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*Dramatic Publishing*



# **THE SINGER IN THE WHITE PAJAMAS**

**by**

**Louis Phillips**



**The Dramatic Publishing Company**

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(THE SINGER IN THE WHITE PAJAMAS)

ISBN 0-37129-090-1

# **THE SINGER IN THE WHITE PAJAMAS**

**A Play in One Act  
For Three Men and One Women**

## **CHARACTERS**

**THE SINGER  
MAN  
WOMAN  
WAITER**

**TIME:** The recent present.

**PLACE:** Tangier.

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## THE SINGER IN THE WHITE PAJAMAS

AS THE CURTAIN OPENS: *A simple set: a round wrought-iron table with two or three matching chairs in the shadows downstage, and a single wrought-iron balcony, bathed in white light. A large man, THE SINGER, wearing white pajamas, is entering through the French doors onto the balcony. He sings the opening aria to Gounod's Faust.*

### THE SINGER.

Rien!—En vain j'interroge, en mon ardente veille,  
La nature et le Créateur;  
Pas une voix ne glissé à mon oreille  
Un mot consolateur!  
J'ai languì triste et solitaire,  
J'ai languì triste et solitaire,  
Sans pouvoir briser le lien  
Qui m'attache encore à la terre!—  
Je ne vois rien!—Je ne sais rien!—rien!—rien!  
Le ciel palit!—Devant l'aube nouvelle  
La sombre nuit  
S'évanouit!—  
Encore un jour!—encore un jour qui luit!—  
O mort, quant viendras-tu m'arbitrer sous ton aile?  
Eh bien! puisque la mort me fuit,

Pourquoi n'irais-je pas vers elle?  
Salut! O mon dernier matin!  
J'arrive sans terreur au terme du voyage;  
Et je suis, avec ce breuvage,  
Le seul maître de mon destin!  
Je suis, je suis, avec ce breuvage,  
Le seul maître de mon destin!

*(At the conclusion of the aria, the SINGER walks backward through the doors. From offstage we hear the voices of a MAN and WOMAN, who enter below as the balcony doors close. The MAN, somewhere in his forties, is dressed in a sports jacket, shirt, tie, and lightweight pants. He carries a 35mm camera. The WOMAN, in her late thirties, is wearing an old-fashioned, long summer dress. She carries a parasol and appears to have stepped out of another age. The stage brightens. As the scene progresses, we become increasingly aware of marketplace sounds, vendors' cries, a call to prayers, the sound of animals—birds, camels, dogs, etc.)*

MAN. What did I tell you? Didn't I tell you?

WOMAN *(slightly bored)*. You told me.

MAN. Once a year that man steps forth onto his balcony and sings that same melancholy aria.

WOMAN. It's too early in the morning for opera.

MAN. You saw him. You heard him.

WOMAN. But why? Why does he do it?

MAN. I have no idea.

WOMAN *(with impatience)*. No, of course not. That would be too much to expect.

MAN. I thought you would enjoy it.

WOMAN. Before breakfast?

MAN. This is the best time of the day to enjoy the city, before the heat overwhelms us.

WOMAN. Enjoy the city? What a joke.

MAN. I saw him three years ago in Venice. He did the exact same thing. He came out on a balcony overlooking the Grand Canal and sang that aria from *Faust*.

WOMAN. A cheerful note to start the day. Please! My head is splitting.

MAN (*not listening*). And then he stepped back inside. I approached the house to inquire about his identity, but his housekeeper refused to let me inside—refused to answer any of my questions. I asked who *she* was—no reply. Very mysterious. And then, one year to the day, I happened to be going on an early morning errand, and he stepped forth again. Clad only in white pajamas, he stood upon his balcony overlooking the canal and launched into his aria. I halted my gondola and listened. (*He takes out a small black notebook.*) I made a note of it in my book. One year to the day. So if twice, then why not thrice?

WOMAN. If thrice, why not eternity? I imagine Eternity to be such a city as this—without the buildings, without the people, without the smells, without the light, without the noise...

MAN (*still not listening*). The third year, again he appeared. And so this year, when I read that he had left the city, I followed him here.

WOMAN. The Garden Spot of the World.

MAN. We shall go back tomorrow if you want.

WOMAN (*sighs*). Tomorrow?

MAN. Tomorrow.

WOMAN. If you read that he had abandoned Venice, then you know his name.

MAN. I learned his name after that first year. I am not one to remain in the dark for long.

WOMAN. You kissed me on our first date.

MAN. I am impatient, a curious fellow.

WOMAN. Curiosity killed the cat...but it would have died anyway. *(Pause.)* So who is this singer who leads your burning curiosity from city to city?

MAN. Do you care?

WOMAN. Make me care.

MAN. Yes, that is life isn't it? Making people care for other people or for events that they could live without. God said, "Let there be light." And then He said, "Make me care. Make me care!"

WOMAN. And what did man do to make God care?

MAN. He murdered.

WOMAN. A lovely solution.

MAN. A lonely solution, but it never fails to work wonders.

WOMAN. Are you suggesting that this man you follow year to year is a murderer?

MAN. There are rumors.

WOMAN. But who is he?

MAN. Dr. Westermann. Emile Westermann.

WOMAN. The Patron of La Scala?

MAN. The very one.

WOMAN. The fierce womanizer?...the authority on myth?

MAN. The very one.

WOMAN *(not without sarcasm)*. The very, very, very one?  
MAN *(smiling)*. The same. So you see, it is no problem to keep track of his movements, is it?

WOMAN. I should say not.



MAN. But why *Faust*? Is it because he is enamored of the devil? A man like him must find the devil of great interest.

WOMAN. You might as well ask, why in his pajamas? Is it because of all his womanizing? And why here?

MAN. Perhaps his neighbors in Venice turned upon him. It cannot be much fun to be awakened in the morning by your neighbor singing from his balcony.

WOMAN. In his pajamas.

MAN. You act as if he were singing nude.

WOMAN. But still...is this what you dragged me here for? To watch a man sing opera from his balcony. Why, we could have stayed home and listened to professionals.

MAN. But now that he has left Venice, he is more vulnerable, don't you see?

WOMAN. He is not the only one. (*The MAN turns his attention to the balcony.*)

MAN. He is not the only one what?

WOMAN. Vulnerable. We too are uprooted.

MAN. But this year I shall not be turned away. I shall wait him out. I shall sit here until he ventures outdoors, and then I shall go up to him and tell him who I am.

WOMAN. Yes. That will impress him.

MAN. My name will mean nothing to him, of course, but I shall make him acknowledge the fact of my existence—that I am the only person in the world who has been privileged to hear him perform four times. Three times in Venice, and this morning in Tangier.

WOMAN (*laughing*). Privileged? You used the word *privileged*.

MAN. And what word would you use? (*The WOMAN crosses to her HUSBAND and kisses him.*)

WOMAN. My darling, you are so easily impressed.

MAN. But I am not.

WOMAN. Of course you are. All men are. That's why men think about sex all the time, because they are so impressionable. Ever since I've known you, you have given the impression that everything that happens to you, to us, is a gift.

MAN. Is that a flaw?

WOMAN. Insofar that it has nothing to do with reality, it is a flaw.

MAN. Well, you must admit that this is a very unusual thing for someone to do.

WOMAN. That once a year, in celebration of some kind of anniversary, a man steps forth upon his balcony to sing? Oh no, my sweet, what is truly unusual is that you have discovered the fact.

MAN. By accident.

WOMAN. However. And from my point of view, what is even more unusual is that I have allowed you to wake me up before dawn to share the experience with you. Oh, no—you are the extraordinary one, not him.

MAN. Two sides to the event: the event itself, and the one who discovers the event. The one who *does*, and the one who looks upon what is done.

WOMAN. Or is not done.

MAN. Which means?

WOMAN. Which means that if a man is going to sing about killing himself, then he ought to step inside and do it. But to drag one's despair—if that is what it is—over four years and into two cities, then I say the act of singing about death loses all its charm.

MAN. A ritual whose roots have been lost.

WOMAN. Whatever, but I see no sense in making it more than it is.