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Dramatic Publishing

Maurice Hennequin and Pierre Veber's

Anything to Declare?

A chaotic and wacky farce

Translated and adapted by Greg Leaming



"Deus sex machina." (The Observer)

Anything to Declare?

"The play hits on all cylinders ... If you don't laugh like a loon, you're missing a funny bone."
(The Observer)

Farce. Translated and adapted by Greg Leaming from the play by Maurice Hennequin and Pierre Veber. Cast: 8m., 6w. The Dupont family is thrilled that their naïve young daughter has married Count Robert de Trivelin. However, upon returning from their honeymoon, it is made clear that the young bridegroom has yet to consummate the marriage, and indeed seems to be suffering from a psychological block brought on by a border crossing guard yelling out "Have you anything to declare?" at a particularly inopportune moment. With only three days left to meet his mother-in-law's demands for a grandson, or at least the promise of one, the count seeks the assistance of Zeze, a courtesan who is passing herself off to her clientele as a prominent artist. The entire Dupont family manages to parade through Zeze's salon and back to the Dupont home, along with a sobbing ex-suitor of the bride, a camel dealer of unknown origin, and a maid desperate to break ties with Zeze and start a career of her own. As the clock continues to tick away, a chaotic race to consummate the marriage results in everyone learning just a little bit more than they might have wanted to. *Two int. sets. Approximate running time: 2 hours, 15 minutes.*

Cover photo: Asolo Repertory Theatre, Sarasota, Fla., featuring Richard B. Watson and Lesslie Dodge Crane. *Photo: Julia Rodriguez.*

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Translated and adapted by

GREG LEAMING

From the play by

MAURICE HENNEQUIN and PIERRE VEBER



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“Originally produced at Asolo Theatre Company,
Sarasota, Florida,
Howard Millman, Producing Artistic Director”

Anything to Declare? was originally produced at Asolo Theatre Company, Sarasota, Florida, January 20-April 27, 2006, Howard Millman, producing artistic director, Marian Wallace*, stage manager, Sarah Gleissner, assistant stage manager, Michelle Hart-Bizzell, wig/hair design. The director was Greg Leaming, scenic design by Steven Rubin, costume design by Michele Macadaeg, lighting design by James D. Sale, sound design by Matthew Parker, the voice, speech and dialect coach was Patricia Delorey. The cast was:

Lisa Dupont	Norah Sweeney*
Gontran	Brit Whittle
Ernestine	Heather Gulling
La Baule	Ross Boehringer
Benjamin Dupont	Bradford Wallace*
Adelaide Dupont	Carolyn Michel*
Phillippe Couzan	James Clarke*
Frontignac	David Breitbarth*
Paulette de Trivelin	Mariam Habib
Robert de Trivelin	Richard B. Watson*
Mademoiselle Zeze	Lesslie Dodge Crane
Francois	Bryan Crossan
Mariette	Darlene Horne
A policeman	John Long*

*Denotes member of Actors' Equity Association, the union for professional actors and stage managers in the United States.

Anything to Declare?

CHARACTERS

BENJAMIN DUPONT Ninth Circuit Court judge
ADELAIDE DUPONT his wife
LISE DUPONT their youngest daughter
PAULETTE DE TRIVELIN their oldest daughter
ROBERT DE TRIVELIN her husband
PHILLIPPE COUZAN a friend of the family
LA BAULE ex-fiancé of Paulette
GONTRAN fiancé of Lise Dupont
ERNESTINE the Dupont maid
FRONTIGNAC a camel dealer of uncertain origin
MADEMOISELLE ZEZE
FRANCOIS her assistant
MARIETTE her maid
A POLICEMAN

THE PLACE: The home of Benjamin and Adelaide Dupont
and Zeze's art studio in Paris.

THE TIME: 1912.

ACT I

SCENE: *A room in the Dupont household. Nicely furnished. Entrance to the room UC. Door to the left, already open and door to the right, also open. Two other doors DR and DL. Between the two doors right, a fireplace. On the right a table to the left of the table a settee and on the other side a chair. On the left an armchair and to the right an armchair with an ottoman. To the left of the door UC, a large cabinet against the wall. Tables, chairs, armchairs, etc. To the right of the door UC, an electric button, left of the door DR a light switch. On a table is a tray with coffee pot, cups, a bottle of cognac, sugar bowl, small glasses, etc.*

AT RISE: *LISE enters from the DL door.*

LISE (*speaking to offstage*). Yes, Mama, I'll bring in the coffee.

(*GONTRAN enters from the same room.*)

GONTRAN. Psst. Lise. Psst.

LISE. Gontran, are you following me?

GONTRAN. Of course, I'm following you. I'm your fiancé. Can't I be alone with you now and then.

LISE. Mama's not going to like that, you know.

GONTRAN. She didn't see me sneak out. Your parents are too busy talking politics with your uncle. Besides, what would they care. We're engaged.

LISE. Doesn't make a bit of difference. Mama has eyes like a hawk—she'll pounce on you just like a crippled fieldmouse.

GONTRAN. She can't be that bad.

LISE. That's what happened when Paulette was engaged. Never let the two of them out of her sight.

GONTRAN. I'm sure they managed to find some time alone, time to sneak one little kiss now and again.

LISE. Oh, no. Not one. Mama was always lurking around the corner somewhere. Besides, Paulette's too innocent for that sort of thing. She's just not the inquisitive type. Not like me. Mama says I can't keep my nose out of anything. And I can't wait for Paulette to get back from her honeymoon today and tell me all about it.

GONTRAN. About the honeymoon? Don't you think that's awfully personal?

LISE. I want to know what's so special about this honeymoon business. Why is everyone so secretive about it?

GONTRAN (*squirming*). Would you please stop asking that. We'll be married in another month, you'll know soon enough.

LISE (*getting angry*). There you go again. You do this every time I bring up our honeymoon. You get all red in the face and start sweating and you look the other way. Just like everyone else, like you all had this great big secret. Something's going on here, and I'm going to get to the bottom of it. (*She starts to leave with the coffee things.*)

GONTRAN. Oh, now don't go yet. Stay with me for just one minute. Just one little kiss. (*He tries to embrace her.*)

LISE. No, now leave me alone. Every time you try to kiss me someone comes into the room.

GONTRAN. Oh, don't be silly. Just one kiss...

(*He kisses her. ERNESTINE immediately comes in UC.*)

ERNESTINE. Mademoiselle Lise... Oh.

LISE. See? (*She pulls away from GONTRAN, handing him the coffee tray.*) M. Gontran was just helping me with the coffee things, Ernestine.

ERNESTINE. Hmmph. Coffee.

LISE (*peremptorily*). What is it, Ernestine?

ERNESTINE. M. Le Baule is here, ma'am.

LISE. Oh, no. Not that one.

GONTRAN. Le Baule? Isn't that your sister's old fiancé?

LISE. Yes, but then she fell in love with Trivelin, so Papa had to break it off with the poor guy.

GONTRAN. But he keeps coming back?

LISE. Well, he got into the habit of coming here two or three times a week, and after Paulette left him, nobody had the heart to kick him out. So now we let him come back out of pity. But he's such a bore. Every time anyone mentions Paulette's name, he bursts into tears. Come on, let's go into the study. (*She takes GONTRAN by the hand into one of the doors right.*) Show old Waterworks in here, Ernestine. And here, give him some coffee. (*Hands ERNESTINE the coffee tray and leaves with GONTRAN.*)

ERNESTINE. But why do I have to talk with him?
(*Through the door.*) In here, M. La Baule.

(*LA BAULE enters. He is very depressed and carries a bouquet of flowers in his hands.*)

LA BAULE. Thank you, Ernestine.

ERNESTINE (*drily*). And look, another bouquet of flowers.

LA BAULE (*deeply depressed*). Every time I came here, I brought flowers to, to... (*almost says her name.*) to my fiancée. And now every time I come, I will bring flowers again. I do it in memory of her, of our life together.

ERNESTINE. But you don't have a life with Paulette.

LA BAULE (*at the name, he begins to cry*). Oh my God, my Paulette!

ERNESTINE. Oh, I'm so sorry. Please, sit here. Madame and monsieur are still having dinner with their guest.

LA BAULE. That's fine. I never eat anymore anyway. When I lost my fiancée I lost my appetite. Oh, Ernestine.

ERNESTINE. Sir?

LA BAULE. I've been treated so badly in this house.

ERNESTINE. That's because Paulette just doesn't love you.

LA BAULE (*sobbing at the name*). She would have...in time. I could make anyone love me...IN TIME. (*He takes out his handkerchief.*)

ERNESTINE. Oh now, are you going to cry all evening?

LA BAULE. I never stop crying. I cry from morning to night. I cry myself to sleep at night, and then I cry in my dreams. Every time I hear her name, I burst into tears.

ERNESTINE. You mean Paulette?

LA BAULE (*bawling*). THAT'S THE ONE!

(The doors left open and DUPONT and MME DUPONT enter with COUZAN.)

MME DUPONT (*cordially*). Ah, La Baule. How are you this evening?

LA BAULE (*pulling himself together*). Good evening, Madame Dupont. M. Dupont.

DUPONT. Ah, La Baule. How good of you to stop by... again. Do you know my old friend Couzan?

COUZAN. Nice to meet you.

LA BAULE (*sniffing*). A pleasure. A great pleasure.

COUZAN. Everything all right?

MME DUPONT (*quietly*). Don't bring it up...

DUPONT (*ignoring her*). La Baule is an old friend of the family, you know...

MME DUPONT. Please, Benjamin...

DUPONT. The ex fiancé of our daughter...

MME DUPONT. No please, don't mention...

DUPONT (*over*). Our daughter, Paulette de Trivelin. (*LA BAULE explodes into tears.*)

MME DUPONT. Oh, for heaven's sake.

DUPONT. What?

MME DUPONT. Did you have to mention her name?

LA BAULE. Please, I beg you, don't call her that.

DUPONT. What, Paulette de Trivelin?

LA BAULE (*in tears*). YES!

COUZAN. I'm very confused.

MME DUPONT (*while serving coffee to everyone*). La Baule has a little problem dealing with our daughter's recent marriage.

COUZAN. I see.

LA BAULE. When is she returning from her ho—ho—ho...from her ho—ho—ho, (*he can't say it*) from her little trip?

MME DUPONT. This evening. At ten o'clock.

LA BAULE. Oh my God!

DUPONT (*oblivious*). Yes, you'll be able to see, um, our daughter, and her new husband.

LA BAULE. OH MY GOD... OH MY GOD...

DUPONT. Oh, please, sir, can't you stop crying?

MME DUPONT. If you can't control yourself, you are simply going to have to leave right now. We don't want anything to spoil their homecoming.

LA BAULE. Why did you have to choose him over me. What does he have that I don't have?

DUPONT. A very healthy bank account, for one thing.

LA BAULE. But I've got prospects. Great prospects!

DUPONT. Then there is his family.

LA BAULE. I have a family.

MME DUPONT. Trivelin is one of this country's most historic names.

DUPONT. Trivelin's ancestors were part of the Crusades.

LA BAULE. So were mine. Mine were on the Crusades.

MME DUPONT. They were cooks.

LA BAULE. But they went.

DUPONT. La Baule, be reasonable. You don't have a title.

LA BAULE. How can you condemn me for that. You, a Dupont. You're a judge of the Republic. A son of the Republic. A grandson of the Republic.

DUPONT. You're exaggerating.

LA BAULE. Your grandfather met his death on the barricades in '48!

DUPONT. An accident.

COUZAN. Just stepped out to get the morning paper.

MME DUPONT. Even the best Republican would be thrilled to have a nobleman for a son-in-law.

LA BAULE. But he's got a horrible reputation. He'll ruin your daughter.

MME DUPONT. Nonsense. He's just what our child needs. That girl is far too innocent. Besides, a man of the world will understand exactly what his husbandly responsibilities are. He will know that it is his job to please his wife in every way he can. Nightly. Is that not right, Benjamin.

DUPONT (*uncomfortable*). Of course, my dear.

MME DUPONT. He'll throw off his wild ways and settle down into domestic bliss. We expect to have two young grandchildren very, very quickly.

DUPONT. One will be a baron, the other an earl.

LA BAULE. What if there's a third?

MME DUPONT. Bishop!

LA BAULE. I could have settled down into domestic bliss.

I could have given you a bishop.

MME DUPONT. Now, now, La Baule, have a cup of coffee.

LA BAULE. I don't want coffee. I want PAULETTE!
(*Sobs.*)

DUPONT. Too late.

LA BAULE. I am still your daughter's fiancé, you promised me first.

MME DUPONT. We promised you nothing.

LA BAULE. But you married her to a man who will make her miserable.

DUPONT. Don't be so dramatic, La Baule.

LA BAULE. I can feel it. She's going to be miserable and she'll end up divorcing him.

MME DUPONT. Please, stop the tears.

LA BAULE (*rising*). You will be forced to look for another husband for her. And when you do, promise me you will let me be number two. Please. I'm begging you. (*He clutches at MADAME DUPONT.*)

MME DUPONT. Stop that. Please, you're ruining my dress. Oh all right, fine, as you wish. (*To BENJAMIN.*) Please don't upset him anymore. We'll be flooded.

DUPONT. All right, sir, you are number two.

LA BAULE. Thank you. Thank you. (*Shakes hands with both of them, then with COUZAN.*) I will be your son-in-law. I swear. (*Handing off his flowers to COUZAN.*) I must go now, but I will be back, to see my own beloved Paulette, and to meet her future ex-husband face to face. (*He marches to the door UC.*)

DUPONT. But, La Baule, that will only upset you more.

LA BAULE. Not at all, sir. I have not done crying yet. The depths of my sorrow have yet to be plumbed. (*With pride.*) You have not seen the last of my tears! (*And he's gone.*)

MME DUPONT. So, Couzan, what do you think of this young man?

COUZAN. Very nice; a bit moist, but very nice.

DUPONT. The monseigneur will be called Enguerrand.

COUZAN. Which monseigneur?

DUPONT. Our youngest...the bishop.

COUZAN. Ah, you mean your grandchildren.

DUPONT. Of course.

MME DUPONT. Who knows, Benjamin. Why should he stop at bishop? Perhaps, dare we set our sights so high, perhaps even pope?

DUPONT. Pope Enguerrand the First. It has a very nice ring to it, doesn't it?

MME DUPONT. Our country hasn't had a pope since the Babylonian captivity. It's about time.

(ERNESTINE enters.)

ERNESTINE. Sir, there is a gentleman here who insists on speaking with you.

DUPONT. At this hour? Did he give you his name, Ernestine?

ERNESTINE. No. When I asked, he said, "Doesn't matter, M. Dupont doesn't know me anyway." He's in an awful hurry, sir.

DUPONT. Another litigant, I suppose, desperate for my advice. No rest for the weary.

COUZAN. Perhaps he's here about that affair with the Widow Tripette. You know, the Lecher of Loudon?

MME DUPONT. The Lecher of Loudon? Who in heaven's name is that?

COUZAN. That's all anyone has been talking about all week. An eighty-year-old widow named Tripette who owns a pork stall in Loudon was violated and murdered by an unknown assailant two weeks ago.

MME DUPONT. How horrible!

COUZAN. The villain is still at large. The whole countryside is terrified.

ERNESTINE. Oh my God! What if he IS the Lecher of Loudon? I don't want to go back out there!

DUPONT. Oh, please, Ernestine. Just send him in. You're twenty years old. You've got nothing to worry about for another sixty years. *(She exits.)*

COUZAN. We'll leave you to your business.

MME DUPONT. Let me show you the room we've prepared for Paulette and her husband.

COUZAN. They're going to live here?

MME DUPONT. Well, of course, just while we're waiting for the arrival of the baron, the earl, and the bishop, I mean the pope. The pope! *(And they are gone.)*

DUPONT. Just five minutess for this man, no more.

(FRONTIGNAC enters. He wears a soft hat with a large brim in the Mexican style.)

FRONTIGNAC *(bowing formally—tense and clipped)*.

Messer. Forgive me for coming on you like this.

DUPONT. Not at all, sir. Won't you sit down?

FRONTIGNAC. Not at all. There ees no time. Do I have the pleasures of addressing Messer Dupont?

DUPONT. You do, but please...

FRONTIGNAC. And I am also assuming that you are married?

DUPONT *(worried)*. My God. Does it show?

FRONTIGNAC. *Bueno*. You will please to be calling your wife.

DUPONT. I beg your pardon?

FRONTIGNAC. You perhaps have the beans in your orifices? I am asking you please to be calling your wife.

DUPONT. Whatever do you want my wife for?