

Under the Poppy DIA show 2/17/12

Working title "Puppets of Passion"

The MC is ageless, a self-possessed creation. The MC is the bridge between the audience/patrons and the people of the Poppy, able to speak to and interact with anyone.

The MC and the Puppeteer have a special rapport.

Note: These script segments are bridging interludes and can be used in different order.

INTRO – THE FLOOZIES

MC: Good evening, be welcome! A thousand heartfelt welcomes, ladies and gentlemen. Did you bring your appetites? For art, of course. And what of your hearts – are they broken, or still in good working order?

Be assured you've come to the right place. In fact there's no place like it, this stage of most theatrical love. For isn't love the great performance, always with a hero – or two – and an untouched maiden, a dastardly villain, and a chorus of pretty voices in the darkness . . . Oh, and a puppet. More than one, in fact. Do you like puppets, ladies and gentlemen? Be assured that they like you.

Whether it's real, or only make-believe – or both – we here Under the Poppy are prepared to give you, ladies and gentlemen, everything that you deserve. Because if it's fun you're after, you need look no further than the end of your – nose.

(Indicates the FLOOZIES) Aren't they a treat? Every flavor in the cupboard from tart to sweet, and guaranteed to bring you all the joys of heaven. Or all the heat of hell, if that's your pleasure.

Observe . . . But not to touch, ladies and gentlemen – that's for paying customers only. Though special arrangements may occasionally be made.

INTRO – DECCA

MC: To operate a reliable establishment such as this one takes a certain combination of attributes, and a sharp eye is one of them, eh, Miss Decca? And a memory like a lockbox, and fingers to pinch a penny till it shrieks. A strong stomach [*picking lice out of hair?*] doesn't come amiss, either.

The heart is not required to enter in.

But then, the heart is a capricious organ. For without love, we risk the freeze, we turn hard as old hickory wood, our strings come all a-snarl, and one winds up like –

Miss Decca's no one's puppet. She comes to us from – well, we're not entirely sure where she hails from, but it must have been a most remarkable place. She learned all manner of tricks there, just what a gentleman likes! Though she tugs her own strings, she keeps her passion for the account books . . . And perhaps one other.

Because desire *is* a most desirable state. Puppet or flesh, it has a certain smell, one can't mistake it – a certain intoxicating taste – And that certain, very special ache, that maddening, irresistible throb – between – between the . . . ears! For it's the mind, always, that falls in love, is it not? and then hauls the heart along?

Yet the human heart's a fugitive – it can turn in upon itself, as deeply as needs be, and keep turning, for years at a time. For a lifetime, sometimes. Until it stops. Or dies from the cold.

INTRO - RUPERT

MC: Mr. Rupert also comes to us from elsewhere – an orphan, alas, he’s walked a winding road. And the road has many hazards, though not always the ones one would expect. No one has ever gotten the best of him in a tussle, that’s for truth.

But I don’t believe he likes it here, I don’t believe he’s happy. Does he look happy to you?

When did the sorrow start?

Was it when he met his fond comrade? – no, for that’s what makes one happy, isn’t it, to have love and passion all rolled into one skin and one smile! Was it when they took to the road together, with a puppet tucked between? No, for that’s adventure, making one’s way by one’s wits, performing on the cobblestones for whoever rolls up to see the show, spending the gettings on whatever young men like to drink and smoke, and when dawn pops up, onto the next stop on the road . . .

Was it, may be, when they left the road for the quiet rooms? left flung pennies for folded bills, the street urchins for the townhouse gentry, all those smooth and smiling men – and women – who meant to buy the showmen with the show, who saw the show itself as just prelude to a more intimate performance?

Who’s the puppet then? Who pays for the showing, who brings the curtain down?

Better not to ask him. He’ll answer you with his fists.

INTRO – THE PUPPETEER & MARCO

MC: Some people, ladies and gentlemen, do not admire puppets. Miss Decca, alas, is one of those people. Mr. Rupert ... well.

Perhaps it's their amazing facility, their way of being all things to all people, of *being* all people: the beggar and the king, the fairy princess, the backdoor slut, the little boy lost ... Perhaps that quality breeds a certain mistrust in the viewer. An actor, after all, can take off a mask. But a puppet *is* a puppet, a special case among players, half-way between life and eternity.

And puppets are very old, as old as passion itself! Some say they were born alongside Man – who's got no great pedigree himself, does he? Awful fellow, Cain – the father of all flesh, you know, what with Abel being disabled.

Others say puppets are a sort of homunculi, the whole lot contained in one – rather cramped – little space. And yet others insist that puppets must be possessed of spirits – that is, if the show's any good.

And can there ever be an actor more suitable for the vagaries of passion? A puppet's as wily and indestructible as the heart itself: knock it down, tear it to pieces, hurl it at idiots – and back it comes, refreshed and ready for more abuse. And a puppet makes a fine friend upon the road. Sleeps anywhere, and just a wooden nickel to feed ... Especially as the road grows darker. Especially when the heart aches and burns like a city on fire.

[To Marco/Pan] Can you see the future, Monsieur? Can you see who's coming down the road?

INTRO – MR. VIDOR

MC: All the world loves a lover, isn't that so? Especially when he's a gentleman, one who's traveled all over that spinning world, to Paris, and London, and Hamburg, to spots in those cities that most travelers never see – places like the Roxy Club, or Le Lapin Vert, or the Pale Ophelia. Places where gentlemen have their fun.

This fine gentleman, Mr. Vidor – sorry, not to name names – he's a traveler, he's accustomed to the best. The finest wines and cigars, all the modern conveniences – electric lights, the telegraph – but he can do without them. What he can't do without is that special taste, that flavor of – call it darkness. A puppet, one might call him, to that desire.

So he puts on his mask, and he goes Under the Poppy.

Yet what he's found here – well. Not to tell tales on our patrons – we would never do that! – but what happens when the devil falls in love? Love can be sharp as a knife, and just as deadly, it can look like hate, and act like war. It can break a man in two, like a puppet carved from flimsy wood.

We will hope things do not go so far. We would hate to see the show end that way.

EXIT – THE MC

MC: All the world loves a lover. And the hot magic of make-believe.

Have a wonderful evening, gentlemen and ladies. We shall hope to see you Under the Poppy sometime very soon!