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Delirium’s Daughters

Comedy by Nicholas Korn



Delirium's Daughters

“Definitely funny, but holy cow, did it also tug some heartstrings ... The dramatic moments in this play, while few, are completely earned and showcase how heartfelt Korn’s script is. All may be fair in love and war, but both leave casualties.”—*IN New York*

Comedy/Farce. By Nicholas Korn. Cast: 5m., 3w. When four suitors arrive to ask for the hands of Signor Di Lirio’s three lovely daughters, the old gentleman agrees, as long as they have the approval of their mother. And that’s where the problems begin—the old man’s wife died three years ago, and he has gone so mad with grief that he still believes she is alive. However, one of the suitors is the town scoundrel, Giovio, who plays a series of kind-hearted but hilarious tricks that bring the father back to sanity and the intended couples together. Before all is done, the four men have been forced to dress up as their own mothers, and Giovio pretends to have died and appears as his own ghost to haunt the old man’s home. *One ext. set. Approximate running time: 75 minutes. Code: DF8.*

Cover image: Triumvirate Artists at the Clurman Theatre, New York City, featuring (l-r) Brandon Beilis, Evan Zimmerman and Jackson Thompson. Photo: Michael Blase.

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Delirium's Daughters

A comedy in verse by
NICHOLAS KORN



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Originally produced on July 29, 2015, at The Clurman Theatre in New York City by Triumvirate Artists, Inc. (Kathleen Butler, Daniel P. Butler and John Essay).

Cast (in order of appearance):

Marina Stephanie Nicole Kelley
Terresa Deanna Gibson
Celia Kerry Frances
Serio Evan Zimmerman
Pomposa Jackson Thompson
Timidio Brandon Beilis
Di Lirio Branislav Tomich
Giovio Nick Bombicino

Production:

Director Kathleen Butler
Set Design Abby Walsh
Lighting Design Alana Jacoby
Costume Design Izzy Fields
Sound Design and Original Music Sam Kusnetz
Fight Coordinator Chris Michael Burke
Production Stage Manager Jack Gianino
Stage Manager Dustin Z. West
General Manager Michael Lonergan
Company Manager Kim Moarefi
Production Manager Peter L. Smith
Production Assistants Gus Riley and Sam Alper

Delirium's Daughters

CHARACTERS

DI LIRIO: Father to Terresa, Marina and Celia.

GIOVIO: A good-hearted scoundrel, in love with Celia.

SERIO: A stern young man, in love with Terresa.

TIMIDIO: A shy young man, in love with Marina.

POMPOSA: A conceited young man, in love with Celia.

TERRESA: Di Lirio's eldest daughter, in love with Serio.

MARINA: Di Lirio's second daughter, in love with Timidio.

CELIA: Di Lirio's youngest daughter, deciding between
Giovio and Pomposa.

PLACE: The terrace of De Lirio's villa in the imaginary
Italian city of Aviano.

TIME: The past.

Delirium's Daughters

ACT I

AT RISE: The terrace of DI LIRIO's estate. TERRESA enters in a state of delighted agitation. She peers over the banister, looking for anyone to tell her glorious news. MARINA enters.

MARINA. Sister, you will never believe!

TERRESA. Nor will you. I have never been so excited.

MARINA. I simply had to find you.

TERRESA. And to think I have been here all the time

Looking for you. I have such marvelous news.

MARINA. I am sure it must be, but even more sure

That mine is more so.

TERRESA. There is no possible way in the world

That could be.

MARINA. Then let me speak, and I will prove it.

TERRESA. And I will, as soon as I have spoken first.

MARINA. But I must tell you mine. You will be so delighted

For me.

TERRESA. As will you for me, my dear Marina,

Once you have given me the privilege

Of being the elder, and allowed me

To say mine first.

MARINA. Well I am quite certain that whatever it is

You have to say is nothing compared

To what my heart is bursting to tell you.

TERRESA. Which must no doubt be entirely inconsequential

To the raptures I am nearly dying to speak of.

MARINA. Well, if you will not hear mine first,

I will not hear yours at all.

TERRESA. Nor I yours. I hope the cold stone of your grave

Covers your ears from any mention of

My glorious news.

MARINA. And I pray that with your dying breath

You beg me to impart the faintest hint of how

My fortunes have favored me this morning,

But I will let you grow as grizzled and gray

As any old ghost, before I let you know

The least of it.

(They both turn away from one another. And then turn back.)

TERRESA. And yet you must know.

MARINA. And you.

TERRESA. That I am to be married.

MARINA. As indeed am I.

TERRESA. Then Timidio has proposed to you?

MARINA. And Serio to you?

TERRESA. This very morning.

TERRESA & MARINA. O sister, I am so delighted!

MARINA. When did Serio say he'd come to ask

Our father for your hand?

TERRESA. I expect him any moment. And Timidio?

MARINA. I expect him any moment. And I am sure

That it will not take long, for as you know,

My dear Timidio says very little.

TERRESA. If he has said he loves my dearest sister
So much as to marry her, then he has said
Enough. Will not our little Celia be amazed
To learn that both her sisters in a single day
Have become engaged?

MARINA. I cannot wait to tell her.

TERRESA. No, but I will tell her first.

MARINA. I dare say you will not.

TERRESA. Let us not quarrel over it, but let it be
Her choice, as she comes upon us now.

MARINA. Yes, let it be her choice, since she has
Always liked me best.

(Enter CELIA.)

CELIA. Sisters, I have been so desperate to find you.

MARINA. We have great news.

TERRESA. But you must make a difficult choice.

CELIA. I know I do, but how is it you have come
To hear of it so soon?

MARINA. Hear of what, my dear?

CELIA. That I am to be married. When Pomposa heard
From Serio and Timidio that they were both intent
On asking for your hands in marriage, he made up
His mind to make the same request of me.

TERRESA. My dear, I could not be happier for you.
Pomposa is the closest friend of my own dear Serio.
Now thanks to us, they shall be brothers.

MARINA. And Pomposa's father is as wealthy as any man
In the world. You will want for nothing.

CELIA. Only for your advice. You see, Pomposa was
Not the first man of the morning to propose.

There is another who has asked me to be his wife.

MARINA. I am shocked to find that proposals
Are so common this season. And that you
Should have two, whereas your elder sisters
Are left with only one.

TERRESA. Who is this second gentleman?

CELIA. Why, Signore Giovio.

TERRESA. Giovio?

MARINA. For heaven's sake. Not Giovio.

TERRESA. The fellow's a fool.

MARINA. And a rascal.

TERRESA. Certainly you didn't think his proposal
Was serious. He never says or does anything
Except he means it as some kind of joke.

CELIA. The very reason I prefer him. He makes
Me laugh.

TERRESA. Giovio makes everybody in Aviano laugh,
But the whole town doesn't plan to marry him.

CELIA. If the whole town did plan to marry him,
That might prove he was worth considering
As a husband.

MARINA. You wanted our advice and here it is:
Accept Signore Pomposa's proposal, and leave
Giovio to consider in what manner he may
Improve himself to be more worthy of a woman's
Good opinion. For certainly, he does not
Have mine.

TERRESA. Nor mine, my dearest Celia.

(Enter SERIO and POMPOSA.)

SERIO. It seems, my friend, we have come upon
A secret conference among sisters.

POMPOSA. I am sure that it can be no other
Than their satisfaction at our
Impending marriages.

TERRESA. That is some of our topic, but not
The sum of it completely—

MARINA. Giovio has asked our Celia to consider him
In marriage.

POMPOSA. Then mine is not the only offer.

CELIA. I am sorry, Signore Pomposa, but it
Is not.

POMPOSA. Surely, you have not accepted him.

MARINA. No, she has not, and we were at the point
Of counseling her against it, in favor
Of your proposal.

POMPOSA. I am relieved to learn you lean
More to my desires than to his,
Which I would expect.

SERIO. And be certain that when I speak
To Signore Di Lirio, part of my pleading
Will be on your behalf.

TERRESA. Before you speak with my dear father,
There is something you should know.

MARINA. Indeed, there is.

SERIO. If any here are to need
Some counsel, I think you should lend
It to your Timidio, who though
A little late behind us, has finally arrived.

(Enter TIMIDIO.)

MARINA. My darling, Timidio! Why have you
Taken so long? You see that Serio
And Pomposa have been here long
Before you.

TIMIDIO. Dearest, I have been waiting outside,
Standing like a soldier at the front door
For the last ten minutes.

MARINA. For ten minutes? Would no one let you in?

TIMIDIO. No, I was afraid to knock.

MARINA. Certainly, you're not saying you're afraid
To marry me.

TIMIDIO. Certainly not. I am more afraid not
To marry you than anything else.
But I was afraid that if I knocked,
Your father would answer, and if he answered
He would see me, and if he saw me,
He would want to know why I was
There, and if I said "to marry Marina,"
He would say "why," and then what would I say?

MARINA. "Because I love her madly."

SERIO. And be sure, these are the very words
Signore Pomposa and I have come here
To profess regarding my darling Terresa
And her sister.

POMPOSA. Which is more than can be said

For my roguish rival, Giovio.

TERRESA. Yes, where is Giovio? If his proposal

To you had been serious, he would

No doubt have been here by now.

SERIO. Your sister is right. I think the true nature

Of his intention shows itself most

Assuredly in his failure to appear

With us to receive your father's blessing.

MARINA. Very likely another one of his tricks,

And his proposal was meant to make

A fool of you.

POMPOSA. Or of me, by absurdly placing himself

As a competitor for your affections.

CELIA. Perhaps you are right. Still, when we spoke

Earlier today, I was convinced he would

Come to make some overture to Papa.

POMPOSA. That, I am sad to say, is Giovio

Through and through: no one succeeds

As he does, making a person believe

He is doing one thing, so that he can get

The better of him while he does another.

I hope that you will measure my worthiness

By the one deed that matters most—the swift

Determination to stand before your father

And ask his permission to marry you.

Which I will do as soon as you,

Or one of your sisters, will consent

To bring me to him.

SERIO. As will I.

TIMIDIO. And I.

TERRESA. My darling, I gladly will. But you must
Be forewarned. Our father's mind
Is of a very tender disposition.

SERIO. Then he must surely want you to be happy,
And what could make you happier than
Than becoming my wife.

MARINA. And yet Teresa is right, there is something
You should consider before—

(Enter DI LIRIO.)

DI LIRIO. Daughters, my daughters, my darling, darling
daughters!

TERRESA. Yes, Father?

DI LIRIO. Such news. Such wonderful, wonderful news!

MARINA. What is it, Father?

DI LIRIO. O, you shall be so happy! I have just received word
That one of you is to be married.

CELIA. Then you know of it already?

DI LIRIO. I do, my dear, I do.

SERIO. I am honored, sir, that my intentions should
Have reached your ears so quickly and that
You should embrace them with such fervor
And such favor.

DI LIRIO. And, good sir, who are you?

SERIO. I am Signore Bartolo Serio, and I have come
To ask you for the hand of your eldest daughter,
Teresa.

DI LIRIO. Well, I am amazed. Two proposals in one day.

MARINA. Then Father, you must have heard

That Signore Timidio was going to request
My hand of you as well.

(TIMIDIO stands forth and nods almost pleadingly.)

DI LIRIO. No, I had not. Three proposals for three daughters.

And all in a single morning. Astonishing.

(POMPOSA steps forward.)

POMPOSA. Signore, I am glad that my intentions

Toward your daughter, Celia, have sped

Their way so quickly to your understanding.

Be sure of it, I had come here this morning

To strike the bargain in person.

DI LIRIO. And who might you be, sir?

POMPOSA. I am Giovanni Pomposa. The very fellow

You have been speaking of.

DI LIRIO. Sir, you are mistaken. I am speaking of

Someone else entirely. I have been in

Serious conversation with him this last

Half hour about the prospect of wedding

My Celia.

MARINA. Speaking with whom?

TERRESA. And where?

DI LIRIO. In my study. And his name is—

O, I am sure he told me his name. It is—

(Enter GIOVIO.)

POMPOSA. Giovio!

SERIO. Giovio!

CELIA. Signore Giovio!

DI LIRIO. Giovio, that's it. That's it exactly.

(DI LIRIO turns to see GIOVIO in the doorway.)

DI LIRIO *(cont'd)*. O sir, come in. It seems that everybody
Here already knows you.

POMPOSA. This man, sir, is not fit in reputation
Or behavior to be your daughter's husband.
He's known to be the most notorious
Scoundrel in town. Of course,
If my being his rival makes
My opinion suspect, ask any here.
These two gentlemen, and even
Your two eldest daughters, will echo
The same unfortunate estimation of him.

GIOVIO. Of course they will. First of all, because
It is true, Signore. But that should mean
Nothing to you, with the truth being
So variable in nature. Why, it is true that
The wind blows west today, but only last week
It gusted southerly, and very hard too.

DI LIRIO. So it did. I remember it well. It blew
My hat off in the square.

GIOVIO. I have always believed you cannot be too
Careful with the weather. One never knows
What dangers and treacheries await us.

Why, see how it comes upon me here.
Before us stands this gentlemen, Serio,
Well enough in himself, but with his
Best companion Pomposa so near at hand,
Will he speak a kind word for me?
Damnation fall upon him if he does,
To favor another at your friend's expense!
I have some honor, and so must expect
That he can no other but condemn me,
Give ample voice to my several vices,
Hang my name on gossip's gallows
To swing in the very breeze that blew
Your hat from off your reverend head
Last week in the square, for which I pity you,
Sir, I pity you, and hope for this that you
Will pity me.

DI LIRIO. I do, sir. Indeed, I do.

SERIO. This is ridiculous.

GIOVIO. No sir, do not. Think of your eldest.

She is engaged, in love with this very man.
Will she break with her affection and her
Hopes of marriage merely for a solitary
And assuring word that might make me
Shine a moment in your best opinion?
She must not, nor would the faith
I place in love lead me to request it
Of her—no, I would plead with her
To not adulterate her passions for me,

Make light of the man she foolishly
Adores to do me the courtesy of one
Favorable phrase. As unbearable
A pain as it will give me, I know
That from that quarter I can seek
No comfort, sir.

DI LIRIO. You poor soul.

TERRESA. Father!

DI LIRIO. Be quiet, you ungrateful girl.

GIOVIO. As for these others here, what more can I
Expect? Timidio says so little I cannot think
He is possessed of any words that he
Might spare on my behalf. And his beloved,
Your middle daughter, is far too busy
Thinking of herself to think of me.

DI LIRIO. Why, whatever will you do?

GIOVIO. There is but one place that I may go,
Sir, one haven and one heaven that will
Look down upon me, and sing my better
Qualities, see my kinder nature, know
The tenderest of my affections. Of all
The world, when no one will, your daughter,
Celia, the angel of my questionable soul,
Will speak some good of me, say that I
Was reckless, but not wrong, protest
I never said a false thing but for some
True purpose, and never answered to
The devil but to teach him how to pray.

DI LIRIO. She is a good girl, isn't she?

GIOVIO. The very pattern of the cherubim.

But sir, all elements descend from some
First quality, and so I must believe that
All her goodness, which is all that goodness is,
Must by parentage, appear in you
As its original. And so my only hope
Is that the grace of her consent to have
Us married, is but the child of yours
To see it so. I am too much a fool
To ask for anything, yet would be more
Of one did not I ask for this: to have
Your youngest angel for my wife.

DI LIRIO. It is a good request. And I do
Pity you so!

GIOVIO. I thank you, sir. And yet if my love
For Celia has drawn this pity out of you,
As though it were life-giving water
From a well, do not the loves these gentlemen bear
Your other daughters, deserve a similar charity?
Consider us, and say that we, except this fellow here,
May joy to make these ladies our wives,
And ourselves the happiest men alive.

DI LIRIO. This is a great decision, and one that
A man should not lightly enter into.

POMPOSA. No sir, it is not.

DI LIRIO. As worthy as all of you may seem, especially
By the report of good Signore Giovio,
I must defer to the better wisdoms of one
Who knows more of these matters than I.

TERRESA. No, Father, do not.

DI LIRIO. My dear, it would not be right
If I did otherwise.

MARINA. Father, we beg of you. Make your answer now.

DI LIRIO. I am shocked, Marina, that you of all people
Would think to ignore the opinion of one
To whom you owe everything, your very life.

CELIA. Please, Father. I am certain she will agree.

DI LIRIO. Indeed, she may. But it may just as well be
That she will not. I must ask your mother
If she thinks it is right and appropriately timed
That her daughters, and mine, are to be married.

SERIO. Is this all? My dear, why do you worry so?
There is not a mother in the world that does
Not dream to have her daughters married.

TERRESA. Darling, you don't know what you are saying.
I will follow you in everything, if only you
Will let my father make an immediate answer.

MARINA. Father, be you the master of the house,
The ruler of us all, and give us your consent
And do be quick about it.

DI LIRIO. I am shocked that you should slight
Your mother so!

POMPOSA. Indeed, the mother should be asked. How can
Any of us demand it otherwise?

DI LIRIO. My dears, I am glad to see that your suitors
Have a higher opinion of a woman's mind
Than do you.

POMPOSA. Exactly. Now go and ask your wife.

SERIO. Yes. To put this matter to rest once

And for all. Do go and ask her.

TIMIDIO. Yes, do.

DI LIRIO. You are all very kind. I will go and ask.

(Exit DI LIRIO back into the house.)

TERRESA. O, my foolish, darling dear! What have you done?

POMPOSA. Sealed your mother's consent to our marriage.

MARINA. No, you have not.

SERIO. What do you mean? Of course your mother

Will agree to see you married.

GIOVIO. Those that cannot speak, give no consent

To even the best of offers.

CELIA. Our mother died three years ago. You see,

Our father loved her so, that he has refused

To accept it. He imagines her alive

And speaks with her at their old

And customary hours of the day

As if she still were mistress of the house.

TERRESA. I tried to tell you before you spoke with him,

But you were so certain of everything. He will

Go into the drawing room and talk to the air,

And whatever decision he returns with,

Will be his own, born out of his loneliness.

TIMIDIO. It is a gentle madness.

MARINA. And yet its hold on him is strong.

At night, he rarely sleeps, but walks

The terrace here, recounting to our mother

The actions of the day. The windows

To my room open there above, and often
I will come down to him and beg him
Go to bed, for his solitary talks
Keep me from my sleeping nearly
Every night.

POMPOSA. He will consent to the marriages.

I am sure of it. Excepting Giovio's
To Celia. Your father's thoughts are
Clear enough to see what a scoundrel
The match would leave him for a son-in-law.

(Enter DI LIRIO, half muttering.)

DI LIRIO. Very well, my dear. Very well. Your reasonings
Are clear and I understand them absolutely.
Well, my daughters, and kind gentlemen,
I have your answer.

SERIO. Your wife is pleased with our proposals?

DI LIRIO. I never thought any news could please her
Half as well.

POMPOSA. And she approves of Serio, Timidio and myself.

DI LIRIO. And Signore Giovio. She thinks you all as fine
A set of suitors as the city could provide.

MARINA. And she agrees that we should marry?

DI LIRIO. Never had it in her mind that you would not.

CELIA. Then she will let us marry.

DI LIRIO. No, my dear. I am afraid that she will not.

You are too young, she says, and will not
Send you out into the world so soon.
Why Teresa, you are but seventeen.

TERRESA. But Papa, I am twenty.

DI LIRIO. Seventeen is far too young. So your mother

Says, and by my faith in heaven, she is always
Right, is she not dear, Celia?

CELIA. You have always believed it that she was.

DI LIRIO. You are a good girl, Celia. As are the two

Of you, my dears. And for you, good gentlemen,
I regret that I must disappoint you in your hopes,
But as you can see, the decision is made.

Good luck to you.

(Exit DI LIRIO.)