

A decorative border featuring a climbing vine with green leaves and small pink flowers, running vertically along the left edge and horizontally across the bottom of the page.

Space Opera

An Opera in Five Acts

by

Joe St.Johanser

LIBRETTO

libretto adapted from a novel by Jack Vance.

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an opera buffo in 5 acts

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Dramatis Personae

Principal roles

Dame Isabel Grayce - mezzo-soprano

Secretary Treasurer of the Opera League -A wealthy, aristocratic and eccentric grande dame

Roger Wool - baritone

Nephew to Isabel - likeable but foolish young fop

Madoc Roswyn - soprano

Alluring and mysteriously exotic young woman

Alfred Gondar- bass

Space Captain - haggard, haunted and piratical

Bernard Bickel- baritone

Eminent authority on symbological euphonics, famed space traveller and rackets raconteur.

Dyrus Bolzen, Pamina, Marie -

soprano

Sexy soubrette.

Comprimario Roles and Chorus

Elgin Seaboro, Papageno, Wozzeck- baritone

Josephine Louise Thorpe- soprano

Lilian Monteagle, Hermina Warn- mezzo-soprano

Young Lady, Darwin Litchely- soprano

Mess Steward, Logan de Appling, Tambour major - baritone

Byzantaur spokesperson - bass

Zade audiant- tenor

-

Chorus and Dancers

Andrei Szinc, Hermann Scantling, Otto von Scheerup, Sir Henry, Opera Singers and Ballet Dancers, Crew of Spaceship "Phoebus", 'Zants,

Zade indigenes

Rlaru Ninth Ballet Troupe

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Introit

ACT 1

Scene I

SL - a box in the theatre looking down at the 'stage' SR - evening - theatre light warm glow -

Dame Isabel is at the centre of an admiring group of music critics moments before the curtain. Her nephew Roger surreptitiously tries to pour himself another glass of champagne but is repeatedly foiled by Dame Isabel's stern glance and sharp raps from her lorgnette.

No. 2 - Quartet and Aria **'Mr.Gondar is a sensitive and perspicacious man'**

DAME ISABEL

You agree then that Adolph Gondar and the Ninth Troupe are genuine?

JOSEPHINE LOUISE THORPE

I can only reiterate that I find his conduct the opposite of reassuring. Why will he allow no press interviews? Why has not some ethnologist of reputation examined these people?

DAME ISABEL

You think then that Mr Gondar has hoodwinked me? The whole tour has been under my supervision - I doubt you can seriously accuse me of peccancy!

JOSEPHINE LOUISE THORPE

Not the slightest hint of such a thing - you are almost notoriously straightforward.

ELGIN SEABORO/ROGER WOOL

Adolph Gondar may be an excellent fellow - aside from his attempt to pull the wool over our eyes. Ha ha ha.

JOSEPHINE LOUISE THORPE

Yes - exactly who is Gondar? Ha ha ha.

DAME ISABEL

**Mr Gondar is a sensitive and perspicacious man.
His trade is that of spaceship captain.
He has visited dozens of far worlds.
On one of these, that
World called Rlaru,
He managed to prevail upon the
Ninth Company**

**To undertake a tour of Earth.
That is all there is to it.
I cannot understand
Your criticism.**

ELGIN SEABORO

It is our business to be skeptical. Whoever heard of a credulous critic?

JOSEPHINE LOUISE THORPE

My objections are based partly on musical theory and partly on an informed layman's knowledge of the galaxy. I find it hard to believe that an alien race could employ a comprehensible musical idiom and also I have never heard of the planet Rlaru - which presumably exhibits a highly advanced civilization.

DAME ISABEL

You are a fool!

ELGIN SEABORO

Unfair, unfair. We are all poor mortals pushing through our various dark thickets! Bernard Bickel, who probably knows...

DAME ISABEL

Don't mention that name to me - he is an opinionated poseur, completely superficial.

ELGIN SEABORO

He is probably the world's leading authority on comparative musicology. We cannot help but be influenced by his views!

No. 3 - Rlaru Ballet - Performance of the Ninth Troupe

The curtain rises on stage - Roger at last succeeds in pouring his drink. The Ninth Troupe perform a fete champetre ballet in garments of pink and blue, green and blue, yellow and blue diaper - the players engaging hybrids of fairies and harlequins - no perceptible plot or pattern, apparently aimless motion, curtsies, capering and cantering. Then fade to black. Then flash of dazzling blue green light reveals players in attitudes of attention and enquiry. Then curtain falls to applause

JOSEPHINE LOUISE THORPE

Clever. Though inchoate

ELGIN SEABORO

I note a certain absence of discipline. A praiseworthy exuberance, an attempt to break away from traditional forms, but as you say inchoate.

JOSEPHINE LOUISE THORPE

Good evening Madame Grayce, thank you for your invitation. Good evening to you too sir.

The critics exit SR

DAME ISABEL

A pair of buffoons. Come Roger.

ROGER WOOL

I believe I will leave you here. I have an engagement.....

DAME ISABEL

You have nothing of the sort. You are driving me to Lillian Monteagle's supper party.

They exit SR

Scene 2

Lillian Monteagle's elegant house -evening - a crowded after theatre supper party- dancing in full swing. Lillian dancing downstage with one admiring group including Bernard Bickel who is holding forth.

No 4 Party Walz

LILLIAN MONTEAGLE

O my dear Mr Bickel!

YOUNG LADY

I was absolutely thrilled!

BERNARD BICKEL

Foolish folk want to pay him...why should he not take the money?

CHORUS

Ha ha, ha ha!

YOUNG LADY

O my dear Mr Bickel!

LILLIAN MONTEAGLE

O my dear Mr Bickel!

My dear Mr Bickel, you sound as if you doubted the authenticity of this troupe

BERNARD BICKEL

I'll say this much: I have never heard of the planet 'Rlaru ', or however it's pronounced. And, as you know, I have travelled space a great deal.

YOUNG LADY

But Mr. Bickel! I think you're being dreadfully unfair! You haven't even gone to one of the performances. I have, and I was absolutely thrilled!

Dame Isabel and Roger enter SL

BERNARD BICKEL

Adolph Gondar, whoever or whatever he may be, undoubtedly is a fantastically good showman.

DAME ISABEL

I must take issue with you. Adolph Gondar is totally inept as a showman, though he is probably a competent captain of space-ships, for this is his trade.

BERNARD BICKEL

Oh. This would of course lend colour to his claims. As for myself, modesty aside, I am close to top of a field that has been called comparative musicology or symbological euphonics, or just plain musicology And I simply refuse to be hornswoiggled by the mysterious Adolph Gondar. His music is comprehensible, which is the giveaway.

No 5 Bickel's Tale

Music is like a language: you cannot understand it unless you learn it, or more accurately, are born into it.

LILLIAN MONTEAGLE YOUNG LADY

Hear hear!

Dame Isabel looks for the offender - in frosty voice

DAME ISABEL

Do you refuse to believe then that sensitive and artistic creatures of one world are unable to comprehend the artistic efforts, including the music, of equally sensitive and artistic inhabitants of another world?

BERNARD BICKEL

No of course not. Not at all. I recall an amusing adventure on Capella's fourth planet: a miserable little world, incidentally; if anyone is planning a visit, take my advice, don't! At any rate, I had joined a mineral survey team which was making a swing through the back-country. One

night we camped near a tribe of the natives: the Bidrachate Dendricaps as you're all aware...? No? Well they're rather decent creatures, about five feet tall, with a heavy black fur. They have two little legs, and what's under the fur is anybody's guess. Be this as it may, after we set up camp, about thirty 'caps came to visit us. For a lark I started up my portable music player. I tell you the 'caps sat absolutely entranced for three hours, not moving a muscle.

LILLIAN MONTEAGLE

It's rather touching. Probably the first good music they had ever heard.

YOUNG LADY

Did these - er, 'caps show any - well call it understanding, or appreciation?

Bickel laughs

BERNARD BICKEL

Let me put it this way. I'm sure they missed the point of the Brandenburg Concertos, but they listened with the same attention they gave the Nutcracker Suite.

general laughter and applause

DAME ISABEL

I'm not sure I completely understand. You acknowledge the universality of music?

BERNARD BICKEL

Oh to some extent, if certain conditions are satisfied. Music is a communication - emotional communication to be sure- and this implies agreement as to the context of the symbology. Do you follow me?

No 6 Bickel's aria

DAME ISABEL

Naturally.

I am Secretary Treasurer of the Opera League. If I knew nothing of music I would hardly be allowed to continue in this capacity.

BERNARD BICKEL

Indeed?

The point I wish to make

Is this.

The mathematical vibrational relationships

Make the diatonic scale

A universal tool

Like Pythagoras's theorem.

It should be no surprise

**To find a totally strange race
On a totally strange planet
Using instruments similar to our own.**

**I merely find it hard to believe
The musical symbols of an alien race
Could mesh so completely with our own**

**As to affect us emotionally.
Is this not reasonable?**

Stunned silence from partygoers - Holker enters SL and wonders why all stare at him

Isabel breaks the silence

DAME ISABEL

Very reasonable. So reasonable as to indicate a flagrant fallacy in your chain of logic. The facts are these. I personally have sponsored Mr.Gondar. I am in full financial control of the tour of the Ninth Company, and I am not a woman to be fooled. I suggest you attend a performance. You may if you like join me in my box tomorrow.

BERNARD BICKEL

I shall look into my appointments and if at all possible I shall do so.

HOLKER THE BUTLER

Mr. Gondar madame. An urgent message

Gondar enters SL

DAME ISABEL

Well Adolph, what is the trouble?

ADOLPH GONDAR

The Ninth Company has disappeared.

stunned silence again - blackout - tabs in fast

Scene 3

Dame Isabel's beautiful old home 'Bellew' -morning the next day - Adolph Gondar is reporting to Dame Isabel and Roger Wool in the sober light of day.

No 7 Duet

ADOLPH GONDAR

After the performance I escorted the troupe up to the theatre penthouse. They fed themselves and seemed comfortably settled for the night.

When I looked in later they had disappeared.

The porter had seen no one leave. The deck attendant swears no air vehicles arrived or departed

DAME ISABEL

**This is a serious business.
One in which my personal
Reputation is involved.
I must say I am
Not completely satisfied.**

ADOLPH GONDAR

**Why shouldn't you be?
You've got every cent we've made
over the last three months.**

DAME ISABEL

**It appears my precautions were
absolutely in order.**

ADOLPH GONDAR

**I will be happy to end our
association.
You need merely turn over to me my
money.**

DAME ISABEL

**I will do nothing of the sort.
I refuse to release the money.
Complete frankness has not existed.**

**a heated row ensues - when things get too fierce
Roger moves to his aunt's side
and things cool down**

No 8 Gondar's Aria

**Why did they disappear?
Where are they now?**

ADOLPH GONDAR

In my opinion they've returned home.

DAME ISABEL

To Rlaru?

ADOLPH GONDAR

**Yes.
I don't know how.
These people are adept in all sorts of**

**Techniques and sciences
We know nothing about.
I think they decided to go home
And went.
On Rlaru I've seen things I can't
describe -
Musical productions which are
Absolutely overwhelming.
Operas I suppose you'd call them.
The Ninth Company
Is what we would call light.**

silence while Dame Isabel contemplates

DAME ISABEL

What inducements did you offer the Ninth Company to persuade them to visit Earth?

Gondar twitches and looks uncomfortable

ADOLPH GONDAR

I was on Rlaru for about four months. I learned something of the language. When I saw the quality of the performances I mentioned that on Earth we had similar activities and that perhaps we could effect a cultural exchange programme.

Roger laughs but stifles it when glared at by Dame Isabel

No difficulties were made. I brought the Ninth Company to Earth and in due course proposed to take an Earth group to Rlaru.

DAME ISABEL

There is a highly developed science on the planet?

ADOLPH GONDAR

I wouldn't say that. Things aren't quite that simple. No one seems to work too hard. The aristocrats are the musicians and pantomimists. At the bottom a class of vagrants, no-talent indigents.

DAME ISABEL

You did not explore very thoroughly?

ADOLPH GONDAR

I was given to understand that it wasn't, well, safe to go everywhere. No one told me why.

DAME ISABEL

Well well. This is highly interesting. The Opera League is meeting tonight. I shall report what you have told me and recommend that the cultural exchange programme be kept up.

ADOLPH GONDAR

I'm not so sure that it's a feasible project- in fact now that I think of it...for reasons of my own I do not care to leave Earth. Not at the present time...

Isabel's gaze becomes stony

DAME ISABEL

Mr Gondar I am never ambiguous or untruthful, and I demand that everyone I deal with act in a similar manner. You made the assertion that the Ninth Company of Rlaru came to Earth as half of a cultural exchange scheme.

ADOLPH GONDAR

Yes of course but...

DAME ISABEL

Is this statement true or untrue?

ADOLPH GONDAR

Naturally it's true, however...

DAME ISABEL

If it is true the obligation is definite - those persons who are attacking our good faith must be refuted. By arranging a visit to Rlaru by a group of representative musicians or, if necessary, by turning the money over to some worthy charity. Do you not agree?

Gondar heaves a long sigh of resignation

ADOLPH GONDAR

Very well. Organize your tour.

Blackout

Scene 4

Dame Isabel's beautiful old home -one week later - Roger Wool and Bernard Bickel are talking over a tray of coffee and cakes.

No 9 Duet

ROGER WOOL

Thank you for coming out to Bellew as my guest. My aunt will be delighted to see you. You've heard of my aunt's new

scheme. I'm not so sure that it's a feasible project- the problems, the details, the headaches... the expenses - she'll spend millions without batting an eye.

BERNARD BICKEL

Your aunt exemplifies a type which sadly is almost extinct: the affluent amateur, the wealthy eccentric. An impressive woman...

ROGER WOOL

It's appalling. She wants to visit other worlds along the way-to Rlaru - you yourself have influenced her with your description of the Bidrachate Dendricaps listening to music from your player.

BERNARD BICKEL

But it's all so ridiculous. Those particular creatures were merely wondering how I managed to confine so many insects, which locally produce loud shrill noises, into so small a box. Your aunt's concept- excuse me if I speak frankly - is idiotic.

Bickel goes to balustrade SL and surveys grounds

...A magnificent place, absolutely baronial! It must be hundreds of years old!

ROGER WOOL

She's been strongly influenced by your remarks. Could you find some way to set my aunt straight. This is a beautiful place, which will be mine some day... I don't want to find it sold at auction... you'll probably find her on the rose terrace...

**Bickel is ushered out and exits SL - after a short musical interlude while Roger consumes cakes
Dame Isabel and Bickel enter SL**

DAME ISABEL

Good news Roger. Good news indeed! Mr Bickel has agree to join our little tour among the planets. He'll be musical consultant at an exorbitant salary I'm sorry to say

she chuckles roguishly

but we will have his specialized knowledge to guide us

Roger starts up in horror

BERNARD BICKEL

I will be utterly honest - you could not have hired a better man.

DAME ISABEL

Roger are you not staying for dinner?

Blackout, then Tabs swiftly in

Scene 5

No 10a Spaceship Bustle Dance and Roger's Blues

The spaceport. Outside the 'Phoebus', which is off SR being loaded by crew members and opera members. The 'opera stage' is being constructed from 'Phoebus' large loading bay globe and extends from SR to centre stage. The auditorium canopy is being erected. Sir Henry Rixon is interviewing musicians and singers on the stage upstage SR amidst workmen who come and go upstage SL. A dance ensues as all parade to be inspected by Dame Isabel and Bickel, who then exit upstage SR.

Roger is standing off to one side looking very glum- when he is approached by a very pretty girl

MADOC ROSWYN

That lady over there- is she Dame Isabel Grayce

ROGER WOOL

Yes indeed; you are absolutely correct. You couldn't be more so.

MADOC ROSWYN

And who is that man talking to her?

ROGER WOOL

That's Mr. Bickel. A musical expert, or so he fancies himself.

MADOC ROSWYN

And are you a musician?

ROGER WOOL

Yes - in a way.

MADOC ROSWYN

Oh? Really?

ROGER WOOL

Yes indeed. I play the - well I'm one of those allround types...Er, who are you?

MADOC ROSWYN

That's a question I can't answer - because I'm not absolutely sure. But I'll tell you my name- if you'll tell me yours.

ROGER WOOL

I'm Roger Wool.

MADOC ROSWYN

You're associated with Dame Isabel Grayce?

ROGER WOOL

She's my aunt.

MADOC ROSWYN

Indeed! And you're going on this expedition out among the planets? I'd like to travel space too.

ROGER WOOL

You haven't told me your name

MADOC ROSWYN

It's a strange name - from Wales - Meirionnydd - though I'm the only one left. Madoc Roswyn.

Roger is mesmerised - then he snaps out of it

ROGER WOOL

I know what. I'll take you to lunch and you can tell me all about yourself.

No 10b Bustle Dance Lunch Interlude

Roger takes her arm and they exit SL. After a short musical interlude (and a big dance number) they reenter SL - he is holding her hand

ROGER WOOL

No 11 Duet

I've only known you two hours but it feels like...

MADOC ROSWYN

I like you Roger. You're so relaxing, so undemanding. I'll miss you when you are gone in space.

ROGER WOOL

If only Aunt Isabel wasn't such an obdurate old creature we could both go.

MADOC ROSWYN

Oh Roger! Wouldn't that be wonderful! But it won't happen.

ROGER WOOL

It can! And it will! Just leave it to me!

MADOC ROSWYN

Oh Roger! I'm so excited!

She throws her arms around his neck and kisses him. Roger responds and she steps away

Roger behave yourself. You're the most hot-blooded thing!

ROGER WOOL

Let's get married.

MADOC ROSWYN

Oh Roger! I'm so excited!

ROGER WOOL

If necessary I will get you on board as a stowaway! You will marry me won't you?

Roger takes her in his arms - quick curtain

ACT 2

Scene 1

On board 'Phoebus' - the mess deck - the crew queue with food trays and dance in synchrony. Roger exits SL with tray of food, re-enters and joins queue again.

No. 12 Breakfast queue dance (Space Travel Variation 1)

MESS STEWARD

Here's a man with a good appetite.

ROGER WOOL

I happen to be hungry.

MESS STEWARD

I can't see where you stow all that grub. You don't have the look of a big eater.

Scene 2

On board 'Phoebus' - Dame Isabel's cabin - she is supine on a lounge, suffering from space sickness.

No. 13 Duet (Space Travel Variation 2)

DAME ISABEL GRAYCE

Abh! Oh!

Roger enters SL escorted by a security officer

I have several things to say to you. I preface them by a remark to the effect that of all human failings I find ingratitude among the most despicable. Do I make myself clear?

ROGER WOOL

If you are speaking in a general sense, yes.

DAME ISABEL GRAYCE

To particularize, I allude to the presence of your paramour aboard the ship-

Do not interrupt -

**When I ended my days
I had planned to bequeath to you
A not inconsiderable portion
Of my estate.
The disclosures of this last hour -
ahhh! oh! -
Force me to alter
My intentions.**

Our first port of call is Sirius planet, and there you and that woman will be put ashore.

ROGER WOOL

Aunt Isabel, let me explain. Things are not what they seem.

DAME ISABEL GRAYCE

Your paramour is in Captain Gondar's custody. I believe he has improvised a brig from a storage locker. You are lucky you are not treated likewise. Now leave me.

**It is a shame that
Together with this
Dreadful space sickness
I must be burdened
With the impudicities
Of my nephew.**

ROGER WOOL

**She is not my paramour,
She is my fiancée.
And not for lack of trying either.
She has absolutely refused
To let me more than kiss her cheek
Until we are married -
Which I hope will be soon.**

**I have heard tales
About you when you were
Fifty years younger
And if they are true,**

Miss Roswyn's stowing away is absolutely trivial.

DAME ISABEL GRAYCE

**Get out of here you impudent whelp!
Ahh! Oh!**

Scene 3

On board 'Phoebus' - Captain Gondar's bridge. Gondar is at the helm. Madoc Roswyn sitting on a bench

No. 14 Duet (Space Travel Variation 3)

Roger enters SR he looks at Madoc who ignores him - he approaches Gondar

ROGER WOOL

I understand that my aunt has placed Miss Roswyn in your custody.

ADOLPH GONDAR

That is correct Mr. Wool.

ROGER WOOL

Will you allow me to have a few private words with her?

ADOLPH GONDAR

If Miss Roswyn is willing to talk with you, it's certainly agreeable to me.

He turns back to helm. Roger attempts to take Madoc in his arms - she thrusts him off

MADOC ROSWYN

Please Mr. Wool - say what you want to say and then...

ROGER WOOL

My darling! What's wrong?

MADOC ROSWYN

What's wrong? The mess you've got me in. The things you've said about me - it's a wonder I have a shred of reputation left.

ROGER WOOL

I don't understand - I've merely...

MADOC ROSWYN

You've merely got me in the worst trouble I've ever been in. I'm thankful I know you for the selfish blunderer you are before you did worse than you've done! Now please go and never speak to me again.

Roger stumbles blindly away and exits SR

Scene 4

On board 'Phoebus' - Dame Isabel's cabin - she is still supine on a lounge, suffering from space sickness.

No. 15 (Space Travel Variation 4)

Gondar enters SL

DAME ISABEL GRAYCE

Yes Captain. How is everything going?

ADOLPH GONDAR

Everything seems first rate madame. I've made arrangements in regard to the young lady whom I fear your nephew had attempted to victimize.

DAME ISABEL GRAYCE

What! Roger victimize anyone except me? Certainly not that devious little trollop.

ADOLPH GONDAR

Eventually you'll hear the full truth madame. In the meantime the young lady is not only filled with remorse but wants to make amends for the trouble she has unwittingly caused. Mr. Wool tricked her aboard. She was drugged and locked in a storage closet. Mr. Wool made periodic attempts to assault her, but without success.

hoarse caw of laughter from Dame Isabel

DAME ISABEL GRAYCE

If it's true - though I doubt it- it's about the level of competence I would expect of Roger. He has a girl locked in a closet, drugged and helpless and still she fends him off. Well, well, well. Poor Roger.

ADOLPH GONDAR

The young lady learned that you were suffering from space-sickness - she tells me she knows a specific cure and will be happy to help you.

DAME ISABEL GRAYCE

The way I feel I'd take help from the devil himself. What is this cure?

blackout

Scene 5

In space - on board 'Phoebus'. The mess deck - champagne party for the cast and orchestra.

No. 16 Chorus

CHORUS

**The sun becomes a star
With Sirius a brighter star ahead.
The 'Phoebus', encapsulated in non-stuff
Like a worm in an oak-gall,
Slides across space
With the speed of thought.**

**We musicians occupy ourselves with practice.
We vocalists with exercises and rehearsals.
There are the inevitable
Outbursts of temperament,
Formation and dissolution of cliques,
Several romances,
As many quarrels,
A spate of gossip, innuendo and caustic comment**

**And by these means
The ravages of space sickness
Are for the most part avoided.**

DAME ISABEL GRAYCE

I am very pleased by the manner in which everyone has adapted to the circumstances of the voyage. Ahead of us lies Sirius and Sirius Planet which for most of us will be a first venture on an alien world. There is flora and fauna unlike anything with which we are familiar, and in fact the words flora and fauna are probably misnomers, as many of the Sirius life forms fit neither category or fit them both. There is an intelligent native population, which is of course the reason for our visit. Mr Bickel

will tell us more about the natives, who happen to live in caves and potholes. We must be careful to avoid parochialism; it is possible the byzantours, as this race is called, regard us as primitive.

Laughter from cast and orchestra. Roger notices Gondor and Madoc at the side. Gondor has his arm round Madoc

I have given a good deal of thought to the choice of our first programme. We want to communicate with our audience but still hold our artistic integrity at its highest levels. To this end we must select works which offer the largest possible number of situations with which they can identify their own existence. I have decided that Fidelio will be our first offering, since much of the action occurs in a dungeon not unlike the blowholes in which the byzantours live.

BERNARD BICKEL

I can fill in one or two details regarding the byzantours - as the Sirius natives are known - as I have had occasion to visit Sirius three, or is it four times previously. In any event I know Commandant Boltzen at the settlement well and look forward to renewing our acquaintance. Sirius planet is a rather dim place, about as bright as an Earth twilight. One's eyes rapidly adapt and the landscape takes on a weird charm. We land at Sirius settlement and nearby live the Royal Giant byzantours, probably the most civilized tribe on the planet. Like the landscape I fear they will seem initially ugly to your eyes, and they are certainly not anthropoid. They have four arms and four legs and what appear to be two heads, but these latter simply contain the sense organs as the brain is in the body itself.

Gondor canoodles more - Madoc is enthusiastic - Roger is angry and despairing

In spite of their nightmarish appearance they are responsive creatures, quite ready to adopt those human manners, methods and institutions which seem useful to them. We may be able to implant some glimmer of our musical heritage into a people curiously deficient in this regard. Who knows? Perhaps

our visit will trigger a complete revolution in the life of the byzantours.

Dane Isabel waves the party on - much chatter - Roger exits angry and despairing

No. 16b

ACT 3

Scene 1

On Sirius planet. Overhead the sky is dark gray - Sirius shines with a cool white glare- The Company is assembled on parade outside the ship SR - Commandant Boltzen mounts podium flanked by a 'Zant SL and then reviews the parade.

No. 17

DYRUS BOLZEN

I'm Dyrus Bolzen, Commandant. Welcome to Sirius Settlement. It doesn't look like much at first sight, and believe me it gets worse.

Gondar and the parade laugh politely

ADOLPH GONDAR, CHORUS

Ha ha ha ha

ADOLPH GONDAR

I'm Gondar, master of the ship. This is Dame Isabel Grayce and Mr Bernard Bickel, whom I believe you know.

Bolzen faours Bickel with a rogueish look

DYRUS BOLZEN

Yes of course. Hello Bickel. Nice to see you again.

ADOLPH GONDAR

These other folk I won't introduce, but they're all famous musicians and opera singers.

DYRUS BOLZEN

As I understand it you propose to stage an opera for the byzantours? One of my responsibilities is to prevent abuse or exploitation of the 'zants; I don't see how showing them an opera can hurt them.

DAME ISABEL GRAYCE

And not just an opera: Fidelio!

Parade is dismissed singing - most exit back into ship SR, some bring tea table for DB, IG, BB, AG and ZANT and begin to unload ship

DYRUS BOLZEN

You don't plan to charge admission? Because if you do you're in for a disappointment. The 'zants have no commercial sense whatever.

DAME ISABEL GRAYCE

If necessary our performances will be staged free of charge.

No. 18

DYRUS BOLZEN

The 'zants are intelligent, no question about this. But they use their intelligence in connection with their own pursuits.

Bolzen addresses the 'zant - four arms, four legs, two heads, skin rough as grey rock - long brown, blue, black shawl

Friend 'zant - here are people from the sky.

They come in big ship.

They like to show friend 'zants

Many pretty things.

They like friend 'zants to come to ship.

Okay?

'ZANT

Maybe OK.

We go to look

For yellow no good 'zants.

DYRUS BOLZEN

They dislike coming up

From their tunnels.

They feel its demeaning

And gives them low social standing.

They eject their criminals

Out onto the plain.

DAME ISABEL GRAYCE

I understand fully. The performance will take place inside the ship. They will be spared the indignity of watching from the plain.

DYRUS BOLZEN

You hear sky talk?

You and friend 'zants run over plain and go inside to look.

Okay?

ZANT

**OK. I go down.
Talk to friend 'zants**

'Zant exits SL - sunny cloudscape on Sirius planet - all watch - Bolzen and Bickel talk - they are very friendly - Roger sees Madoc with De Appling SR- they are very friendly

No. 19

LOGAN DE APPLING

Gondar is a hard man my darling

MADOC ROSWYN

Please don't call me that

LOGAN DE APPLING

He's self-centred and unprincipled. I know, I've seen him in action.

MADOC ROSWYN

Don't say things like that. He's helping me stay aboard the ship.

LOGAN DE APPLING

Why is it so important you make the trip?

MADOC ROSWYN

I just want to I suppose. Would you like me to get off?

Logan De Appling embraces Madoc - she wriggles away

Now Logan don't be impulsive. Let's just watch the lovely Sirius set. Isn't it magnificent. It's so strange and lovely.

Roger exits SR in despair - Bolzen, Isabel and Bickel are served drinks at a little table which ship crew bring on and converse downstage apart from the crowd watching the Sirius cloudscape - bank of soft white mist - nacreous pinks and greens

DAME ISABEL GRAYCE

Do you really think we can make ourselves comprehensible to the byzantours? They seem completely non-human in their attitudes.

DYRUS BOLZEN

In certain ways yes. Sometimes I wonder at how closely our judgements mesh. I'll say this. If you want to present a programme that the 'zants can relate to you're going to have to take them on their own terms.

BERNARD BICKEL

Naturally. We are prepared to so so. Can you offer us suggestions?

No. 20 Aria

DYRUS BOLZEN

I believe I can.

Let me see.

**An obvious matter is colour,
To which they are highly sensitive.**

Yellow is the colour of rogues and outcasts,

**So the unsympathetic characters
Should wear yellow.**

There is the matter of sex:

Love, romance,

Whatever you want to call it.

The 'zants have peculiar

Reproductive habits:

Their sex play

Is a matter of spraying the intended mate

With a viscous fluid.

I doubt if you wish to carry

similitude

To this extent.

BERNARD BICKEL

Probably not.

DYRUS BOLZEN

Well, let's think further...as I recall Fidelio are not certain scenes played in a dungeon?

DAME ISABEL GRAYCE

Quite correct. Almost the whole of act 2.

DYRUS BOLZEN

You must remember that a dungeon is a cherished home to the 'zants. The deranged, the troublemakers are expelled to the plain, where they roam in bands. Incidentally warn your company not to wander off by themselves.

DAME ISABEL GRAYCE

Well, well, well. I suppose we can make some changes easily enough - Act 1 in the dungeon and Act 2 in the open.

DYRUS BOLZEN

Then there's also costuming. Do you know what the 'zants call us in their own language? Sky lice.

reaction

Exactly! If you costumed your 'sky lice' players to resemble 'zants, you'd command a much higher degree of attention.

DAME ISABEL GRAYCE

Where in the world would we get such costumes?

DYRUS BOLZEN

I have some tanned byzantaur pelts in the warehouse. If you like I'll have them brought to the ship

Isabel and Bickel confer and agree

To a successful performance!

Chorus exit gradually - lights dim on table party - Madoc and De Appling canoodle as night falls on Sirius planet with eerie noises (30 seconds) Music interlude with empty stage and cyc projection - tabs close

No. 21 Intermezzo

Scene 2

The 'Phoebus' theatre. SR is the 'stage' SL the theatre seats and an entrance door.

Tabs open on a lone crew member sweeping the stage with a broom. Crew and cast enter gradually and set up the stage, Madoc helps arranging chairs, singers warm up and rehearse Fidelio - cast protest with objurgations, muttered obscenities, exclamations of distress as 'zant skins are produced and they try them on assisted by Roger.

No. 22 Chorus

CHORUS

Ooh. Aah. Air. Eeugh! These skins smell bad! Oh no!

HERMILDA WARN

You surely do not expect us to wear those things?

DAME ISABEL GRAYCE

Yes of course. It is a concession to the social sensibilities of our audience.

HERMAN SCANTLING

Perhaps you will inform me how I can express myself with four arms? And how, conceivably how, can I achieve a projection behind these wads and folds?

OTTO VON SCHEERUP

The skins smell quite badly. I think the whole idea is ridiculous.

Dame Isabel's mouth becomes a thin white line.

DAME ISABEL GRAYCE

There will be no argument. These are the costumes for the performance, and I will brook no insubordination. Your contracts are quite specific on this point. You are not required to risk your health but a certain amount of discomfort must be expected and tolerated cheerfully. I will not put up with temperamental outbursts.

Now then everyone, the word 'dungeon' is not to be used. We substitute the word 'desert'.

HERMANN SCANTLING

What difference does it make. We sing in German which the local beasts can't understand in the first place.

DAME ISABEL GRAYCE

Our aim, Mr Scantling, is for faithfulness, for a basic intensity. If the scene represents a desert, which is now does, then a falsity is committed in referring to this desert as a dungeon, even in German. Do I make myself clear?

OTTO VON SCHEERUP

The metre is changed. 'Die Wuste' 'Der Burgverlies'

Isabel ponders a solution and fails to find it

DAME ISABEL GRAYCE

You must do your best.

No. 22b

all is now ready - singers retire to the wings of the stage SR - Dame Isabel stands alone on stage looking at open door SL

Bolzen enters SL at a fast walk - she carries a weapon

DYRUS BOLZEN

Sorry, but I'll have to miss the performance. We've got to look to some unpleasant business. A band of rogues has been seen heading this way and we have to turn then aside before they make trouble

DAME ISABEL GRAYCE

That's a shame after you've done so much to help. You did arrange that the local folk should come to the performance?

DYRUS BOLZEN

Oh yes they know all about it, and at three o'clock they'll be here. With luck I'll be back for the last act.

exits SL at a run

BERNARD BICKEL

Maybe the 'zants are waiting for someone to bring them over. They're a bit dubious of the open ground, if you recall what Bolzen told us. I'll find them and fetch them over.

No. 23 Zant Opera Production

exits SL, returns after a moment with many 'zants SL. Roger helps with ushering the 'zants to seats, they are very restless

DAME ISABEL GRAYCE

Ladies and gentlemen, I welcome you to our little performance. You are about to see the opera Fidelio, by Ludwig van Beethoven, one of our most accomplished composers. We bring you this programme in the hope that some of you may wish to learn more about the great music of Earth.

Isabel retires to the entrance SL, opera starts, 'zants sit in stunned silence as singers appear in 'zant costume singing a version of a bit of Fidelio.

CHORUS

*O welche Lust
In freier Luft den Atem leicht zu heben.
Nur hier ist Leben,
Der Kerke eine Gruft*

Bolzen reappears - she turns ashen and screams

DYRUS BOLZEN

Your audience - they're the wrong ones - they're the wild rogues from the plain. Can't you see they're wearing yellow? They're terribly sensitive to yellow.

CHORUS

*Wir wollen mit Vertrauen auf Gottes Hilfe bauen
Die Hoffnung flüstert sanft nir zu, Wir werden frei, wir
finden Ruh
O Himmel Rettung
Welch ein Gluck
O Freiheit kerst du zuruick*

*Sprecht leise
Haltet euch zuruick
Wir sind belauscht mit Ohr und Blick*

One singer (Hermina Warn) now waves a yellow scarf - 'zants rise and synchronously wave arms in time with the music - the singer is 'assaulted' by another and the yellow scarf thrown to the floor - 'zants lurch SR towards the stage and chant, start throwing stuff and smashing up the place - Hermina Warn drops in dead faint centre stage - general mayhem - singers fight back, throwing pelts or run screaming SR - Gondar and Roger appear with firehoses SR and drive out 'zants SL. as curtain falls.

INTERVAL

ACT 4

Scene 1

On board 'Phoebus' in space

Lights up on Dame Isabel's cabin set SR front - she is supine on a lounge, suffering from space sickness, Gondar and Bickel are with her

No. 24a Space Travel Var 5

BERNARD BICKEL

We must definitely avoid the mistakes we made on Sirius Planet.

DAME ISABEL

According to our itinerary, we will next visit Zade, the second planet of Phi Orionis. I understand that the autochthones are definitely humanoid - is that not so Bernard?

BERNARD BICKEL

I have not visited the world myself, but I am told the inhabitants of Zade are not only humanoid in appearance, but also display cultural traits analagous to our own, including art forms based on the modulation of sound. Which is to say: music.

DAME ISABEL

Zade it is then. I presume Captain that our route will not take us too far afield from Rlaru.

ADOLPH GONDAR

No, no difficulty there: Phi Orion is in the general direction. But I have a suggestion.

DAME ISABEL

Yes?

ADOLPH GONDAR

I recall mention of a planet in Hydra, named Yan, inhabited by a very musical people. It's a world which has hardly been visited by man, and I understand it's extremely advanced artistically. Just the place for you to take your troupe, or so it seems to me.

DAME ISABEL

Our present itinerary according to you takes us towards Rlaru? Is this not correct?

ADOLPH GONDAR

Yes indeed, absolutely correct.

BERNARD BICKEL

Come to think of it Gondar, don't you think it's about time you let us in on the location of Rlaru.

ADOLPH GONDAR

Better that I keep my own counsel - for a very good reason.

BERNARD BICKEL

But suppose something happened to you! Then we'd be unable to find Rlaru, which is our principal goal!

DAME ISABEL

I fail to understand your reluctance to trust us. You certainly can't believe that we would attempt to bamboozle you?

ADOLPH GONDAR

Of course not, and I'm sorry if I gave that impression

DAME ISABEL

Why then are you so unnaturally cautious?

ADOLPH GONDAR

I'll be quite frank. You put matters on the basis of trust, but your demands for information make it quite clear that you do not trust me. This arouses in me a counter-distrust. You control a great deal of money which is rightfully mine, and this is leverage which you exert on me. I have information you want and this is my leverage upon you. You are asking me to give up my leverage, to put myself in your power without making a corresponding concession.

DAME ISABEL

What you say may be sensible on Earth - but out here, en route to Rlaru, what do you gain? Both Mr Bickel and I are persons of honour; I can't imagine us - for the sake of argument - marooning you, or - to be really melodramatic - causing your death.

ADOLPH GONDAR

Stranger things have happened. When the time comes I will take you to Rlaru. When the time comes I hope that you in your turn will give me my money. Now as to the matter of the planet I mentioned. I believe a visit to this planet would be highly rewarding

BERNARD BICKEL

We would be forced to make a tedious detour.

ADOLPH GONDAR

A slight detour perhaps, but a very rewarding one. An old explorer described it to me. Ever since I have wanted to visit this planet.

DAME ISABEL

You must do so on some other occasion. Our current itinerary is already establishd. We cannot jerk here and there about the Galaxy to satisfy one persons whim.

Gondar exits - Isabel speaks to his retreating back

Kindly inform the astrogator that our immediate destination is Zade, second planet of Phi Orionis.

BERNARD BICKEL

Odd. Why in the name of all the lesser demons is Gondar so anxious to visit this particular world?

DAME ISABEL

It makes small difference since we shall not be doing so.

No. 24b Space Travel Var 5

Light down on the cabin then up on the rehearsal area - a single dim light illuminates the stage, Madoc is sitting quietly on a stage prop chair

ROGER WOOL

I wish you'd tell me why you acted the way you did - told those terrible stories about me... As if I'd ever force you to do anything against your will....

MADOC ROSWYN

It seemed a good thing at the time. You must recognize, Roger, that I am fickle and perverse: not at all the girl you thought I was.

ROGER WOOL

I can't escape the feeling that you were using me, but to what end I can't imagine...Once I thought you were fond of me. If you were, if you still are - for heaven's sake tell me, and we'll clear up this terrible misunderstanding wish you'd tell me why you acted the way you did - told those terrible stories about me. As if I'd ever force you to do anything against your will....

MADOC ROSWYN

There's no misunderstanding Roger.

ROGER WOOL

How can anyone so beautiful, so sensitive, so clever, be so faithless? I can't understand.

MADOC ROSWYN

It's not necessary that you understand Roger.

Roger exits SL - lights change - Crew and Opera singers enter

No 25 Aria and Chorus

Space

That dark emptiness

Almost palpable

An ocean separating systems of stars

Passes astern

If emptiness can be said to do anything whatsoever

CHORUS

Space

That dark emptiness

Passes astern

Sirius recedes

Phi Orionis approaches

MADOC ROSWYN

In order to achieve this effect

A significant process is evidently underway

CHORUS

Ahead Phi Orionis grows bright

Planet Zade can be seen

Landing orbit

Landing clearance

Down to Zade settles the Phoebus

Lights down slowly as chorus dance off march style. Lights up slowly on scene 2

Scene 2

On board 'Phoebus' on Planet Zade - Dame Isabel's cabin - Darwin Litchley, Dame Isabel and Bernard Bickel examine maps

DARWIN LITCHLEY

The natives of Zade are by and large neither hostile, not uncooperative: they are simply unpredictable. There are at least sixteen variations of the intelligent species, much more disparate than the races of man, and with their differences of colour and anatomy go cultural differences. I couldn't even begin to generalize on them.

DAME ISABEL

They are a humanoid people?

DARWIN LITCHLEY

Yes indeed. No question about that. From a distance of a hundred yards you can hardly distinguish one from a man.

BERNARD BICKEL

And I understand they are, in a sense, artists? That is too say they understand the creative processs, the sublimation of fact to symbol and the use of symbol to suggest emotion?

DARWIN LITCHLEY

Absolutely, though here again there is great diversity of ways and means.. One of the peculiar facts of life on Zade is the lack of cultural interchange. Each tribe, except for the occasional slave raid, takes very little notice of its neighbours. In general the folk of Zade are no more and no less to be feared than the people of Earth - and herein lies the unpredictability of Zade.

BERNARD BICKEL

We are not exactly green-horns, and naturally we will make every conceivable allowance for native peculiarities.

DAME ISABEL

I would be happy if you could arrange a suitable itinerary for us, so that we could play before those tribes which would profit the most.

DARWIN LITCHLEY

I can suggest an itinerary. I cannot arrange one. Our situation here by no means affords us automatic respect. Certain of the tribes are sure Earth is a place of desolation and misery; why else would we go to such exertion to come to other worlds?

DARWIN LITCHLEY

You have explained your objectives and while I applaud them in the abstract, I fear that problems of a lower level, the sheer ponderosity of the project, are almost certain to cause misunderstanding and difficulty.

DAME ISABEL

You are a peculiarly confident man Mr. Litchley. After weeks of meticulous planning, dedicated rehearsals and not inconsiderable expense, as well as a voyage across many miles of space, we are finally here on Zade. prepared to present our programme. You now make your

pessimistic enunciations, and apparently envision us reeling back in doubt and dismay, abandoning all our plans and returning to Earth.

DARWIN LITCHLEY

Madame you misunderstand me. I merely hoped to present a realistic picture, in order that you should have no reason to reproach me later for irresponsibility. The peoples of Zade, while intelligent, are rather narrow in their perspective, and some are both uncertain and unreliable, and even volatile.

DAME ISABEL

Very well; you have made your point. Now let us examine the maps I see you have brought.

DARWIN LITCHLEY

We are here. I have described the extreme diversity of the local aborigenes. The Striads of the Tercera Zone are perhaps as good as any to visit first, and undaoubtedly they are a picturesque folk, highly expert in the use of sound, which they project from an organ unique to them.

DAME ISABEL

Very well; we shall present Mozart's 'Magic Flute' to the Striads. There will be no tampering or adjustment. It smacks somehow of condescension to make these unpleasant little compromises.

DARWIN LITCHLEY

I recommend you next visit the Water-folk. They have a highly developed music. In a tradition at least ten thousand years old. They are true experts, all with perfect pitch, and will recognize offhand any chord you can play in any of its inversions. You wanted to meet a musically sophisticated poeple and here they are.

DAME ISABEL

This is good news indeed. I fancy we can show them something they haven't seen before. Next we shall present Alban Berg's 'Wozzeck' to the Water-folk .

Bernard Bickel's eyebrows rise in a high arc. Lights dim as further planning takes place

No. 26a Wozzeck Intermezzo

Scene 3

Main stage revealed as lights up for opera- Phoebus stage - A Temple

No. 27 Zade Opera Production 1

Opera company SR present opera Mozart Magic Flute- Striad indigenes file in SL and sit in seats

CHORUS

**Es lebe Sarastro
Sarastro lebe!**

PAMINA

**O Freund! Nun ist uns getan!
Dies kündigt der Sarastro an!**

PAPAGENO

**O wär ich eine Maus wie wollt' ich
mich verstecken
Wär ich so klein wie Schnecken so
kröch' ich in mein Haus!
Mein Kind, was werden wir nun
sprechen?**

PAMINA

**Die Wahrheit, sei sie auch
verbrechen!**

CHORUS

**Es lebe Sarastro
Sarastro soll leben
Er ist es, dem wir uns mit Freuden
ergeben!
Stets mög er des Leben als Weiser
sich freun,
Er ist unser Abgott, dem alle sich
weihn.**

One Striad rise and grabs conductors arm - abrupt stop to music

Striad mutters words in Darwin Litchely's ear

DARWIN LITCHLEY

There seems to be a slight mistake, a certain degree of misunderstanding. They seem to have mistaken the 'Phoebus' for a commercial mission - they are willing to place a firm order for two oboists and a coloratura.

Blackout.

No. 26b Wozzeck Intermezzo

Lights up - Opera company SR present Berg Wozzeck- Waterfolk indigene SL is sole audiant

No n Zade Opera Production 2

WOZZECK

Er! Sie! Teufel!

MARIE

Immer zu.

WOZZECK

Immer zu

Dreht Euch! Wälzt Euch! Warum löscht Gott die Sonne nicht aus?!

Alles wälzt sich in Unzucht über einander. Mann und Weib. Mensch und Vieh! Weib, Weib. Das Weib ist heiss. Wie er an ihr herum greift! An Ihrem Leib! Und sie lacht dazu... Verdammt!

MARIE

Immer zu.

TAMBOURMAJOR

Immer zu.

CHORUS

**Ein Jäger aus der Pfalz
Ritt einst durch einen grünen Wald!
Halli, Hallo!
Ja lustig ist die Jägerei,
Allhie auf grüner Haid.
Halli, Hallo!**

Zade audiant jumps up, grabs score and sings the part of Andres, conducting the chorus

ZADE AUDIANT

**O Tochter liebe Tochter
Was hast du gedenkt
Dass du Dich an die Kutscher und
die Fuhrknecht hast gehängt.
Hallo!**

WOZZECK

Wieviel Uhr?

ZADE AUDIANT

Elf Uhr!

Zade audiant returns to seat

WOZZECK

**So? Ich meint es müsst später sein.
Die Zeit wird einem lang bei der
Kurzweil**

ZADE AUDIANT

Was sitztest du da vor der Tür?

**Bernard Bickel stops the conductor - music finishes
raggedly Darwin Litchely translates**

ZADE AUDIANT

Thelu gy schrlama

DARWIN LITCHLEY

*He's unfavourably impressed. This essentially is
his reaction. He has noticed a large number of
clumsy mistakes...*

ZADE AUDIANT

ghark jissu bgrassik

DARWIN LITCHLEY

*the singers...hmm a word I don't understand
bgrassik.*

*Whatever it means it's something the singers do
when attempting to... ghark jissu ... the chord
sequence wouldn't move from north to west...he
complains that the musicians sit too statically.
He thinks they should move - hop or jump if
they will - in order to blend the music...*

ZADE AUDIANT

thakal skth hg grsgk y thssg trg

DARWIN LITCHLEY

*He has set his fee at six hundred flashlight
batteries...*

*If this is not paid he will discharge the contents
of his spore-sac into the air, which will infect the
Phoebus with approximately ten million of his
infants*

Blackout.

Scene 3

*On board 'Phoebus' - Dame
Isabel's cabin - she is supine on a
lounger, suffering from space
sickness.*

No. 29 Space Travel (Var 6)

**Dame Isabel, drawing on her breeding, rises above
it**

DAME ISABEL

*I dislike to impute malevolence to anyone, and
somehow I cannot read animus into that terrible
set of circumstances.*

BERNARD BICKEL

*Probably not. A misunderstanding more than
likely. Faulty communication. What a farcical
chap that Litchley! Utterly incompetent! He
frankly admitted his incompetence in the
language.*

**Gondar enters SL - he has dark shadows under his
eyes and his skin has a yellow tone**

DAME ISABEL

*You should take more exercise Captain Gondar.
Even in this age of biological miracles, we must
cooperate by keeping the blood moving.*

ADOLPH GONDAR

*A short while ago I mentioned a civilized and
cultured planet called Yan--*

DAME ISABEL

*Yes I remember distinctly. To visit the planet
would entail an onerous detour.*

ADOLPH GONDAR

*Some small distance perhaps. A matter of
veering off into Hydra---a civilized and
cultured planet--*

DAME ISABEL

*Captain this planet no doubt merits a visit. But
we have a schedule judiciously, even
laboriously arrived at and we simple cannot
pursue every will of the wisp that offers itself*

If I were you I would consult Dr. Shand and ask him for a tonic; I feel you must be driving yourself too hard

**Gondar makes a harsh inarticulate noise and exits
SL**

BERNARD BICKEL

In my opinion Captain Gondar's little affaire du coeur is not proceeding with 'rose petal felicity' as Carvath puts it.

DAME ISABEL

What a heartless little wretch she is - first poor Roger and now Captain Gondar

Blackout. Lights up on Madoc Roswyn's cabin

No. 30 Recit and Aria

ROGER WOOL

**May I come in?
Have you eaten?**

MADOC ROSWYN

I'm not hungry.

ROGER WOOL

**If I only knew why you have been doing this.
It's beyond my understanding.
How could anyone be so beguiling,
so faithless - unless she had some overpowering motive?
It's humiliating to be used.**

MADOC ROSWYN

All I can say Roger, is that I'm sorry. Really I am.

But I'd do it again if it would help...

ROGER WOOL

Tell me why.

MADOC ROSWYN

I'm born of secretive people.
All my life I've had secrets you'd never dream of.

ROGER WOOL

This planet Yan is one of your secrets?
Secrecy is a miserable vice.
I have no secrets whatever.

MADOC ROSWYN

You are indeed an admirable man Roger.
Very well I'll tell you my secret.
It's all mine now, because none of my race are left to share it.

Yan is my home behind the stars.

I am not Welsh.

**Long long ago my ancestors had brought Atlantis to a high peak of civilisation - they sent a ship of space and founded a colony on Yan - after many thousands of years they sent a return ship from Yan to Earth - the ship crashed on landing...
the survivors fled superstitious persecution and**

settled in remote Transylvanian valleys.

**Their numbers dwindled.
I am the last of my line.
I want to return to Yan.
From as early as I can remember and before I went to sleep by this song.**

**Yan is my home behind the stars.
So near and yet so far**

**Sleep baby sleep
Remember your home
Yan is your home
Yan is your home
Mummy is watching
You'll come to no harm
Sleep little babe
Behind the stars
You'll come to no harm**

**Madoc sings her nursery song. Roger sits quietly for a long moment - then heaves a sigh and exits
SR**

ROGER WOOL

I'll help you as best I can.. I can't lose something I never had... I'll talk to my aunt.

Slow fade to Black on Madoc in chair - lights up Dame Isabel's cabin

ROGER WOOL

I know you consider me a wastrel and credit me with little judgement.f

DAME ISABEL

Do I not have reason to do so? You brought that dreadful young woman aboard the 'Phoebus'. She has disrupted the entire tour!

ROGER WOOL

Yes. Quite true. her motive for wanting to visit this particular world is astonishing.

DAME ISABEL

I do not wish to be astonished. I've had enough surprises... I suppose in simple justice I must speak to this wretched girl. Where is she?

Roger fetches Madoc in

Dame Isabel listens to Madoc and is moved - she contemplates in silence for a moment

DAME ISABEL

Please tell Captain Gondar to step in here for a moment, if he'll be so good. I have decided to convey Miss Roswyn to the planet Yan.

Blackout

No. 31 Space travel (Var 7)

Scene 4

On Yan - strangely scented air, greenish white sun - edge of a dense forest - ship's company are grouped still and sing

No. 32 Chorus

CHORUS

**A beautiful planet
Oceans and continents
Mountains and deserts
Forests and tundras and ice-fields
Strangely scented air
Greenish white sun**

Gondar enters SR from ship, followed by Roger

GONDAR

No response to our radio signal- in fact we can't intercept signals on any wavelength whatever

MADOC ROSWYN

I don't understand - nothing looks as it should

GONDAR

I saw no obvious signs of habitation

ROGER WOOL

There were ruins - or rough patches which looked like ruins

CHORUS

**A beautiful planet
Oceans and continents
Mountains and deserts
Forests and tundras and ice-fields
Strangely scented air
Greenish white sun**

ROGER WOOL

Are you sure this is the correct planet?

MADOC ROSWYN

Yes of course. Something terrible has happened. What has happened to Yan?

ROGER WOOL

Perhaps the traditions of your people were incorrect

MADOC ROSWYN

It can't be. All my life I had planned to visit this city... now there is nothing but ruins

ROGER WOOL

It's getting dark

Roger turns away and goes to enter ship SR

MADOC ROSWYN

I'm hated by everyone aboard the ship... They think terrible things of me - and now they think me a fool as well

Madoc walks into the forest SL - eventually small screams from the Company - Roger notices, curses

**and runs after her - strangely scented air, greenish
white sun - edge of a dense forest - ship's
company stand silent - night falls -**

CHORUS

**A beautiful planet
Oceans and continents
Mountains and deserts
Forests and tundras and ice-fields
Strangely scented air
Greenish white sun**

**Roger and Madoc enter SL under a hail of rocks
(on cyc)**

MADOC ROSWYN

*Evil is here. We must leave and put Yan far out of our
mind.*

They see us and envy -

knowing themselves and what they have done to Yan

- they will attack the ship - we must leave at once.

Blackout - tabs in

ACT 5

Scene 1

On 'Phoebus in space. Dame Isabel's cabin.

No. 33 Space travel var 8.

Dame Isabel and Gondar confer re Rlaru

DAME ISABEL

The Rlaru inhabitants are friendly?

ADOLPH GONDAR

Friendly? You saw the Ninth Company. Did they seem unfriendly?

DAME ISABEL GRAYCE

No of course not. Though I have always considered their abrupt departure ungracious, in view of our efforts.

I believe you stated that you had photographed the planet?

ADOLPH GONDAR

Did I say that?

DAME ISABEL GRAYCE

Yes - during our original negotiations.

ADOLPH GONDAR

I don't recall.

DAME ISABEL GRAYCE

I would now like to be shown the photographs. There can be no possible reason for further caution.

Gondar reluctantly hands over envelope. Dame Isabel studies photos

These are hardly informative. You have nothing depicting the people, their cities, their architecture, their rituals?

ADOLPH GONDAR

No. I did not take the camera from the ship.

DAME ISABEL GRAYCE

The inhabitants gave you a hospitable greeting? You seem a trifle uncertain.

ADOLPH GONDAR

Not at all. Although hospitable isn't quite the right word. They accepted me without much interest of any kind.

DAME ISABEL GRAYCE

Weren't they surprised to see you?

ADOLPH GONDAR

Difficult to say. They showed no great interest in me.

DAME ISABEL GRAYCE

Did they show curiosity in regard to Earth, or your spaceship?

ADOLPH GONDAR

No, not to any great extent.

Gondar exits SR.

No. 34 Scena 'One would think'

Dame Isabel studies photos with music over and mutters to herself

DAME ISABEL GRAYCE

Hmmmf. One would think them a stolid or stupidly introverted people, were it not for the evidence of the Ninth Company to the contrary.

Noises and shouting off. Gondar returns in charge of Roger, who holds a gun, pinioned by Chief technician Henderson and Logan de Appling. All are panting from exertion

ROGER WOOL

He was going to kill me - I stopped him from going off in the lifeboat

DAME ISABEL GRAYCE

Perhaps you'll tell me why you chose to act in this fashion?

ADOLPH GONDAR

Certainly. I suddenly became anxious to leave the ship.

DAME ISABEL GRAYCE

Please conduct Mr Gondar to his cabin. Make sure he has no further weapons. Mr Henderson, you will see that a suitable lock is attached to the door.

Mr De Appling - we will land at Rlaru at the original site. I see no reason to be intimidated by Mr Gondar's ambiguous hints.

Blackout.

No. 35 Space travel Var 9

Scene 2

Rlaru

No. 36 Rlaru Ballet

As lights come up the landscape is drenched in the golden haze of late afternoon - wonderfully tranquil and beautiful, though permeated with a sense of remoteness and even melancholy, like a scene remembered from one's youth.

Rlaru inhabitants (very similar to the Ninth Company!), emerge SL with little dance moves and inspect the ship

Ship's company enter and assemble SR - Rlaru inhabitants exit SL one by one, then company exit SR leaving 3

DAME ISABEL

Odd - their lack of interest is almost insulting.

BERNARD BICKEL

Did you notice their physical characteristics? Extremely manlike yet in some subtle, almost indefinable manner, not quite men.

DAME ISABEL

What in your expert opinion would seem an appropriate work to perform here?

BERNARD BICKEL

I find it difficult to decide. Frankly I had expected a far different cultural complex - an ambiance considerably more lively and sophisticated.

ANDREI SZINC

My feelings exactly. There seems an aimlessness here, a lack of purpose, as if people and landscape aren't exactly real. Perhaps 'archaic' is the word I want. Everything exudes a redolence of something old and half-forgotten.

DAME ISABEL

Both of you seem to have evaded the question.

BERNARD BICKEL

I evade because I am at a loss. I talk hoping to stimulate an idea into existence, but I have failed.

ANDREI SZINC

Why not Fliegende Hollander or Parsifal. Either of these would be suitable. Of course there is always the risk of tedium, especially for persons not imbued with the Wagnerian mystique.

DAME ISABEL

I consider it a calculated risk. The level of musical sophistication is high, we must not forget this.

Good.

This evening we shall perform Parsifal - and hope that the sound of the music will attract an audience.

Andrei please see to bringing out the requisite sets.

Bernard perhaps you would be so good as to inform Sir Henry and his people.

All exit SR- brief blackout - then evening light up as crew enter SR and set up stage

Scene 3

Rlaru

No. 37 Chorus stage setting music and Rlaru Opera Production

CHORUS

**Geleiten wir im bergenden Schrein
Den Gral zum heiligen Amte,
Wen berget ihr im düstren Schrein,
Und führt ihr trauernd daher?
Es birgt den Helden der
Trauerschrein,
Es birgt die heilige Kraft,
Der Gott einst selbst zur Pflege sich
gab:
Gondar is carried away.**

Parsifal commences. Rlaru people enter SL - act out ballet of Gondar's arrival in ship with a ballet person dressed as Gondar in crude mask, enslavement of Ninth Company and then Gondar is magically seized out of his cabin bound and gagged on a bier (chorus are magically compelled to drag him) and Rlaru people exit SL in procession with Gondar

Dame Isabel and Bickel confer

DAME ISABEL

It is beyond my understanding We have no further business here on Rlaru. We will leave in the morning

BERNARD BICKEL

What of Adolph Gondar?

DAME ISABEL

It is clear he committed a wrong against these people. Clearly he had been warned never again to approach Rlaru. When he did so he was punished. His fate is out of our hands.

BERNARD BICKEL

Could they spirit him out of his cabin? Through the solid walls of the ship?

DAME ISABEL

Why not? It is amply clear they brought the Ninth Company back from Earth: why should they not extract Mr Gondar from his cabin?

BERNARD BICKEL

It is beyond my understanding.

DAME ISABEL

Mine too. We have no further business here on Rlaru. We will leave in the morning.

All exit SR save Roger and Madoc watching the dawn - Madoc joins Roger

No. 38 Duet

MADOC ROSWYN

*This is such a soothing place Roger.
So calm and quiet.
I've been extremely wicked, Roger.
And you've been very kind to me.
I'm ashamed. Truly I am.*

ROGER WOOL

Don't let's talk about it.

MADOC ROSWYN

But I must. It haunts me! Now that it's over I can see myself for the monomaniac I was.

ROGER WOOL

I'm sure you didn't mean to hurt anyone.

Madoc sadly goes to move away - Roger calls her back

**Wait!
The only lasting effect
Of this business
Is the state of my reflexes.**

**I feel like a laboratory rat.
When he presses a green button
Cheese comes down a chute;**

**Until suddenly
Pressing the green button
Gets him only
Shocks and air jets.**

Roger is overcome - Madoc comforts him

MADOC ROSWYN

**What if
Little mouse asked you to press
The green button
Just once more,
And promised
Nothing but cheese and
Never any shocks and air jets**

For the poor young rat again

Press the green button

**Madoc throws her arms around Roger - Two small
Rlaru persons enter, dance a pas de deux and exit**

Little mouse promises

**They embrace - morning is broken music -
blackout**

And we from them.

**There were
Various levels
Of comprehension.**

End of the Opera

No. 39 Space Travel Var 10

Scene 4

*Earth- the opera house - a press conference-tabs open on
cast assembled before journalists and TV cameras,
others of cast limp on to stage - they have had a hard
time*

No. 40 Finale

Cast limp on to stage, travel weary and fed up

CHORUS

**The tour in general was a
resounding success.
There were various levels of
comprehension**

**Dame Isabel however is full of confidence and
wants to keep up appearances**

DAME ISABEL

*The tour in general was a resounding success. Beyond
question it contributed to the culture and understanding of
all those before whom we performed.*

Bickel backs her up for the TV cameras

BERNARD BICKEL

*There were various levels of comprehension, corresponding to
what I call the 'cultural perspective' of the people who
formed our various audiences. They learned much from us
and we from them*

**Roger and Madoc come forward arm in arm and
display the engagement ring, applause from
journalists and cast, everybody now light hearted**

MADOC, ROGER, AND TUTTI

**Ha ha
They learned much from us**