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## **Family Plays**

# **THE WONDERFUL TANG**

BOOK BY  
**BEAUMONT BRUESTLE**

INCIDENTAL MUSIC BY  
**CHARLES SWIER**

# THE WONDERFUL TANG

***Comedy. Book by Beaumont Bruestle. Incidental music by Charles Swier. Cast: 8m., 6w., with doubling, or up to 25+ (9m., 9w., 7+ either gender). This is an original play produced in a stylized Chinese manner. The comedy is built around the fantastic tale of three suitors who come to prove their prowess in order to win the hand of the emperor's daughter. Fleeing with the suitor of her choice—the unpretentious student, Tang—the princess is pursued by the emperor's army. She is welcomed back when Tang is able to subdue the fierce dragon of the Khan of Tartary by twisting its tail. Novel, deadpan comedy is provided by a property man and the chorus. Single set. Bare stage with movable Chinese properties. Chinese costumes. Approximate running time: 45 minutes. Music in book. Code: WD7.***

## Family Plays

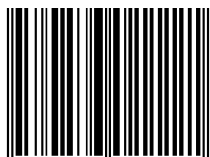
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The Wonderful Tang

# **The Wonderful Tang**

A play in the Chinese manner

by

BEAUMONT BRUESTLE

With incidental music by Charles Swier

**Family Plays**

311 Washington St., Woodstock, IL 60098

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## CAST

PROPERTY MAN

CHORUS

THE EMPEROR TSO-TSO

MADAM TSO—his Empress

FU-TSE—the oldest Princess

LU-TSE—the middle Princess

SU-TSE—the youngest Princess

FOUR ATTENDANTS

THE SHAH OF PERSIA

TWO PERSIAN SLAVES—may be played by girls or women

THE KHAN OF TARTARY

TANG—a student

CHI CHI—Fu-Tse's maid

PING-WING—Su-Tse's maid

AH-NO—the royal court wrestler

THE DRAGON

FOUR SOLDIERS

TWO TARTAR GUARDS—played by the same actors who play the  
Persian Slaves

SCENE—wherever the CHORUS tells us it is.

## THE WONDERFUL TANG

### ACT ONE

SCENE: *A bare stage hung with drapes, sides and back.*

ON RISE: *The curtain is up when the audience comes into the theatre. Shortly before the time for the play to begin the Property Man comes on down the aisle, laden with all his properties, cushions, gongs, and so on—excepting the seats for the royal family which are already piled beside the proscenium. He goes to his place at the side of the proscenium arch, L., puts down cushions, picks up his largest gong and gives it a mighty thump. Then he lights a cigarette, sits down and leans against the proscenium and smokes. But he is not bored. Immediately a perky little person in a long robe comes out from the back of the stage, U.L., trots to the front of the stage and bows to the audience. He is the Chorus.*

CHORUS: Good evening, delightful and gracious people who sit before me. This evening this theatre is China and you are in China. Just look around you and you will see that you are surrounded by Chinese. The stage on which I stand at the moment, will be any part of China we wish it to be. Just now it happens to be—(*The Property Man beckons the Chorus.*) What is it? (*The Property Man repeats his gesture. Crosses to the Property Man, a little irritably.*) Yes?

PROPERTY MAN (*Pulls Chorus down gently and whispers in his ear.*)

CHORUS: Oh, thank you. (*He straightens up, crosses center and with a flourish of his fan starts again.*) Our Property Man reminded me to tell you who I am. I often forget to tell an audience who I am because I take it for granted everybody knows me by this time. I am the

Chorus. Without me there wouldn't be any play, because I'm supposed to explain to you anything you don't understand. Anything you don't understand and I don't explain, you weren't supposed to understand in the first place. (*He flourishes his fan*). That reminds me of a story. Once upon a time there was an old merchant who had a faithless wife—

PROPERTY MAN (*wags at the Chorus to attract his attention.*)

CHORUS: Now, what is it?

PROPERTY MAN (*Wiggles his fingers impatiently, meaning "get on with the play"*)

CHORUS: Oh yes, of course, that story has nothing to do with this play. Well, I said before that the stage was any part of China that we want it to be. At the moment it is the throne room in the palace of the great Emperor Tso-Tso. You'll meet him in a minute. Now, over there you can see the throne of the Emperor Tso-Tso. It was brought here years ago from Persia at great expense. (*Property Man puts out his cigarette, picks up a high stool and places it stage L. to represent throne.*) Next to it is the somewhat less elaborate but equally beautiful throne of the Empress Madam Tso. (*Property Man places a slightly shorter one for the Empress.*) Next to those two sit the thrones of the three daughters of the Emperor Tso-Tso and his Empress. The eldest, Fu-Tse. Just between you and me, she's a fright. The second eldest, Lu-Tse, a lovely girl but with a kind of second-eldest air about her. And the youngest, Su-Tse. (*He sighs.*) Such a charming girl. (*Property Man places stools for all three, the shortest being for Su-Tse.*) But here comes the Emperor and we can begin. Good-bye for a while. (*He flourishes his fan, bows, starts upstage; the Property Man glides after him, puts stool under him just as he sits.*) Just one moment, please. (*This as the Property Man starts back to his place. The Property Man turns back, pulls Chinese newspaper out of blouse and gives it to Chorus to read.*) Thank you. *Property Man goes back to place; Chorus reads*);

(Music: Tso-Tso Theme.)

(*The Emperor Tso-Tso comes on. He is a large, kindly man, in brilliant costume, his face painted to indicate large kindliness.*)

TSO-TSO: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. Let me introduce myself. I am the Emperor Tso-Tso, ruler of the vast and wonderful kingdom of China. I have been blessed, I have been told, with a beautiful wife, the Empress Madam Tso. (*There is a terrible clatter off-stage, R.*) Yes, yes, dear; I'm telling them about you now.—Also, I have three daughters, all beautiful. The eldest, Fu-Tse, is very, very beautiful and I'm a little afraid of her. The second eldest Lu-Tse is married. Her husband is my general, Wu; a husband sufficient unto the day, and like most generals, hardly more than adequate. The little one, Sue-Tse.—(*he sighs adoringly.*)—you shall judge for yourself.—Now, if you don't mind, I'll sit down and we can get on with the play.

*(He bows, and retires to the throne, and sits.)*

(Music: Madam Tso Theme.)

*(The Empress, Madam Tso, comes on and goes to the front of stage—she is elaborately dressed and painted like a determined woman.)*

MADAM TSO *(To audience, after she has bowed to it just a little condescendingly)*: I am Madam Tso, wife of his august highness, the Emperor Tso-Tso. It is said he rules China, but you may watch and see for yourself. I also have three beautiful daughters. The eldest, Fu-Tse, is very, *very* beautiful and quite wonderful. She takes after me. The second, Lu-Tse, is beautiful and has succeeded in getting herself a husband, tho he's probably the stupidest man in the world. The youngest is nothing but a child and takes after her father, but she may outgrow it. *(She bows again, crosses up to chair next to Tso-Tso and sits.)*

TSO-TSO—Good morning, my darling.

MADAM TSO: Good morning, my dear.

TSO-TSO: Did you sleep well?

MADAM TSO: I certainly did not. I tossed and turned all night.

TSO-TSO: I am so—

MADAM TSO: Of course, you slept like a rock. You don't care whether your daughters have husbands or not.

TSO-TSO: My very beautiful daughter, Lu-Tse, has a husband, the excellent General Wu.

MADAM TSO: She has and he's a dunce.—But your very, *very* beautiful daughter, Fu-Tse, hasn't any husband at all.

TSO-TSO: That may be her own fault. If she were a little sweeter—

MADAM TSO: She's as sweet as a woman can be without being a fool.

Anyway, I've decided that the lady Fu-Tse must have a husband.

TSO-TSO: Here she comes with her sisters now. Let's hear what she has to say about it.

MADAM TSO: I know perfectly well what she has to say about it. She agrees with me.

(Music: Fu-Tse, Lu-Tse Theme.)

*(Fu-Tse, something of a fright with one tooth blackened out, comes in R. and down front.)*

FU-TSE *(To audience, after bowing)*: I am Fu-Tse, Princess of China, and one of the most beautiful women in the world, if not the most beautiful. *(She bows, goes up to her father and mother and bows again.)* Good morning, Father; good morning, Mother. *(She sits.)*

(Music: Fu-Tse, Lu-Tse Theme.)

*(Lu-Tse, very pretty, comes in R., and comes down front.)*

LU-TSE *(after bowing to audience)*: I am Lu-Tse, the second eldest daughter, at your service. I am married to a very good husband and therefore you won't have to worry about me at all. *(She bows again, then goes up to her father and mother and bows again.)* Good morning, Father; good morning, Mother. *(She sits.)*

(Music: Su-Tse Theme.)

(*Su-Tse, pretty and charming, comes in R. and down front.*)

SU-TSE (*After bowing to audience*): I am Su-Tse, the youngest daughter, and as yet my family doesn't quite know what I'm like. I am at your service, and I hope you will like me. Thank you very much. (*She bows and goes up to her father and mother, bows again*). Good morning, Father; good morning, Mother. (*She sits.*)

MADAM TSO: My dearest daughters, your father, the Emperor of China, and I are going to discuss your futures.

LU-TSE: I have a future; I'm married.

MADAM TSO (*Drily*): Yes, I know.

FU-TSE: MY future is the one that needs discussing.

TSO-TSO: Shall we have tea first? (*Claps his hands.*)

(Music: Su-Tse Theme.)

(*Property Man gets up and brings an imaginary cup of tea which he hands to Su-Tse, who hands it to Lu-Tse, who hands it to Fu-Tse, who hands it to Madam Tso, who hands it to Tso-Tso- who drinks.*)  
Delicious. (*Hands cup to Madam Tso; she drinks.*)

MADAM TSO: Too strong. (*Hands it to Fu-Tse; she drinks.*)

FU-TSE: Too strong. (*Hands it to Lu-Tse; she drinks.*)

LU-TSE: Delicious; but a little strong. (*Hands it to Su-Tse; she drinks.*)

SU-TSE: Oh, how nice. (*Hands cup to Property Man.*)

(Music: General Wu Theme.)

(*At this moment, General Wu comes on R. and down front. He is tall with a comically blank face.*)

GENERAL WU: I am the illustrious General Wu, victor of victors, husband of the very beautiful Lu-Tse, at your service. (*He bows, turns and sees cup.*) Ah, tea! (*Property Man starts to hand cup to Wu.*)

MADAM TSO: It's bad for your digestion. (*Wu, his hands out for cup, is frozen for a moment, then Property Man takes cup back to his place and sits.*)

WU (*Crossing to Emperor and Empress*): Good morning, Father-in-law; good morning, Mother-in-law. (*Bows.*)

MADAM TSO: We are about to discuss the marriage of our daughter, Fu-Tse.

WU: Ah, did you find her a husband at last?

MADAM TSO (*Severely*): Sit down. (*Wu sits; Property Man tosses him cushion which arrives under him just as he reaches the floor.*)

TSO-TSO: Fu-Tse, your mother thinks it's high time you had a husband and so do I.

FU-TSE: I bow to your wishes. I think I should have a husband, too. Who is it to be?

TSO-TSO: I haven't any ideas yet, but—

WU: What about the Shah of Persia.

MADAM TSO (*Thunderously*): Be silent and listen to his august Maj-

*esty. (Cooing.)* What about the Shah of Persia?

TSO-TSO: He has seventeen wives, now. I don't think he'd be in the market for another.

MADAM TSO: There's the Khan of Afghanistan.

TSO-TSO: He hasn't any money. We'd have to support him.

LU-TSE (*Innocently*): It's one way of getting a husband, august Father.

MADAM TSO (*Looking at Wu who squirms uncomfortably*): One experience is enough.—What about the Prince of Tibet?

TSO-TSO: He was swallowed last week by a two-headed dragon.—I forget which head.

MADAM TSO: Well, there must be somebody.

FU-TSE: I don't see why you're acting as if nobody wanted me. Or as if I weren't a prize for somebody. I think you're being perfectly awful.

MADAM TSO: Darling, you know there's nobody quite good enough for you. That's why we can't decide on anyone.

FU-TSE: Well, I wish you would and get it over.

SU-TSE: August Father, may I make a suggestion?

TSO-TSO: Certainly, my darling.

MADAM TSO (*To audience*): You probably see now which daughter always gets her own way.

SU-TSE: Why don't we have a contest for the hand of Fu-Tse? Let young men come from all corners of the earth to win her hand?

MADAM TSO: Preposterous!

FU-TSE: Am I prize in a lottery?

MADAM TSO: Darling daughter, you are the most delectable prize in the world.

FU-TSE: Oh, that's different.

MADAM TSO: However, I have no intention of letting such a thing happen.

SU-TSE: It's only a suggestion.

WU: I think—

MADAM TSO: Silence! (*They've all become a little noisy at this point.*)

TSO-TSO: Very well, very well; we'll have no argument. Let's forget the whole thing until some great prince suitable for the hand of Fu-Tse just comes along.

FU-TSE (*Irritably*): We'll do nothing of the sort. I like the idea of a contest.

MADAM TSO: So do I. The more I think of it the better I like it.

TSO-TSO: My dear, I thought you objected?

MADAM TSO: I changed my mind.

TSO-TSO: Very well; let us arrange for the contest at once. (*Claps hands.*) Attendants! (*Four attendants appear—two from each side—bow on either side of throne.*)

ATTENDANTS: Your august and magnificent Majesty, we are at your service.

TSO-TSO: Proceed to the four corners of the earth and announce to one

and all that there is to be a great contest and that the hand of my daughter shall be given to the winner.

FOUR ATTENDANTS: It is done. (*The Four Attendants go to the four corners of the stage and blow a simultaneous fanfare on Kazoos, ending on a wonderful sour note; they then turn, face each other, bow, return to the Emperor and bow.*) It is done.

TSO-TSO: Good. (*Four Attendants bow and go to doors U. R.*)

MADAM TSO: Now that everything has been done exactly contrary to my wishes, shall we retire?

TSO-TSO (*Looks at her in amazement, is about to say something, then changes his mind*): Let us retire.

(*Music: Tso-Tso Theme.*)

(*They all rise. Tso-Tso comes to front of stage and bows, then goes out R.; Madam Tso comes to front of stage and bows, then goes out R.; three daughters come down, bow, then go out. Wu comes down front, bows and speaks.*)

WU: I don't think this is going to turn out well at all. (*He goes out; Four Attendants follow.*) (*Chorus puts down his paper and comes flying forward.*)

CHORUS: General Wu had no business saying anything to you. (*To Property Man who is busy removing the chairs that were thrones.*) See to it that he's fined two cents when the performance is over. (*Property Man nods with pleasure and sits down.*) Now, I suppose you want to know what that fanfare was you just heard. Well, it said—HEAR YE, HEAR YE, men of the world. The hand of the Princess Fu-Tse of China will be given to the man who wins the contest of the Feast of Lanterns in the great courtyard of the royal palace of the Emperor Tso-Tso. Three contests in one he must win: the contest of strength; the contest of skill, and the contest of art!—Now to get on with the play. You will next see three roads to the Royal City and three of the suitors who are coming to contest for the hand of the Princess Fu-Tse. However, I still think she's a fright and I'm certainly glad I don't have to get involved in the contest myself. (*Chorus bows and retires.*) (*Property Man strikes gong.*)

(*Music: Shah Theme.*)

(*The young, handsome Shah of Persia comes on down left, riding in his palanquin. He walks with a jiggling movement, as do his Two Persian Slaves, front and back, indicating that the Shah is riding and the slaves are carrying.*)

SHAH OR PERSIA (*Circles stage and comes to a halt, stage centers*): Slaves, put me down. (*This with great haughtiness. The Two Persian Slaves pretend to lower palanquin, and Shah steps out. After bowing rather condescendingly to the audience*): Ladies and gentlemen, I have just stepped out of my gold and jeweled palanquin in order to explain to you who I am. I am Agga-Khar, the Shah

of Persia, and I am on my way to the Royal City of Tso-Tso to sue—I beg your pardon—to sue for the hand of the very, *very* beautiful Princess Fu-Tse. I am wonderful at almost everything, and as you can see I am also very handsome. Therefore, I shall undoubtedly win the hand of the very, *very* beautiful Princess Fu-Tse without half trying. It's such a bore.—Of course, it's true that I have eighteen wives already; but I think it would be all so much less boring if I had one more. And now, if you don't mind, I shall continue my journey to the Royal City. *(He bows and turns.)* Ah, I see the gates of the Royal City in the distance. *(He points up left.)* Slaves, on to the gates of the Royal City of the Emperor Tso-Tso. *(He steps back into palanquin.)* *(Slaves pretend to pick up palanquin and carry it up left where they set it down and front Slave pantomimes knocking on gate while Property Man knocks on floor of stage to make actual sound. Slaves then pick up palanquin and march with it through gate.)*

CHORUS *(Looking up from newspaper)*: There wasn't anything about that you couldn't understand, was there?—Good, we'll go on. *(Goes on reading newspaper.)*

*(Music: Khan Theme.)*

*(The Khan of Tartary comes on, R., a fierce man on an imaginary fierce horse. He is fiercely dressed with fur on his gown and lots of fierce paint on his face. He rides furiously on his horse and carries a tasseled stick. He also carries up his sleeve a great red handkerchief.)*

KHAN OF TARTARY *(Riding horse round and round, and stopping R. C.)* Whoa! *(He dismounts, pats horse, comes down C., and bows to audience. Bellowing)*: Ladies and gentlemen! I am the terrible Khan of Tartary, much admired for my fierceness. Everyone almost trembles before me. *(He laughs ferociously)*: I am on my way to the Royal City of Tso-Tso to make the very, very beautiful Princess Fu-Tse, who is also I am told very rich, my bride. I haven't any special talent, but I expect to win the Princess just the same. I'll let you in on a little secret. I have here a red handkerchief that can turn into—guess what?—a dragon! If they refuse to give me the Princess Fu-Tse, who is both very, *very* beautiful and rich, I will let my handkerchief become—a dragon! *(He laughs ferociously)* I shall now let my horse bear me to the gates of the Royal City of Tso-Tso. *(He nods to the audience, then mounts horse.)* Away! *(He gallops up left, stops, leans forward on his horse, knocks on gate in pantomime while Property Man knocks on piece of wood. Then he gallops through gate.)*

*(Tang comes on, D. L., and straight to C., and bows to audience.)*

*(Music: Tang Theme. (Beginning of Princess' Song.)*

TANG: I am Tang, and I have just come from school in the provinces. I have heard that there is to be a great contest in the Royal City of the Emperor Tso-Tso, for the hand of his very, *very* beautiful daughter Fu-Tse, the Princess Royal of China. I don't know whether I'd



like the Princess or not, but nothing ventured nothing gained. I have no great accomplishments, but I can sing songs and therefore I do not *have* to marry a Princess. Now, if you don't object, I would like to sing you one of my songs.

SONG: In the spring

Love comes;  
Love comes  
In the spring.  
And the whole  
Year long  
It's a beautiful  
Thing  
That loves comes  
In the spring,  
In the spring.

That is all now. I must go on my journey because I still have a long way to walk to the Royal City of the Emperor Tso-Tso. I hope to be of service to you. (*He bows to audience and walks around the stage once, then knocks on gate, U. L. in pantomime, while Property Man knocks on piece of wood or stage floor. Then Tang goes through the gate and off, U. L.*) (*Chorus comes down front.*)

CHORUS: I don't suppose it's my place to say anything, but I thought that was a charming song. However, we again change our scene and if you look very close you will see that we are now in the great courtyard of the Royal Palace of the Emperor Tso-Tso. This is the great day of the contest for the hand of the very, *very* beautiful Princess Fu-Tse. (*The Property Man sets a circle of chairs up center or slightly left of center.*) The Royal courtyard is a blaze of glory as you can see, lighted as it is with hundreds of lanterns of gem-like loveliness. (*The Property Man pantomimes hanging up a lantern.*) The paths to the Royal courtyards are strewn with chrysanthemums. (*The Property Man pantomimes strewing chrysanthemums.*) And the Royal stoves are steaming with the foods of welcome. If you take a good, deep breath you can smell all the delicious odors. (*He takes a great whiff.*) That reminds me of a story. There was once a cook in the land of Persia—(*The Property Man snaps his fingers at the Chorus to get on.*) Very well, I won't tell that story.—And now to go on with this play. The very, *very* beautiful Princess Fu-Tse is dressed in her most gorgeous clothes and comes now into the courtyard. (*To Property Man*): Let us begin again. (*Chorus bows to audience and retires upstage to his newspaper.*) (*Property Man strikes gong.*) (*The Princess Fu-Tse, comes on, R., and moves toward center.*)

(Music: Fu-Tse Theme)

FU-TSE (*Confidentially*): This is the day of the contest for my hand. My father says I am to marry the man who wins the contest. I'm not at all sure that I like that idea. (*Chi-Chi, Fu-Tse's maid, comes on R.*)

CHI-CHI (*Bowing to audience*): I am the maid of the very, very beautiful Princess Fu-Tse, and I am your humble servant. (*Bows to Princess*) Illustrious Princess, you have forgot your jeweled pins. (*Holds out imaginary jewelled pins to Fu-Tse.*)

FU-TSE: So I did, Chi-Chi. I must be more excited than I thought.

CHI-CHI (*Putting imaginary jeweled pins in Fu-Tse's hair*): Oh, I'm terribly excited. Suppose it were the Shah of Persia. Then you'd be a Shahess.

FU-TSE: No; I think I'd be the Sultana.

CHI-CHI: Shaheen?

FU-TSE: No.

CHI-CHI: Lady Shah?

FU-TSE (*Annoyed*): I think it would be the Sultana.

CHI-CHI: Well, it wouldn't matter; just as long as he were the Shah. (*Giving hair a final touch.*) You're so beautiful.

FU-TSE: Yes, I think I look unusually handsome today.

(*Madam TSO comes on, R.*)

(Music: Madam TSO's Theme.)

MADAM TSO (*Grandly*): My daughter, the Princess Fu-Tse, is the most beautiful princess in the world.—Chi-Chi, you may go and fetch me something.

CHI-CHI (*Bowing very low*): Yes, your Majesty. What, your Majesty?

MADAM TSO: For goodness' sake, anything; but get it now.

CHI-CHI: Yes, your Majesty. (*She bows and goes out, U. R.*)

MADAM TSO (*As soon as she's certain Chi-Chi has gone*): Now, my daughter, I must speak to you.

FU-TSE: Yes, gracious Mother, what about?

MADAM TSO: This silly idea of your father's.

FU-TSE: But, Mother, suppose I should become the wife of the Shah of Persia?

MADAM TSO: Nothing could be better. But I won't have you the wife of some common good-for-nothing.

FU-TSE: What shall we do if some common good-for-nothing wins?

MADAM TSO: Nothing, today.—But on the day of the wedding we'll simply have him thrown down a well.

FU-TSE: How wonderful of you to say that. I'd thought of it already.

MADAM TSO: You're your own mother's own daughter.—Here comes your father; not a word about this to him.

(Music: Tso-Tso Theme.)

(*Madam Tso and Fu-Tse bow as Tso-Tso, elegantly dressed, comes on R., followed by Two Attendants, then by Lu-Tse and General Wu; lastly by Su-Tse and her maid, Ping-Wing. Tso-Tso moves around stage to his throne and stands.*)

TSO-TSO: Come, illustrious wife, sit on my right hand. (*Madam Tso comes to throne beside Tso-Tso.*) Daughter Fu-Tse, sit in the seat of honor at my left hand. (*Fu-Tse comes to R of Tso-Tso.*)

SU-TSE (*To audience, as she passes front*): This is my maid, Ping-Wing. Isn't she pretty? (*Ping-Wing bows to audience.*)

TSO-TSO: Now let us all sit and await the beginning of the contest. (*The Royal Family sits. L. to R. Wu; Lu-Tse; Fu-Tse; Tso-Tso; Madam Tso; Su-Tse. Ping-Wing on cushion beside Su-Tse.*) (*Attendants stand at either side of family.*)

(*Chi-Chi hurries on R. and crosses behind Madam Tso.*)

CHI-CHI (*holding out imaginary comb*): Here is the comb you wanted me to fetch you.

MADAM TSO: Comb? What comb?—Oh yes, of course. (*Snatches comb and puts it in back of headdress. Chi-Chi sits on cushion to L. of Wu.*)

TSO-TSO (*To audience*): How suspicious my wife seems. I wonder if she's been up to something?

WU (*To Lu-Tse*): We are not in a place of great honor.

LU-TSE: Ssh!

TSO-TSO (*To all*): Are we ready for the contest?

ALL: Yes, illustrious Father or Emperor.

TSO-TSO: Good. (*Claps hands.*) Attendants! (*Attendants step forward.*)

ATTENDANTS: Yes, your Majesty.

TSO-TSO: Strike the great gong.

ATTENDANTS: Yes, your Majesty. (*They pantomime striking gong; Property Man strikes one of his gongs. Attendants bow and retire; Two Other Attendants come on, bow.*)

OTHER ATTENDANTS: Your Majesty, the contestants are ready and await your summons.

MADAM TSO: Are they all coming on at once?

FU-TSE: I never thought of that.

WU: I would suggest—

MADAM TSO: Nonsense.

SU-TSE: Why not see all at once so that we don't like one more than another before they contest?

TSO-TSO: That's a very good idea.

MADAM TSO (*To Audience*): Any thing she suggests he agrees to.

WU (*To audience*): Anything I suggest nobody agrees to.

TSO-TSO (*To Attendants*): Let the contestants be summoned.

FIRST ATTENDANT: Your Majesty, there are 1600 of them.

TSO-TSO: Let them come in. (*Chorus rises and comes down front.*)

CHORUS: I think I ought to point out to you that although there are 1600

contestants, you will only see three. It's something like the story of the director who when he only had six actors with which to represent an army—*Property Man whams the gong.*) But we must get on with the play. *(He retires.) (Four Attendants move stage L. and call.)*

ATTENDANTS: His gracious Majesty, the Emperor Tso-Tso, will see the contestants for the hand of his daughter, the very very beautiful Princess Fu-Tse! *(They retire.)*

(Music: March of the Suitors.)

(MUSIC—a brief march—while the contestants enter and march around stage. They are the Shah of Persia, the Khan of Tartary and Tang. All three stop finally before the Emperor and Empress, bow to them and stand R. of the royal family.)

TSO-TSO (*Nodding to them*): You are all welcome, gracious gentlemen. Will the first contestant step forth! *(The Shah of Persia steps forth; the other two retire a step or two.)*

ATTENDANTS: Your gracious Majesty, the first contestant is his supreme highness, the Shah of Persia.

WU: There, what did I tell you. I knew it would be the Shah or Persia.

MADAM TSO (*Annihilating him with a word.*) Silence!

SHAH OF PERSIA (*To Madam Tso*): Thank you, Madam. *(He bows low)*: Your Majesties; having heard of the beauties of your daughter, the celestial Princess Fu-Tse—which is she?

FU-TSE (*Rising imperially*): I am the Princess Fu-Tse. *(She sits.)*

SHAH OF PERSIA (*Momentarily knocked off his base*): I—I—I—Celestial Princess, I see the stories told about you are all true.—Your Majesties, having heard of your generous offer, I have come to contest for the hand of the very, very beautiful Princess Fu-Tse.

SU-TSE (*To audience*): You'd think my sister was a piece of merchandise.

SHAH OF PERSIA: I am ready.

TSO-TSO: The first, most excellent Shah of Persia, is a contest of strength. *(To Attendants)*: Let the Royal Wrestler, Ah-No, be summoned. *(Two Attendants go out, R.) (To Shah)*: You'd better take off your over-tunic; it might get dirty.

SHAH OF PERSIA (*Stiffly*): Thank you. *(Property Man comes forward and takes off outer tunic of the Shah of Persia.) (Two Attendants come back, R., with the great, burly, genial-looking Royal Wrestler Ah-No.)*

ATTENDANTS (*Bow*): Your Majesty, the Royal Wrestler, Ah-No.

TSO-TSO: Ah-No, you know your duty. We are an honorable emperor and wish everything to be fair. No tickling.

AH-NO (*Bows low*) *(An Attendant crosses to him and gives him a wrestling stick with which he performs all his wrestling sequences.)*

TSO-TSO: Good. Let me present the first contestant, the Shah of Persia—a renowned wrestler, I am told. *(Sits.)* I am ready. *(Ah-No and the Shah of Persia circle each other several times; grapple, break, grapple. The spectators indicate their interest and excitement. Fi-*