted cup and the convivial jest for them—but for me—what is there for me?

SILLIMON There is some claret-cup and lobster salad.

[Handing some.

THESPIS (taking it). Thank you. (Resuming.) What is there for me but anxiety—ceaseless gnawing anxiety that tears at my very vitals and rends my peace of mind asunder? There is nothing whatever for me but anxiety of the nature I have just described. The charge of these thoughtless revellers is my unhappy lot. It is not a small charge, and it is rightly termed a lot, because they are many. Oh why did the gods make me a manager?

SILLIMON (as guessing a riddle). Why did the gods make him a manager?

SPARKEION Why did the *gods* make him a manager?

DAPHNE Why did the gods make him a manager?

PRETTEIA Why did the gods make him a manager?

THESPIS No—no—what are you talking about? What do you mean?

DAPHNE I've got it—don't tell us—

ALL No—no—because—because—

THESPIS (annoyed). It isn't a conundrum—It's a misanthropical question. Why cannot I join you?

[Retires up center.

DAPHNE (who is sitting with SPARKEION to the annoyance of NICEMIS who is crying alone).

I'm sure I don't know. We do not want you. Don't distress yourself on our account—
we are getting on very comfortably—aren't we Sparkeion?

SPARKEION We are so happy that we don't miss the lobster or the claret. What are lobster and claret compared with the society of those we love?

[Embracing Daphne.

DAPHNE Why, Nicemis, love, you are eating nothing. Aren't you happy dear?

NICEMIS (spitefully). You are quite welcome to my share of everything. I intend to console myself with the society of my manager.

[Takes Thespis' arm affectionately.

THESPIS Here I say—this won't do, you know—I can't allow it—at least before my company—besides, you are half-married to Sparkeion. Sparkeion, here's your half-wife impairing my influence before my company. Don't you know the story of the gentleman who undermined his influence by associating with his inferiors?

ALL Yes, yes,—we know it.

PREPOSTEROS (furiously). I do not know it! It's ever thus! Doomed to disappointment from my earliest years—

STUPIDAS endeavours to pacify him.

THESPIS There—that's enough. Preposteros—you shall hear it.

Nº 6. Solo with Chorus: "I Once Knew a Chap" Thespis and Chorus













































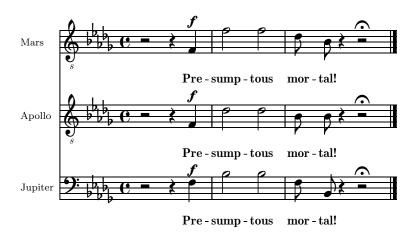




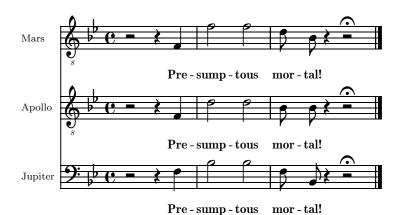


THESPIS It's very hard. As a man I am naturally of an easy disposition. As a manager, I am compelled to hold myself aloof, that my influence may not be deteriorated. As a man I am inclined to fraternize with the pauper—as a manager I am compelled to walk around like this: Don't know yah! Don't know yah! Don't know yah!

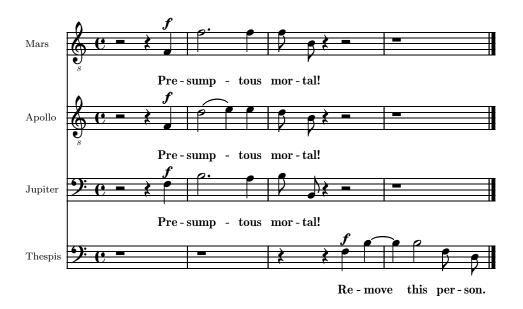
 $Strides\ haughtily\ about\ the\ stage,\ {\tt JUPITER},\ {\tt MARS},\ and\ {\tt APOLLO},\ in\ full\ Olympian\ costume\ appear\ on\ the\ three\ broken\ columns.\ The spians\ scream.$



THESPIS (same business). Don't know yah! Don't know yah!



THESPIS I do not know you. I do not know you.



STUPIDAS and PREPOSTEROS seize APOLLO and MARS.

JUPITER Stop, you evidently don't know me. Allow me to offer you my card.

[Throws flash paper.

THESPIS Ah yes, it's very pretty, but we don't want any at present. When we do our Christmas piece, I'll let you know. (*Changing his manner*.) Look here, you know, this is a private party and we haven't the pleasure of your acquaintance. There are a good many other mountains about, if you must have a mountain all to yourself. Don't make me let myself down before my company. (*Resuming*) Don't know yah!

JUPITER I am Jupiter, the King of the Gods. This is Apollo. This is Mars.

[All kneel to them except THESPIS.)

THESPIS Oh! Then as I'm a respectable man, and rather particular about the company I keep, I think I'll go.

JUPITER No—no—stop a bit. We want to consult you on a matter of great importance.

THESPIS I can give you five minutes.

JUPITER No matter. It will suffice.

THESPIS (to Thespians.) I have been invited to confer with a brother manager. As our discussion is not for the ears of the oi polloi, I should be very much obliged if you would withdraw to a respectable distance.

[They are reluctant to go.

JUPITER (steps forward). Allow me—

[Throws thunderbolt. The spians scream and go out.

There! Now we are alone. Who are you?

THESPIS I am Thespis of the Thessalian Theatres.

JUPITER The very man we want. Now as a judge of what the public likes, are you impressed with my appearance as father of the gods?

THESPIS Well to be candid with you, I am not. In fact I'm disappointed.

JUPITER Disappointed?

THESPIS Yes, you see you're so much out of repair. No, you don't come up to my idea of the part. Bless you, I've played you often.

JUPITER You have!

THESPIS To be sure I have.

JUPITER And how have you dressed the part?

THESPIS Fine commanding party in the prime of life. Thunderbolt—full beard—dignified manner—a good deal of this sort of thing "Don't know yah! Don't know yah!"

[Imitating, crosses L.

JUPITER (*much affected*). I—I'm very much obliged to you. It's very good of you. I—I—I used to be like that. I can't tell you how much I feel it. And do you find I'm an impressive character to play?

THESPIS Well no, I can't say you are. In fact we don't use you much out of burlesque.

JUPITER Burlesque!

[Offended, walks up.

THESPIS Yes, it's a painful subject, drop it, drop it. The fact is, you are not the gods you were—you're behind your age.

JUPITER Well, but what are we to do? We feel that we ought to do something, but we don't know what.

THESPIS Why don't you all go down to Earth, *incog.*, mingle with the world, hear and see what people think of you, and judge for yourselves as to the best means to take to restore your influence?

JUPITER Ah, but what's to become of Olympus in the meantime?

THESPIS Lor bless you, don't distress yourself about that. I've a very good company, used to take long parts on the shortest notice. Invest us with your powers and we'll fill your places till you return.

JUPITER (aside). The offer is tempting. (aloud). But suppose you fail?

THESPIS Fail! Oh, we never fail in our profession. We've nothing but great successes!

JUPITER Then it's a bargain?

THESPIS It's a bargain.

[They shake hands on it.

JUPITER And that you may not be entirely without assistance, we will leave you Mercury, and whenever you find yourself in a difficulty you can consult him.

Enter MERCURY (trap C.)

No 7. Act One Finale: "So That's Arranged" Ensemble





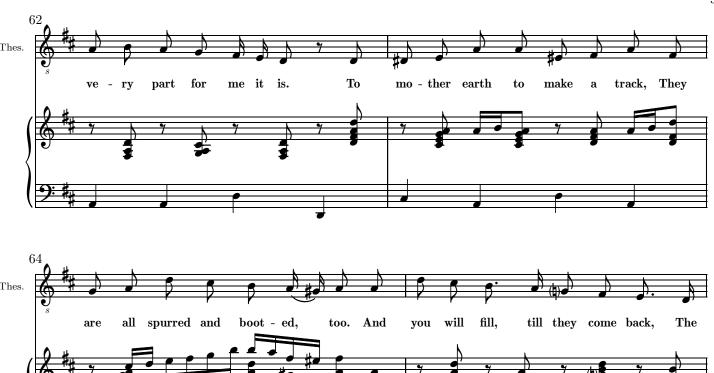
































































The Gods, including those who have lately entered in procession, group themselves on rising ground at back. The Thespians (kneeling) bid them farewell.

Act Two

Scene.— The same scene as in Act I with the exception that in place of the ruins that filled the foreground of the stage, the interior of a magnificent temple is seen showing the background of the scene of Act I, through the columns of the portico at the back. High throne. L.U.E. Low seats below it.

All the substitute gods and goddesses (that is to say, Thespians) are discovered grouped in picturesque attitudes about the stage, eating and drinking, and smoking and singing the following verses:—

Nº 8. Opening Chorus and Solo: "Of All Symposia" Chorus and Sillimon







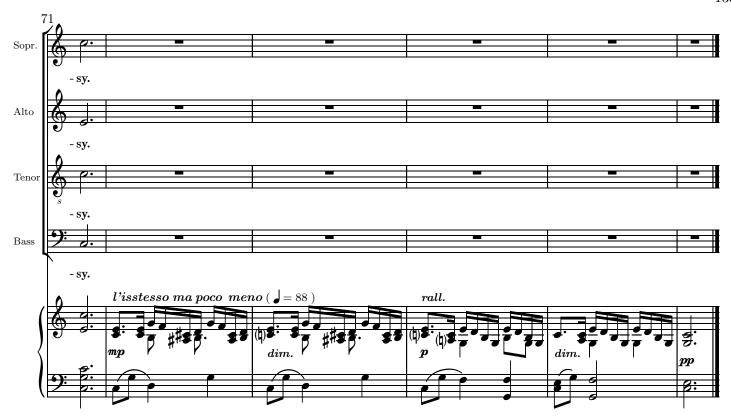












Exeunt all but NICEMIS, who is dressed as DIANA and PRETTEIA, who is dressed as VENUS. They take SILLIMON's arm and bring him down.

Bless their little hearts, I can refuse them nothing. As the Olympian stage-manager I ought to be strict with them and make them do their duty, but I cant. Bless their little hearts, when I see the pretty little craft come sailing up to me with a wheedling smile on their pretty little figure-heads, I can't turn my back on 'em. I'm all bow, though I'm sure I try to be stern!

PRETTEIA You certainly are a dear old thing.

SILLIMON She says I'm a dear old thing! Deputy Venus says I'm a dear old thing!

NICEMIS It's her affectionate habit to describe everybody in those terms. I am more particular, but still even I am bound to admit that you are certainly a very dear old thing.

SILLIMON Deputy Venus says I'm a dear old thing, and Deputy Diana who is much more particular, endorses it! Who could be severe with such deputy divinities?

PRETTEIA Do you know, I'm going to ask you a favour.

SILLIMON Venus is going to ask me a favour!

PRETTEIA You see, I am Venus.

SILLIMON No one who saw your face would doubt it.

NICEMIS (aside) No one who knew her character would.

PRETTEIA Well Venus, you know, is married to Mars.

SILLIMON To Vulcan, my dear, to Vulcan. The exact connubial relation of the different gods and goddesses is a point on which we must be extremely particular.

PRETTEIA I beg your pardon—Venus is married to Mars.

NICEMIS If she isn't married to Mars, she ought to be.

SILLIMON Then that decides it—call it married to Mars.

PRETTEIA Married to Vulcan or married to Mars, what does it signify?

SILLIMON My dear, it's a matter on which I have no personal feeling whatever.

PRETTEIA So that she is married to someone!

SILLIMON Exactly! So that she is married to someone. Call it married to Mars.

PRETTEIA Now here's my difficulty. Timidon takes the place of Mars, and Timidon is my father!

SILLIMON Then why object to Vulcan?

PRETTEIA Because Vulcan is my grandfather!

SILLIMON But, my dear, what an objection! You are playing a part till the real gods return. That's all! Whether you are supposed to be married to your father—or your grandfather, what does it matter? This passion for realism is the curse of the stage!

PRETTEIA That's all very well, but I can't throw myself into a part that has already lasted a twelvemonth, when I have to make love to my father. It interferes with my conception of the characters. It spoils the part.

SILLIMON Well, well. I'll see what can be done. (Exit PRETTEIA L.U.E.) That's always the way with beginners, they've no imaginative power. A true artist ought to be superior to such considerations. (NICEMIS comes down R.) Well, Nicemis—I should say Diana—what's wrong with you? Don't you like your part?

NICEMIS Oh, immensely! It's great fun.

SILLIMON Don't you find it lonely out by yourself all night?

NICEMIS Oh, but I'm not alone all night!

SILLIMON But—I don't want to ask any injudicious questions—but who accompanies you?

NICEMIS Who? Why Sparkeion, of course.

SILLIMON Sparkeion? Well, but Sparkeion is Phœbus Apollo. (*Enter* SPARKEION) He's the Sun, you know.

NICEMIS Of course he is; I should catch my death of cold, in the night air, if he didn't accompany me.

SPARKEION My dear Sillimon, it would never do for a young lady to be out alone all night. It wouldn't be respectable.

SILLIMON There's a good deal of truth in that. But still—the Sun—at night—I don't like the idea. The original Diana always went out alone.

NICEMIS I hope the original Diana is no rule for me. After all, what does it matter?

SILLIMON To be sure—what does it matter?

SPARKEION The sun at night, or in the daytime!

SILLIMON So that he shines. That's all that's necessary. (*Exit* NICEMIS R.U.E) But poor Daphne, what will she say to this?

SPARKEION Oh, Daphne can console herself; young ladies soon get over this sort of thing. Did you never hear of the young lady who was engaged to Cousin Robin?

SILLIMON Never.

SPARKEION Then I'll sing it to you.

Nº 9. Solo: "Little Maid of Arcadee" Sparkeion









[Exit Sparkeion.

SILLIMON Well, Mercury, my boy, you've had a year's experience of us here. How do we do it? I think we're rather an improvement on the original gods—don't you?

Well, you see, there's a good deal to be said on both sides of the question; you are certainly younger than the original gods, and, therefore, more active. On the other hand, they are certainly older than you, and have, therefore, more experience. On the whole I prefer you, because your mistakes amuse me.

$$\rm N^o$ 10. Song: "Olympus is Now in a Terrible Muddle" $_{\rm Mercury}$



















[Enter Thespis L.U.E.

THESPIS Sillimon, you can retire.

SILLIMON Sir, I—

THESPIS Don't pretend you can't when I say you can. I've seen you do it—go! (*Exit* SILLIMON bowing extravagantly, THESPIS imitates him.) Well, Mercury, I've been in power one year to-day.

MERCURY One year to-day. How do you like ruling the world?

THESPIS Like it! Why it's as straightforward as possible. Why there hasn't been a hitch of any kind since we came up here. Lor! The airs you gods and goddesses give yourselves are perfectly sickening. Why it's mere child's play!

MERCURY Very simple, isn't it?

THESPIS Simple? Why I could do it on my head?

MERCURY Ah—I daresay you will do it on your head very soon.

THESPIS What do you mean by that, Mercury?

MERCURY I mean that when you've turned the world *quite* topsy-turvy you won't know whether you're standing on your head or your heels.

THESPIS Well, but, Mercury, it's all right at present.

MERCURY Oh yes—as far as we know.

THESPIS Well, but, you know, we know as much as anybody knows; you know, I believe, that the world's still going on.

MERCURY Yes—as far as we can judge—much as usual.

THESPIS Well, then, give the Father of the Drama his due, Mercury. Don't be envious of the Father of the Drama.

MERCURY Well, but you see you leave so much to accident.

Well, Mercury, if I do, it's my principle. I am an easy man, and I like to make things as pleasant as possible. What did I do the day we took office? Why I called the company together and I said to them: "Here we are, you know, gods and goddesses, no mistake about it, the real thing. Well, we have certain duties to discharge, let's discharge them intelligently. Don't let us be hampered by routine and red tape and precedent, let's set the original gods an example, and put a liberal interpretation on our duties. If it occurs to any one to try an experiment in his own department, let him try it, if he fails there's no harm done, if he succeeds it is a distinct gain to society. Take it easy," I said, "and at the same time, make experiments. Don't hurry your work, do it slowly and do it well." And here we are after a twelvemonth, and not a single complaint or a single petition has reached me.

MERCURY No—not yet.

THESPIS What do you mean by "no, not yet?"

MERCURY Well, you see, you don't understand these things. All the petitions that are addressed by men to Jupiter pass through my hands, and it's my duty to collect them and present them once a year.

THESPIS Oh, only once a year?

MERCURY Only once a year.

THESPSI And the year is up—?

Mercury To-day.

THESPIS Oh, then I suppose there are *some* complaints?

MERCURY Yes, there are some.

THESPIS (disturbed) Oh. Perhaps there are a good many?

MERCURY There are a good many.

THESPIS Oh. Perhaps there are a thundering lot?

MERCURY There are a thundering lot.

THESPIS (very much disturbed). Oh!

MERCURY You see you've been taking it so very easy—and so have most of your company.

THESPIS Oh, who has been taking it easy?

MERCURY Well, all except those who have been trying experiments.

THESPIS Well but I suppose the experiment are ingenious?

MERCURY Yes; they are ingenious, but on the whole ill-judged. But it's time to go and summon your court.

THESPIS What for?

MERCURY To hear the complaints. In five minutes they will be here.

[Exit Mercury

THESPIS (very uneasy). I don't know how it is, but there is something in that young man's manner that suggests that the Father of the Gods has been taking it too easy. Perhaps it would have been better if I hadn't given my company so much scope. I wonder what they've been doing. I think I will curtail their discretion, though none of them appear to have much of the article. It seems a pity to deprive 'em of what little they have.

Enter DAPHNE, weeping.

THESPIS Now then, Daphne, what's the matter with you?

DAPHNE Well, you know how disgracefully Sparkeion—

THESPIS (correcting her). Apollo—

DAPHNE Apollo, then—has treated me. He promised to marry me years ago and now he's married to Nicemis.

THESPIS Now look here. I can't go into that. You're in Olympus now and must behave accordingly. Drop your Daphne—assume your Calliope.

DAPHNE Quite so. That's it!

[Mysteriously.

THESPIS Oh—that is it?

[Puzzled.

DAPHNE That is it, Thespis. I am Calliope, the Muse of Fame. Very good. This morning I was in the Olympian library and I took down the only book there. Here it is.

THESPIS (taking it). Lemprière's Classical Dictionary. The Olympian Peerage.

DAPHNE Open it at Apollo.

THESPIS (opens it). It is done.

DAPHNE Read.

THESPIS "Apollo was several times married, among others to Issa, Bolina, Coronis, Chymene, Cyrene, Chione, Acacallis, and Calliope."

DAPHNE And Calliope.

THESPIS (musing). Ha! I didn't know he was married to them.

DAPHNE (severely). Sir! This is the Family Edition.

THESPIS Quite so.

DAPHNE You couldn't expect a lady to read any other?

THESPIS On no consideration. But in the original version—

DAPHNE I go by the Family Edition.

THESPIS Then by the Family Edition, Apollo is your husband.

Enter NICEMUS and SPARKEION.

NICEMIS Apollo your husband? He is my husband.

DAPHNE I beg your pardon. He is my husband.

NICEMIS Apollo is Sparkeion, and he's married to me.

DAPHNE Sparkeion is Apollo, and he's married to me.

NICEMIS He is my husband.

DAPHNE He's your brother.

THESPIS Look here, Apollo, whose husband are you? Don't let's have any row about it;

whose husband are you?

SPARKEION Upon my honour I don't know. I'm in a very delicate position, but I'll fall in with

any arrangement Thespis may propose.

DAPHNE I've just found out that he's my husband and yet he goes out every evening with

that "thing"!

THESPIS Perhaps he's trying an experiment.

DAPHNE I don't like my husband to make such experiments. The question is, who are we all

and what is our relation to each other.

Nº 11. Quartet and Trio: "You're Diana, I'm Apollo"

Sparkeion, Nicemis, Daphne, Thespis Jupiter, Apollo, Mars









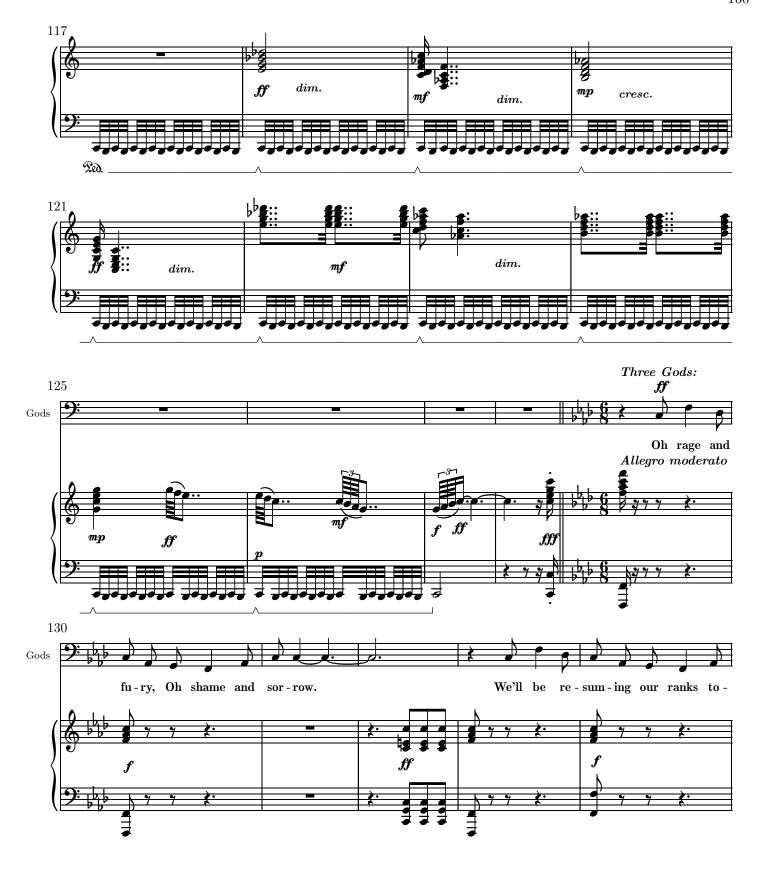








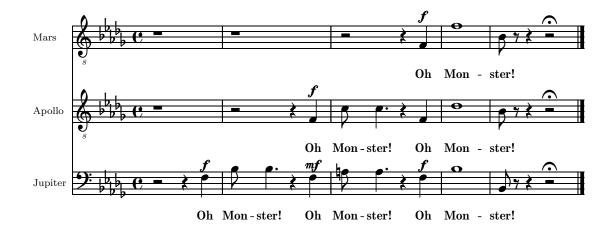








Enter Mercury.



MERCURY (in great terror). Please sir, what have I done sir?

JUPITER What did we leave you behind for?

MERCURY Please sir, that's the question I asked for when you went away.

JUPITER Was it not that Thespis might consult you whenever he was in a difficulty?

MERCURY Well, here I've been, ready to be consulted, chockful of reliable information—running over with celestial maxims—advice gratis ten to four—after twelve ring the night bell in cases of emergency.

JUPITER And hasn't he consulted you?

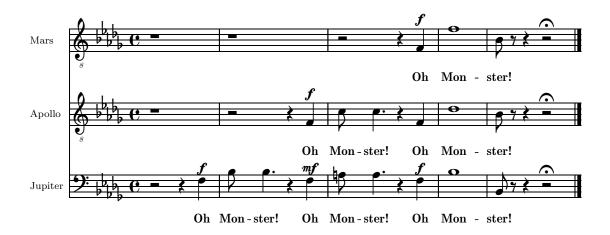
MERCURY Not he—he disagrees with me about everything.

JUPITER He must have misunderstood me. I told him to consult you whenever he was in a fix.

MERCURY He must have though you said *insult*. Why whenever I opened my mouth he jumps down my throat. It isn't pleasant to have a fellow constantly jumping down your throat—especially when he always disagrees with you. It's just the sort of thing I can't digest.

JUPITER (in a rage). Send him here. I'll talk to him.

Enter Thespis. He is much terrified



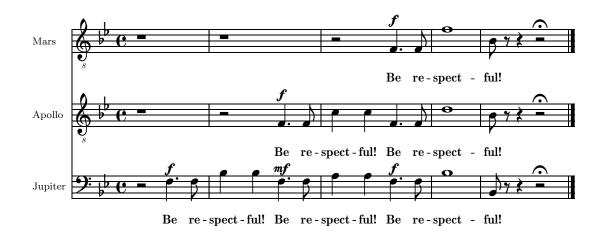
THESPIS sings in great terror, which he endeavours to conceal.

JUPITER Well Sir, the year is up to-day.

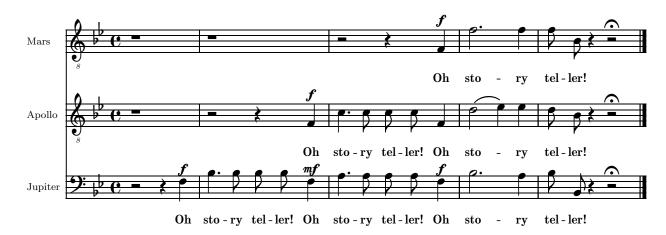
APOLLO And a nice mess you've made of it.

MARS You've deranged the whole scheme of society.

THESPIS (aside). There's going to be a row! (Aloud and very familiarly.) My dear boy—I do assure you—



THESPIS I don't know what you allude to. With the exception of getting our scenepainter to "run up" this temple, because we found the ruins draughty, we haven't touched a thing.



Enter Thespians

THESPIS My dear fellows, you're distressing yourselves unnecessarily. The court of Olympus is about to assemble to listen to the complaints of the year, if any. But there are none, or next to none. Let the Olympians assemble!

THEPSIS takes chair. JUPITER, APOLLO, and MARS sit below him.

THESPIS Ladies and gentlemen. It seems that it is usual for the gods to assemble once a year to listen to mortal petitions. It doesn't seem to me to be a good plan, as work is liable to accumulate; but as I am particularly anxious not to interfere with Olympian precedent, but to allow everything to go on as it has always been accustomed to go—why, we'll say no more about it. (Aside.) But how shall I account for your presence?

JUPITER Say we are the gentlemen of the press.

The tall our proceedings may be perfectly open and above-board I have communicated with the most influential members of the Athenian press, and I beg to introduce to your notice three of its most distinguished members. They bear marks emblematic of the anonymous character of modern journalism. (Business of introduction. Thespis very uneasy.) Now then, if you're all ready we will begin.

MERCURY (brings tremendous bundle of petitions). Here is the agenda.

THESPIS What's that? The petitions?

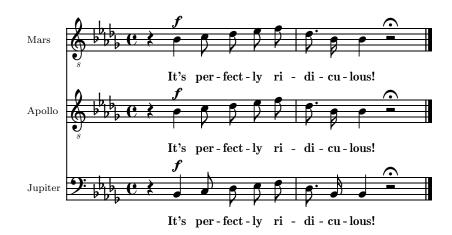
MERCURY Some of them. (Opens one and reads.) Ah, I thought there'd be a row about it.

THESPIS Why, what's wrong now?

MERCURY Why, it's been a foggy Friday in November for the last six months and the Athenians are tired of it.

THESPIS There's no pleasing some people. This craving for perpetual change is the curse of the country. Friday's a very nice day.

MERCURY So it is, but a Friday six months long!—it gets monotonous.



(calling them). It shall be arranged. Cymon!

CYMON (as Time with the usual attributes). Sir!

THESIS (introducing him to the THREE GODS). Allow me—Father Time—rather young at present but even time must have a beginning. In course of Time, Time will grow older. Now then, Father Time, what's this about a wet Friday in November for the last six months.

CYMON Well, the fact is, I've been trying an experiment. Seven days in the week is an awkward number. It can't be halved. Two's into seven won't go.

THESPIS (tries it on his fingers). Quite so—quite so.

CYMON So I abolished Saturday.

JUPITER, (Rising). Oh but—

APOLLO,

THESPIS

MARS

THESPIS Do be quiet. He's a very intelligent young man and knows what he is about. So you abolished Saturday. And how did you find it answer?

CYMON Admirably.

THESPIS You hear? He found it answer admirably.

CYMON Yes, only Sunday refused to take its place.

THESPIS Sunday refused to take its place?

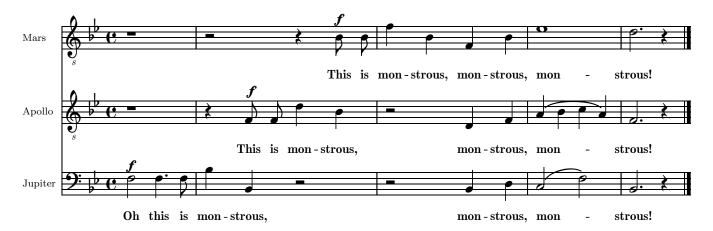
CYMON Sunday comes after Saturday—Sunday won't go on duty after Friday, Sunday's principles are very strict. That's where my experiment sticks.

THESPIS Well, but why November? Come, why November?

CYMON December can't begin until November has finished. November can't finish because he's abolished Saturday. There again my experiment sticks.

THESPIS Well, but why wet? Come now, why wet?

CYMON Ah, that is your fault. You turned on the rain six months ago and you forgot to turn it off again.



ALL Order, order.

THESPIS Gentlemen, pray be seated. (*To the others*.) The liberty of the press, one can't help it. (*To the* THREE GODS.) It is easily settled. Athens has had a wet Friday in November for the last six months. Let them have a blazing Tuesday in July for the next twelve.

JUPITER, But—APOLLO, MARS

ALL Order, order.

THESPIS Now then, the next article.

MERCURY Here's a petition from the Peace Society. They complain because there are no more battles.

MARS (springing up). What!

THESPIS Quiet there! Good dog—soho; Timidon!

TIMIDON (as MARS). Here.

THESPIS What's this about there being no battles?

TIMIDON I've abolished battles; it's an experiment.

MARS (springing up). Oh come, I say—

THESPIS Quiet then! (To TIMIDON.) Abolished battles?

TIMIDON Yes, you told us on taking office to remember two things, to try experiments and to take it easy. I found I couldn't take it easy while there are any battles to attend to, so I tried the experiment and abolished battles. And then I took it easy. The Peace Society ought to be very much obliged to me.

THESPIS Obliged to you! Why, confound it! Since battles have been abolished, war is universal.

TIMIDON War universal?

THESPIS To be sure it is! Now that nations can't fight, no two of 'em are on speaking terms. The dread of fighting was the only thing that kept them civil to each other. Let battles be restored and peace reign supreme.

MERCURY (reads). Here's a petition from the associated wine merchants of Mytilene.

THESPIS Well, what's wrong with the associated wine merchants of Mytilene? Are there no grapes this year?

MERCURY Plenty of grapes; more than usual.

THESPIS (to the gods). You observe, there is no deception; there are more than usual.

MERCURY There are plenty of grapes, only they are full of ginger beer.

THREE GODS Oh, come I say

[Rising, they are put down by THESPIS.

THESPIS Eh? what. (Much alarmed.) Bacchus?

TIPSEION (as BACCHUS). Here!

THESPIS There seems to be something unusual with the grapes of Mytilene. They only grow ginger beer.

TIPSEION And a very good thing too.

THESPIS It's very nice in its way but it is not what one looks for from grapes.

TIPSEION Beloved master, a week before we came up here, you insisted on my taking the pledge. By so doing you rescued me from my otherwise inevitable misery. I cannot express my thanks. Embrace me!

Attempts to embrace him.

THESPIS Get out, don't be a fool. Look here, you know you're the god of wine.

TIPSEION I am.

THESPIS (very angry). Well, do you consider it consistent with your duty as the god of wine to make the grapes yield nothing but ginger beer?

TIPSEION Do you consider it consistent with my duty as a total abstainer to grow anything stronger than ginger beer?

THESPIS But your duty as the god of wine—

TIPSEION In every respect in which my duty as the god of wine can be discharged consistently with my duty as a total abstainer, I will discharge it. But when the functions clash, everything must give way to the pledge. My preserver!

Attempts to embrace him.

THESPIS Don't be a confounded fool! This can be arranged. We can't give over the wine this year, but at least we can improve the ginger beer. Let all the ginger beer be extracted from it immediately.

No 12. Act Two Finale: "We Can't Stand This" Ensemble













































The gods drive the Thespians away. The Thespians prepare to descend the mountain as the curtain falls.