

THIS IS THE BOOK FOR
THE IMPRESARIO
A Song-Play
(Der Schauspieldirektor, a singspiel)

By Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, K. 486
Newly translated and adapted by Callie Kimball

Please direct inquiries
to calliekimball@gmail.com.

I WILL INCLUDE THE LYRICS IN A FUTURE SAMPLE.



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PRODUCTION HISTORY

This translation and adaptation of **THE IMPRESARIO** was commissioned by the In Series for performance in January 2008 at the Atlas Performing Arts Center in Washington DC, under the direction of Allison Stockman.

SETTING

An opera house stage.

2 M

3 W

BUFFO

CAPOGRASSO
The Impresario.

MRS. CANTWELL
A soprano.

MISS HONEYBELL
Another soprano.

MRS. BORGHESA
A mezzo-soprano.

THE IMPRESARIO

Overture plays.

BUFFO enters.

BUFFO

Oh, good, you're warming up so you'll be ready for the maestro. Lord knows you need the practice. Now, we only have the stage for half an hour, and I must get my afternoon nap in before they need me back down in wardrobe.

It's like a dungeon there, you know, all steamy, soapy, and hot. And me, slaving away over the sewing machine, inching this hem up, letting that bust out. The indignity of it all. The silks, the poufs, the feathers. I love it!

But that's just between us. I can never tell the maestro. For as much as I drool over a good backstitch hem, I'm going places. I have ambition. My true talents lie in my tongue. You heard me. And this opera company we're starting is going to be my ticket to the big-time. I can see the marquee now: "The New Capograsso Mid-Atlantic Opera Association proudly presents 'The Marriage of Figaro,' starring Buffo the Great." Or maybe Buffo the Buffenomenal. Yes, that's good. That's very good.

Where is Capograsso? We were supposed to audition Miss Honeybell right at three and it's already after.

Well, since we're paying you by the minute, we may as well squeak a song in while we wait for the maestro to arrive.

[Launches into "Se vuol ballare" from LE NOZZE DI FIGARO. Or not.]

[CAPOGRASSO and MRS. CANTWELL enter the room.]

CAPOGRASSO

—and we are so grateful to you and Mr. Cantwell—

BUFFO

Ah! There's Maestro Capograsso!

CAPOGRASSO

—for your most excellent generosity in helping us get this off the ground.

BUFFO

[Aside.] But that's not Miss Honeybell—!

MRS. CANTWELL

Yes, we know.

CAPOGRASSO

Ah! Do you know Buffo?

MRS. CANTWELL

I'm sure I haven't had the pleasure. Yet.

CAPOGRASSO

Then let me present to you my colleague, Buffo. You may know him as the opera's third assistant costumier, but he will be the Resident Associate Assistant Director to the First Assistant Managing Director of our new company, The New Capograsso Mid-Atlantic Opera Association.

BUFFO

Dedicated to presenting classical opera in a neo-classical manner with a prosodically commedia accent in a musically hyperbolic style. With hydraulics.

MRS. CANTWELL

With hydraulics! How thrilling.

CAPOGRASSO

Buffo, may I present Mrs. Cantwell, whose incredibly delicious donation is laying the foundation on which we can build our incredibly delicious company. *[Significantly, to BUFFO. They were expecting to audition MISS HONEYBELL first.]* She's here a bit early and wanted to go ahead and get started.

BUFFO

Oh yes of course. She is early. Delicious and early. Very pleased to meet you, Miss Cantwell.

MRS. CANTWELL

It's Mrs.

BUFFO

Mrs? Why, that's impossible! you're not a day over 12.

MRS. CANTWELL

I'm nearly twice that. And unhappily married. But thank you.

BUFFO

I adore married women, especially unhappy ones.

CAPOGRASSO

Buffo, are the musicians ready?

BUFFO

Yes. I was just screaming at them as they warmed up. [*To Mrs. Cantwell*] It motivates them to do better. [*To conductor.*] DO BETTER!

MRS. CANTWELL

Oh yes, that's good. You can't let musicians feel too confident. Confidence encourages creativity.

CAPOGRASSO

[*Interrupting.*] Yes, well, I feel we should begin, as I have to get back to polishing the chandeliers before tonight's performance. So let's get right to it, shall we? I would love to hear you sing my best aria, from my new opera, "Metaphoria in Hell."

MRS. CANTWELL

"Metaphoria in Hell?"

BUFFO

"Metaphoria in Hell." It's very...hot.

[*CAPOGRASSO Procures sheet music for her.*]

CAPOGRASSO

Let me set the scene for you. Just prior to this aria, Metaphoria has been torn from the arms of her true love, Synecdoche. She sings this right before she goes on a murderous rampage with a pair of kitchen shears.

BUFFO

I still think it should be pinking shears.

CAPOGRASSO

Buffo. I'm the creative genius here, remember? I have the vision.

BUFFO

Then you should have the vision to know that pinking shears would make for a nice, jagged entrance wound.

MRS. CANTWELL

Oh yes, that's good. He's quite right, you know. Pinking shears, murderous rampage...so the stakes are very high here, then?

BUFFO

Very. High.

MRS. CANTWELL

Well, let me take a stab at it. [*No one laughs.*] That was a joke.

BUFFO and CAPOGRASSO

Oh, yes! Stab! Pinking shears! Ha ha ha ha ha!

MRS. CANTWELL sings the ARIETTA.

CAPOGRASSO

Brava! That was marvelous!

BUFFO

I wept.

CAPOGRASSO

Mrs. Cantwell, it's such an honor for me to hear my humble aria, my poor words, so masterfully lifted to the heavens! I'm really quite a good writer, aren't I, Buffo.

BUFFO

I don't know, I would have liked to have seen you rhyme separate with decapitate or defenestrate.

MRS. CANTWELL

Oh! That's so violent! I love it! He's right, you should change it—

CAPOGRASSO

But I am an artist—

BUFFO

If you were a *good* artist—

MRS. CANTWELL

Or if you knew anything about modern audiences—

BUFFO

Yes, you'd know that violence for violence's sake is always the wisest choice.

MRS. CANTWELL

When it comes to filling opera houses at least. You do want to turn a profit, don't you? My investment will turn a profit. I expect it to.

CAPOGRASSO

My only concern is art for art's sake.

BUFFO

(*Pause.*) Oh, you're such a joker, Capograsso! He's such a joker. You really had us going, didn't he?

MRS. CANTWELL

Oh good heavens. For a minute there I thought you believed such ridiculous tripe! I was about to panic.

BUFFO

Here, let me fan you. That's it, just rest in my arms. My, how your heartbeat races!

MISS HONEYBELL enters.

MISS HONEYBELL

Here I am!

BUFFO

There you are! [*Dumps MRS. CANTWELL, who is then swooped up by CAPOGRASSO, who takes her around the room toward the door.*]

MISS HONEYBELL

I'm sorry I'm late. I was troubled by a piece of toast.

CAPOGRASSO

Yes, yes, you're absolutely right, art for art's sake is a worthless idea. Thank you for coming by. We'll talk more later, I'm sure you have to be on your way, what with the busy life of a benefactress and all.

MRS. CANTWELL

What is this? What is she late for? What are you late for?

MISS HONEYBELL

My audition. And I'm not late. Divas are never on time.

MRS. CANTWELL

Well, my dear, you're more than a few minutes late. This part was cast when I opened my checkbook. There are no auditions.

CAPOGRASSO

Well, actually...

MRS. CANTWELL

That was an audition? No, no, young man. I was auditioning you. You've never run an opera company before, have you?

CAPOGRASSO

Miss Honeybell, did you rehearse the aria we gave you?

MISS HONEYBELL

Oh, I find that rehearsal makes an aria sound too practiced. I'd rather let the music just take me how and where it wants to.

BUFFO

That sounds just terrific. Here, let me set up your music for you. [*BUFFO takes MISS HONEYBELL aside and looks over the sheet music and her décolleté.*]

CAPOGRASSO

Well, Mrs. Cantwell, thank you again so much for stopping by, I'm sure you have other causes to donate to, other artistic organizations that need your attention.

MRS. CANTWELL

Oh no I'm not busy at all.

MISS HONEYBELL

She's welcome to stay while I sing. Who knows, it might inspire her.

MRS. CANTWELL

To laughter.

MISS HONEYBELL

Maestro, please. [*MISS HONEYBELL sings the RONDO.*]

CAPOGRASSO

Brava! That was marvelous!

BUFFO

I wept.

CAPOGRASSO

Miss Honeybell, it's such an honor for me to hear my humble aria, my poor words, so masterfully lifted to the heavens! I'm really quite a good writer, aren't I, Buffo.

BUFFO

I don't know, I would have liked to have heard you rhyme submission with position or emission.

MISS HONEYBELL

Or physician!

BUFFO

[*Ready to play doctor.*] Oh, nursie! I have an emergency, can you find it!

CAPOGRASSO

I am an ARTIST! I take my work seriously and you reduce it to...to...something shameful. You are an enemy of art!

MRS. CANTWELL

Bravo! That's good, that's very good. Temper tantrums are necessary to be a true maestro. [*She takes him aside.*] Though, if I may speak frankly, yours aren't quite believable yet. Have you practiced throwing things? I find nothing motivates employees quite like airborne crockery.

MISS HONEYBELL

Flying crockpots are all well and good, but we haven't addressed this issue of which one of us is singing in your opera.

BUFFO

You both are! You're both marvelous!

MRS. CANTWELL and MISS HONEYBELL

[*Simultaneously.*] That's preposterous! You can't have two sopranos in one opera!

MRS. CANTWELL

I have an international reputation to uphold. I am the premiere diva on the East Coast. Audiences simply won't let me share the stage with anyone of such mediocre talent.

MISS HONEYBELL

Mediocre! I'm the premiere diva on the *West Coast*. And I refuse to share the stage with a lukewarm amateur.

MRS. CANTWELL

Lukewarm!

MISS HONEYBELL

I'll have you know my Salome was the toast of the *Flagstaff Community Players'* season last year.

MRS. CANTWELL

My Aida for the *Lancaster County Amish Opera* was sold out a year in advance!

MISS HONEYBELL

I took 30 curtain calls for my Desdemona at the El Paso Nursing Home Cabaret.

MRS. CANTWELL

[*Playing her trump card with gravitas, perhaps after a dramatic pause...*] Someone died from *fright* during my performance of Elektra at the Beaver Falls Girl Scout Jamboree.

[*The lovely women launch into the TRIO.*]

BUFFO

That was marvelous! You're both such tigers. *Rawr!*

CAPOGRASSO

You both simply *must* consent to being in my opera! Mrs. Cantwell, will you accept the part of Metaphoria?

MRS. CANTWELL

The title role in "Metaphoria in Hell." I'd be delighted, Maestro.

CAPOGRASSO

And Miss Honeybell will you accept the part of Synecdoche?

MRS. CANTWELL

Synecdoche?

BUFFO

Metaphoria's true love.

MRS. CANTWELL

Well. That's very modern of you. I like it. Good marketing.

MISS HONEYBELL

I'll never appear on stage with her.

MRS. CANTWELL

Afraid I'll make you look bad?

MISS HONEYBELL

My reputation would be irrevocably damaged.

MRS. CANTWELL

Ah yes, your reputation would suffer in comparison, I agree.

BUFFO

Oh look at the spark between them. Capo, this will sell a LOT of tickets. Now, even if you ladies make nice over tea and crumpets, you both must always pretend that you hate each other with a passion that is just short of scandalous. We should put that in your contracts. We should put that in their contracts, Capograsso.

MRS. CANTWELL

Hating her is easy.

[MRS. BORGHESA enters, dressed as a Valkyrie.]

MISS HONEYBELL

Hate and envy are vices of the poorly talented.

MRS. BORGHESA

You should know, Honeybell. Now please leave, I've reserved the stage. I need to rehearse.

MISS HONEYBELL

Of course you need to rehearse, you're a mezzo.

CAPOGRASSO

Oh, Mrs. Borghesa. Are we out of time already? Of course we're done, they're all yours.

[Meaning the musicians.]

BUFFO

Oh look at the time! I must get back to wardrobe to let out the bust on Cio-Cio San's wedding kimono. She keeps eating the wedding cake each night, so now her muffin-tops are exploding.

CAPOGRASSO

Ladies, please think it over. The passionate hatred you feel for each other can only fuel a dynamic stage chemistry. I smell blockbuster!

BUFFO

I smell kissing scene!

MISS HONEYBELL

You simply cannot have two sopranos in one opera!

MRS. BORGHESA

The two of you, on stage together? In some middling farce, I imagine?

BUFFO

The world premiere of "Metaphoria in Hell," by maestro Capograsso.

[The three women launch into "Via resti servita," from FIGARO.]

----END OF SAMPLE PAGES----