



# CUPID AND PSYCHE

an opera in three scenes

Libretto by  
**Kevin Ireland**

Music by  
**David Ward**



## Libretto

©

2012

Vanderbeek & Imrie Ltd

Cover Picture

***Cupid and Psyche***

André Masson  
(1938 in *Revue Verve*)

# CUPID AND PSYCHE

Libretto by  
**Kevin Ireland**

Music by  
**David Ward**

**Cast** (6 singers, 6 dancers)

Psyche	Soprano
Cupid	Tenor
Venus	Mezzo (low)
1 <sup>st</sup> Sister	Soprano
Proserpine }	
Ganymede }	
2 <sup>nd</sup> Sister }	Mezzo
Juno }	
Charon }	
Jove }	Baritone

3-6 Dancers (optional)

**Orchestra** (23 solo players)\*

Flute doubling Piccolo and Alto Flute

Oboe

Cor Anglais doubling Oboe 2 and Bass Oboe

B $\flat$  Clarinet

Alto Saxophone doubling B $\flat$  Clarinet 2 and Bass Clarinet 2

Bass Clarinet doubling Contrabass Clarinet, both with a range extending down to low written C (sounding B $\flat$ )

Bassoon doubling Double Bassoon

2 Horns both doubling Wagner Tubas (all in F)

Trumpet in C (mutes: Aluminium Straight, Copper Bottomed Straight, Harmon)

Trombone (mutes: Aluminium Straight, Copper Bottomed Straight, Harmon, Velvet Tone)

Bass Trombone (mutes: Aluminium Straight, Copper Bottomed Straight, Plunger)

2 Percussion (Timpani, Glockenspiel, Vibraphone, Xylophone, Temple Blocks, Tambourine, Triangle, Small Ting-Sha [pair of Tibetan Cymbals], Clashed Cymbals, Suspended Cymbals [Ride, Splash & Sizzle], Tam-Tam, Snare Drum, 3 Kit Toms [1 floor (low), 2 hanging (mid, high)], Orchestral Bass Drum)

Mandolin

Harp

2 Violins

2 Violas

2 Cellos

Double Bass

\*An adaptation with tutti strings in seven parts might be possible, in which certain sections would remain solo.

## Setting

Modern, mixed with the mythological. The main props are three chaises-longues, a table and a set of columns.

**Duration:** 1½ hours single span. If it is essential to have an interval, one is possible between Scenes 1 and 2.

**Brief Outline** Psyche has a lover whose true identity he has not revealed. Her jealous sisters persuade her to discover the secret, which reveals that he is of an order far above hers: now she knows who he is, they must part. Psyche refuses to give up her love, so his family try to destroy her by setting her a task which they hope will kill her. Astonishingly, she completes the task. Reluctantly, her lover's kin allow her to marry him and agree to accept her as one of their own - for now.

### Synopsis

**Scene 1** The curtain rises on a silvery stage. Columns are arranged in a semi-circle, in front of which are three chaises longues. There is a small table on which sit several empty champagne bottles. One of Psyche's sisters reclines on the chaise to the left, the other to the right. They sing enviously of the luxury in which Psyche is now living, which they consider wasted on her, and speculate on the identity of the generous lover who only comes to Psyche in the dark of night. Psyche enters, a little drunk, and flops onto the centre chaise. She sings of how lucky she is, but her sisters ask how she can bear to remain ignorant of her lover's identity. Psyche sees the mystery as part of her love. While she sits in happy reverie, her sisters rise and go to one side. They plan to separate Psyche from her lover and share him and his wealth between them. Returning to Psyche, they first flatter her then set about convincing her that her mysterious lover must be a monster of some kind, who is afraid to show himself and very likely plans to eat her. Psyche's former certainty is shaken (helped by the champagne she has been drinking). Cupid, Venus and Jove now appear behind the columns, invisible to the three sisters. Cupid cannot believe that Psyche's faith can be shaken so easily. Her sisters again try to persuade Psyche that her lover must mean her harm, and Psyche thinks they must be telling her the truth. They tell Psyche to kill the monster while she can, and hand her a lamp and a knife. Frightened, she takes them, as her sisters lead her away. Jove is horrified by the blasphemy Psyche is about to commit, and asks Venus how this came to be. She explains that she had sentenced "the disgusting girl you see" to be put to death by her son Cupid, because Psyche's beauty was the heresy whereby mortals were worshipping love in human form; but instead, Cupid had fallen in love with her and brought her to safety. Jove expresses his anger with Cupid, before the two gods leave. Cupid is now revealed in a dim light, lying on the centre chaise. Psyche has returned slowly and peers as she approaches him. Cupid sings of his sorrow that she did not trust her love. He commands her to shine the lamp on him and hand him the knife. As she lifts the lamp the whole stage is flooded with light. Stunned, she meekly passes him the knife. Psyche realizes that she was in love with Love itself, and has destroyed her own happiness. The stage is now taken over by a three part dance of the fates. The first part is a dance of cheerful indifference, the second depicts detached and emotion-free aggression, while the last has a hint of mocking sadness. The next scene follows at once.

**Scene 2** The pillars are now arranged in two lines, at the head of which the table has become a simple altar inscribed 'Juno'. Juno and Venus enter from opposite sides. Venus apologizes for the trouble Juno has been put to over Psyche. She asks Juno to deliver the girl to her when Psyche next comes to the altar to pray. Juno protests: she must protect a suppliant, but on the other hand she has become involved in Psyche's predicament against her will. They both deplore the fact that Psyche hasn't done the decent thing and quietly killed herself. Juno blames Venus for inflaming humankind with passion, and then refusing to accept the consequences. Venus suggests they ask Proserpine for help by setting Psyche an impossible task: "Ask her to step down into the well of Stygian cold and retrieve the scallop-shell of beauty." They call Proserpine who enters dressed in black and accompanied by Charon. Juno and Venus explain their problem; Charon comments that all problems are the same to him, he can "make them float away". Psyche enters. Juno and Venus tell her the task they have set in order that she may be reunited with Cupid, then leave. A black cloth is now draped across the altar, and the light becomes lurid and shadowed. Psyche trusts in the favour of the gods, though Proserpine and Charon tell her the journey will be fraught with menace. Proserpine and Charon leave, but as Psyche is about to follow them, Cupid enters. He and Psyche sing of their desire to be reunited. Psyche tells him they **will** be soon, once she has performed the simple task she has been set. Cupid warns that it is not so simple, but he will help her. He gives her money to pay the ferryman for a return journey, and tells her to ignore the pleas for help she will hear from a drowning man, a lame man asking for rope to bind his load upon an ass, and three women at their spinning wheels. He also gives her slices of bread to feed to Cerberus. Finally, he warns her not to open the casket she will be given. Cupid leaves and Psyche follows the path taken by Proserpine and Charon. The dancers now enter to represent the journey through Hell. The darker instrumental colours are prominent - the bass oboe, contrabass clarinet and double bassoon, together

with two Wagner tubas replacing the horns. After the dance, Psyche re-enters, followed by Proserpine and Charon. They have reached the border of the Underworld, and the lighting is still lurid and shadowed. Proserpine gives Psyche a small casket, while Charon lifts the black cloth from the altar, and once again the stage becomes the temple of Juno. The lights become radiant as Proserpine and Charon depart. Psyche now inspects the casket. She wonders what might be inside - surely a little peep wouldn't hurt? She opens the casket and peers inside. A great drowsiness overcomes her and she falls asleep. Cupid enters. He is irritated that Psyche couldn't resist the temptation to open the casket, but now that she has, and has acquired the beauty inside it, he admires her more and more. He tries to shake her awake, but she remains asleep. In desperation he pricks her with one of his arrows. She wakes, and is now even more in love with Cupid. They feel themselves the playthings of fate, but decide it is time to face the consequences of their actions. They move to the side as the stage is transformed for the final scene.

**Scene 3** Mount Olympus. The columns form a semi-circle. The dancers perform a twirling dance with ribbons or streamers, without narrative, as an ecstatic introduction to the home of the gods. Juno and Venus stand imperiously centre-stage. Cupid and Psyche move towards the two goddesses, Psyche carrying the casket. Venus repulses Cupid, whom she blames for everything, and when he addresses her as "mother" she informs him her title is "Star of Love, Queen of Joy". Cupid, Psyche and Juno remark on how Venus has changed - she has become respectable, so mortals have turned away from love. Venus says she is punishing mankind for worshipping Psyche, and also Cupid for having saved her. They ask her to relent, but she refuses. A small concession, then? Still she refuses: goddesses do not compromise. Cupid asks, what in the name of Jove are they to do? Jove has heard his name taken and enters, accompanied by Ganymede carrying a jug and glasses. Jove complains he is only called upon when there is a problem to be solved. He notices Psyche and is surprised to see her there. Ganymede offers him a drink, and he asks for a large one. Everyone begins to sing at once with conflicting demands. Jove orders them to stop, and asks what has been going on. Venus and Juno explain that Psyche had flouted his commands by refusing to die, and has come through the trials set for her. Cupid insists that Psyche is exceptional and wants only kindness and understanding. Psyche begins to plead with Jove, but Venus tells him not to listen. One small thunderbolt would solve the problem! Jove is now expected to make his decision, but he wants a private word with Cupid first. They go to one side, and Jove tells Cupid he has a problem. While "well set up on Mount Olympus", with Juno for romance and Ganymede for drink, he needs to visit Earth every now and then for light relief; but since Venus decided to punish mortals, no-one is interested in love. Cupid says he'll help if Jove gives him Psyche, and they come to an agreement. They return to the others. Jove gives his judgement. First he condemns before gods and men - Cupid. Cupid protests that there must be some mistake. Venus, however, is delighted and swears henceforth she will be ruled by Jove. Jove now gives the second part of his judgement - Cupid is condemned to marry Psyche. Cupid and Venus both protest at this, but Jove reminds them they both gave their word. Cupid says he can't marry: of course he can, says Psyche. Juno intervenes as Goddess of Marriage. All are resigned to the inevitable: all that remains is for everyone to have a drink. Ganymede passes Jove the jug, and he invites Psyche to drink and join the company of the gods. She drinks. Jove, Juno, Venus and Ganymede move away from Cupid and Psyche, while the dancers move down-stage close to the pair. At first the dance is exuberant, but it becomes more sensual and erotic as the lovers sing a duet. The last words come from Venus, joined by Jove, Juno and Ganymede, mocking love the liar. Cupid and Psyche are absorbed in their passionate embrace. The sax solo that ends the piece echoes the opening, but this time it is played over a funereal tread.

From a director's point of view, an almost limitless variety of productions of the opera seems possible. Here is one idea:

The whole piece might be presented as Psyche's wishful-thinking dream in a drunken slumber after reading Apuleius' version of the tale, with the dream becoming nightmarish at the end. For the valediction Jove would return as Charon, Ganymede and Juno would again be the jealous sisters, but as Keres with masks and talons, while Venus - Love - would sport the mask of Death.

A traditional production, insofar as the mix of myth and modernity allows, might be equally valid.



# CUPID AND PSYCHE

## Scene 1

*[The curtain rises on a silvery stage. It is as though all colour has been tinselled. The columns are arranged in a semi-circle, in front of which are three chaises-longues. There is a small table on which sit several empty Champagne bottles, a lamp and a knife. One sister reclines to left, the other to right. The centre chaise is empty.]*

<b>1<sup>st</sup> Sister</b>	It's such a pretty place to call one's own.  I could really settle down in a palace just like this  and wear a crown and put my feet up  and paint a sign on the front gate informing the less fortunate it's my Home Sweet Home.
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Sister</b>	Not to mention the unlikely unexpected little extras ...
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Sister</b>	Such as ...
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Sister</b>	Diamonds ...
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Sister</b>	Rubies ...
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Sister</b>	Rolly-polly pearls ...
<b>Both</b>	And the caviar and truffles ...
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Sister</b>	It's the thoughtful little trifles which give one such support.  Our humdrum sister Psyche is a very lucky girl ...
<b>Both</b>	It's such a pretty place to call one's own.  Just think how perfect it would be  if it belonged to you and me  and in strict uncontradicted fact  this was Home Sweet Home.
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Sister</b>	Just think ...
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Sister</b>	Of all the drink ...
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Sister</b>	Champagne!
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Sister</b>	Wasted on a plain little ...

**2<sup>nd</sup> Sister** Vain little ...  
**1<sup>st</sup> Sister** Featherbrain!

**Both** He may as well  
have poured his money  
down a drain –

Who? Who?  
Why, Mister Mystery himself of course.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Sister** The one who set her up  
in wealth and luxury,

**1<sup>st</sup> Sister** in lace and fur and finery,  
in baubles, trinkets, rings,

**2<sup>nd</sup> Sister** and all those homely things  
a modest girl desires –

**1<sup>st</sup> Sister** the man of shadows and disguises,

**Both** the man we never see.

The man who larks  
between the midnight sheets

then burgles love  
by deed of dark –

the cheat who edged  
into our sister's bed

then swindled her  
of knowledge.

*[Psyche enters a little tipsily.]*

**Psyche** Give me the moonlight and chrysanthemums,  
red sails in the sunrise and wine,  
cocktails for two and boloney,  
and hey diddle diddle you're mine ...

*[She flops on the centre chaise, then quickly composes herself.]*

**Psyche** What a lucky girl am I  
to live in silver walls

to love a gilded man  
so skilled in all the arts

of inexhaustible, irresistible,  
lavish excellence

of mad extravagance ...

**2<sup>nd</sup> Sister** Such **mad** extravagance ...

**1<sup>st</sup> Sister** Such enviable elegance ...

**2<sup>nd</sup> Sister** And yet ...

**1<sup>st</sup> Sister** And yet, Psyche,  
how can you bear

to indulge yourself  
in this affair



<b>(1<sup>st</sup> S)</b>	yet not bother to uncover  the true identity of your lover?
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Sister</b>	Such ignorance.
<b>Psyche</b>	I'd rather call it total and unstinted,  absolute, unfettered, High Romance
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Sister</b>	Ignorance.
<b>Psyche</b>	How can that be?  My lover comes to me as a dark cloud crosses the moon, and the whole world is plunged into obscurity where mysteries become new pleasures and pleasure is the only mystery, where the sea of my love swirls across the land – and air and earth and water become the warm shadows of creation.
<b>Both Sisters</b>	Could it really be like that? It sounds a touch obscene to expound with such a passion on a matter so unclean –
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Sister</b>	But, remember she's had bucketsful to drink.
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Sister</b>	Of course, it's only the muddle in the bubbles ...
<b>Both Sisters</b>	But, then again, if there really is a grain  of truth in what she claims, it does explain  how she can be so unashamed to entertain in such –
<b>Psyche</b>	Truth unashamed.  An unrestrained –
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Sister</b>	Flighty –
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Sister</b>	Flagrant –
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Sister</b>	Spiteful –
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Sister</b>	Blatant –
<b>Both Sisters</b>	Wasteful way.

*[Psyche leans back with a glass, proudly, mistaking her sisters' smile-disguised shafts for flattery.]*

*[While she sits in reverie, her sisters rise to consider.]*

<b>1<sup>st</sup> Sister</b>	It's so lamentably unfair
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Sister</b>	That she should have so much to spare
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Sister</b>	Yet be worth so little in herself.
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Sister</b>	Putting on all these magnificent airs before her own sisters.
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Sister</b>	It's so lamentably unfair.
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Sister</b>	Making her vile lover sound like a cross between a rare work of art –
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Sister</b>	And a billionaire.
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Sister</b>	Or - perhaps, a wizard?
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Sister</b>	I could reconcile myself to a share of something of the kind.
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Sister</b>	And I wouldn't mind my portion of his magic style – a man like that can make it worth a nice girl's while ...
<b>Both</b>	Then, by all the powers above, we'll rid him of his Psyche and make him ours and divide his love.

*[They return to Psyche, who is still in a reverie.]*

*[As her sisters sit down again, Psyche rouses herself, as if from a state of enchanted rapture.]*

<b>Psyche</b> }	It's such a splendid way to spend the day in friendly family gatherings waiting for the evening ...
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Sister</b> }	
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Sister</b> }	
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Sister</b>	And what happy secret pleasures have you just been dreaming, Psyche?
<b>Psyche</b>	I've seen a view of sunlit trees shimmering in a breeze of golden pollen which soaked the leaves and twigs and blossom – and through these woods there played a brood of marvellous babies as soft and pink as little pigs.

<b>1<sup>st</sup> Sister</b>	Exactly, sister!
	You dream of things Which can be <b>seen</b> .
	Your mind persists in wishing for a world which really does exist – do you see what I mean?
<b>Psyche</b>	No!
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Sister</b>	Did you dream a darkness undefined? Were your fantasies invisible?
<b>Both Sisters</b>	Are you blind?
<b>Psyche</b>	Stop!
<b>Both Sisters</b>	Shall we make the point more clear? How can you tell your lover's not a vicious monster? Have you ever seen him, dear?
<b>Psyche</b>	I trust my love.
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Sister</b>	An ogre?
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Sister</b>	A demon?
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Sister</b>	A dragon?
<b>Both Sisters</b>	A cannibal?
<b>Psyche</b>	How could that be?
<b>Both Sisters</b>	How could he be a serpent?
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Sister</b>	The answer is: quite easily. Serpents have subtlety – they fear your chance discovery.
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Sister</b>	He won't show himself for one reason alone – he's afraid, afraid you'll know.
<b>Psyche</b>	What more should I know than that he loves me?
<b>Both Sisters</b>	Call that love? A man who won't let you look at him?

*[Psyche takes a long drink.]*

<b>Psyche</b>	He's not in the slightest bit sinister – in fact, I think him quite amusing with his funny midnight act ...
---------------	--

*[She drinks again.]*

**Psyche**                    It's so confusing.  
Everything was as plain as pi  
and now it's all ...  
it's all –

**Both Sisters**            Like living a sickening,  
slippery, poisonous lie?

*[Cupid, Jove and Venus appear behind the columns. They are invisible to the three sisters.]*

**Cupid**                    How can her heart waver  
and my love so soon  
lose favour in her eye?

How can deceit thrive  
and faith wither  
and truth die?

I can't believe  
what I have seen ...

<b>1<sup>st</sup> Sister</b>	}	Love is a liar
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Sister</b>		with a bloated smile,
<b>Venus</b>		a heart of briars
<b>Jove</b>		and an eye of bile ...

**1<sup>st</sup> Sister**                Heed well, sister –  
he has lured you here  
then dulled you with his treats  
and gulled you in the dark  
to sweeten the recipe  
before he eats you –

**Psyche**                    No. It can't be true.

**1<sup>st</sup> Sister**                Can't be?  
Can't be?  
I defy you  
to look me straight in the eye  
and tell me that I lie.

**Psyche**                    You are my own flesh and blood.  
I could sooner believe  
the sun a smut,  
the moon a smudge,  
the stars mud  
than you deceive ...

*[The sisters point first at the lamp, then at the knife.]*

**Both Sisters**            Then while you still have time, my sister,  
follow the light of this lamp,  
follow the glister of this knife –  
kill the monster of the night.

Kill, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill!

**Jove**                      Blasphemy!

<b>Psyche</b>	Don't ask me to do this wrong ...
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Sister</b>	Force yourself –
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Sister</b>	it's your only hope.
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Sister</b>	Be resolute,
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Sister</b>	be strong.
<b>Psyche</b>	I couldn't, I couldn't ...
<b>Both Sisters</b>	When he murders you for his next meal how would you like to be served? Stewed, casseroled, baked, roasted, coddled, steamed, grilled or toasted?
<b>Psyche</b>	Oh ... !!!
<b>Jove</b>	Blasphemy!
<i>[Psyche takes the lamp and knife, and her sisters lead her away.]</i>	
<i>[Jove and Venus move down-stage, and Cupid lies on the centre chaise.]</i>	
<b>Jove</b>	This is a scandal to the Gods – How did the whole sordid matter come about?
<b>Venus</b>	By my authority I sentenced the disgusting girl you see to death.  Psyche was the heresy whereby men worshipped Love in human form.  One look at her and they turned away from me and my celestial light and – grunting in the pigsties of corrupt mortality – they cried: Psyche, Psyche, Psyche ...  A double treachery. The first transgression in the eyes of lust hallucinated men. The second in my wretched dissipated son.
<b>Jove</b>	Cupid again!
<b>Venus</b>	My son who brought her here to hide her from her fate.
<b>Jove</b>	Damn all humanity. I will not have them flout my will and mock the Gods ...

**(Jove)** Cupid shall know  
what justice is all about ...  
I'll have her locked away way in Hell!

*[Jove and Venus retire from the scene.]*

*[The light dims to a deep gloom as Psyche returns slowly, carrying the lamp and knife.  
A dim spot lights Cupid as he lies on the central chaise.]*

**Cupid** I fear, my love,  
that this shall turn out worse  
than you could ever think ...  
  
If only you had learnt  
to trust the instinct of the heart  
you would have been inviolate  
*[with suppressed bitterness]*  
to the distortions and inventions  
and dissembling which the world employs  
in oily lying sanctimonious counteraction  
to the magic life-enriching injuries  
of my golden darts ...

**Psyche** Distortions?  
Injuries?  
Darts?  
I fear this shall turn out worse  
than I had ever thought ...

**Cupid** When first I came to you  
and took you in my arms,  
you did not question –  
I was your God  
and your blind faith was dark  
and deep and true –  
  
Well, let's have it over with –  
shine the light upon me –  
bring me it's harm ...  
*[softly and wearily]*  
And hand me that unholy knife.

*[Psyche lifts the lamp and suddenly the whole stage is flooded with light.]*

**Psyche** Ah!

*[Stunned, she meekly passes the knife.]*

**Psyche** I could have caused you  
no greater injury  
than my disbelief.

**Cupid** You could have caused me  
no greater injury  
than by disbelief.

The lamp was curiosity  
and the knife was doubt ...

**Psyche**

I was in love  
with Love itself  
yet could not understand.

The perfect and unblemished gift  
of blindness in the heart

*[Cupid and Psyche each leave slowly in opposite directions.]*  
broken by my own hand.

*[As the pair leave, 3-6 dancers come on stage.]*

*[Cupid and Psyche are now well separated and nearly off.]*

**Psyche**

I was in love  
with Love itself.

**Cupid**

No greater injury  
than disbelief.

### **Dance of the Indifferent Fates**

*[The dance of the Fates is in three distinct parts. The first and longest is a dance of cheerful indifference, the second evokes coldly aloof aggression, while the last suggests a tinge of mocking sadness.]*

### **End of Scene 1**

(Scene 2 follows *semi-attacca*)

## Scene 2

*[The pillars are quickly rearranged into two lines at the head of which the table makes a simple altar. On this altar is the word 'Juno'.]*

*[Juno and Venus enter from opposite wings.]*

<b>Venus</b>	Dearest Juno – I really must apologize for the fuss and bother you have suffered from Psyche. Of course, it's not my fault, but it has been so inconsiderate, so messy – impertinent, truculent, insolent – I could pulverize the revolting little hussy.
<b>Juno</b>	Venus dear – I should have thought the girl would have been well dead by now and your problem solved,  instead of which your divine will has been thwarted and we are all becoming involved.
<b>Venus</b>	I disclaim all responsibility –
<b>Juno</b>	And blame the girl entirely?
<b>Venus</b>	Find a way to help me, Juno – deliver Psyche to me when next she comes to pray ...
<b>Juno</b>	To pray? To pray?  Out of respect for love and beauty I shall prefer not to have heard your deplorable request –  although indeed the girl's been plaguing me here in my own temple – imploping me to save her silly neck –  I have a duty to protect ...  On the other hand –
<b>Venus</b>	Yes?
<b>Juno</b>	On the other hand,  I have no other wish to save her, I have been involved without my permission, stuck in an embarrassing position ...  If only Psyche had done the decent thing, shown more respect for all of us crawled into a circumspect grave.



**Venus**                    It never occurred to me  
                                  that Psyche would not see  
                                  to her self-destruction

                                 but – of all the impudence –  
                                  throw herself at your feet  
                                  and deny me love's sacred vengeance ...

                                 It was no fault of mine.

**Juno**                    That same refrain ...

                                 You fire men and women  
                                  with dreadful flames  
                                  of desperate desire  
                                  and set the world ablaze –

                                 then instead of showing sympathy  
                                  you pretend to be amazed –  
                                  you lose your temper –  
                                  and never take the blame.

**Venus**                    Juno! That's hardly fair –

**Venus** }                    It's not quite fair  
**Juno** }                    that the sticky, inextricable,  
                                  tricky, inexplicable  
                                  intentions of the Gods  
                                  so quickly come unstuck  
                                  in the wanton, fickle, uninstructed lusts  
                                  of destructive little boys and girls.

**Venus**                    I suppose we could look  
                                  to a little help  
                                  from Proserpine ...

**Juno**                    How?

**Venus**                    Could we suggest  
                                  she set some test or quest?

                                 Set the girl a task:  
                                  some preposterous, easy-sounding,  
                                  but impossible proposition –

**Juno**                    Such a brilliant thought,  
                                  such an elegant solution –

**Venus** }                    Ask her to step down  
**Juno** }                    into the well of Stygian cold  
                                  to retrieve the scallop-shell  
                                  of beauty.

**Juno**                    Yes that doesn't seem  
                                  too hard –

**Venus**                    And it leads her  
                                  straight to Hell.

**Juno**                    | straight to Hell.

*[Calling down to Hell.]*  
                                  Call Proserpine!

*[Proserpine enters, dressed in black. She is accompanied by Charon.]*

<b>Proserpine</b>	}	Beauty is the last of the great secrets we keep from humanity.
<b>Juno</b>		
<b>Venus</b>		
<b>Charon</b>		
<b>Proserpine</b>		Its delicate child-like form, its delicate child-like form, lies curled in dream-sleep, in the unborn rock-fast darkness of the Underworld.
<b>Juno</b>		
<b>Venus</b>		
<b>Charon</b>		
<b>Proserpine</b>	}	No mortal hand has yet unlocked its mystery.
<b>Juno</b>		
<b>Venus</b>		
<b>Charon</b>		
<b>Juno</b>		We sent for you dear daughter of the night that you may help prevent human hostility against us and rid us of a threat to our divine stability –
<b>Venus</b>		You've always had a quite unique ability to reverse a plight, disperse a problem facing us –
<b>Juno</b>		And matters are racing from bad to worse then back to bad –
<b>Venus</b>		then back to bad –
<b>Proserpine</b>		Driving you completely mad?  Well, what is it this time? Famine? Fire? Plague? Or an army on the rampage?
<b>Charon</b>		They're all the same to me – whatever the problem I can make it float away.
<b>Proserpine</b>		He can make it float away.
<b>Charon</b>		A single dip of the paddle, the scrape of the keel as we slip away from the shingle – then into the deep and off your troubles escape –
<b>Proserpine</b>		then into the deep and off your troubles escape –
<b>Charon</b>		And all for the price of a cheap one-way ticket in a boat.

*[Psyche enters.]*

**Venus** Ah, here she is at last.

**Juno** The little lady  
that our fuddle-headed Cupid  
might try to make his queen.

**Venus** Banished by Jove –

**Juno** Punished by Venus –

**Venus** } And she wants her lover back  
**Juno** } and won't accept she's finished.

**Juno** Psyche,  
meet Proserpine and Charon.

**Proserpine** But she's only a young girl ...

**Charon** It's of not the slightest consequence –

*[As Charon sings, Juno and Venus seem to be giving instructions to Psyche.]*

Young, old,  
black, white,  
intelligent, magnificent,  
cutthroat, turncoat, scapegoat,  
zealot, hellot, crackpot, despot, idiot,  
in pretty petticoat  
and mouldy waistcoat –  
It's of not the slightest consequence  
when they squat in the back of my boat  
and feel the cold.

**Juno** In our divine mercy

**Venus** we have decided

**Juno** to set you

**Venus** a simple task.

**Juno** Perform it,

**Venus** } Psyche,  
**Juno** } and we shall ask no more.

**Psyche** Is that why  
Proserpine and Charon? –

**Venus** } Enquire from us no further sign  
**Juno** } but go with them Psyche.

Bring us our prize  
of secret beauty

and we shall promise you  
the gift of your desires.

*[Juno and Venus leave. Charon drapes a black cloth across the altar. The light becomes lurid and shadowed.]*

**Psyche** I knew I could trust  
the favour of the Gods.  
No truer heart than mine  
has laid itself  
upon the altars of the high  
and prayed with such,  
with such pure fervour.

**Proserpine }  
Charon }** Trust the favour of the Gods.  
The heart that asks  
in innocence  
shall get just recompense –

**Charon** *[with heavy irony]* And sometimes even more.

**Proserpine }  
Charon }** Though the journey  
be fraught with menace

**Psyche** Fraught with menace

**Proserpine }  
Charon }** | love shall be the guide.

**Psyche** | love the guide  
*[Proserpine and Charon signal to Psyche to follow them and leave.]*  
to steer the heart  
through thought of failure  
and fear of the night,  
the night.  
*[As Psyche is about to follow, Cupid appears.]*  
My love!

**Cupid** Shushsh ...!  
  
There's little time  
to warn you  
of the harm  
these demons mean.

**Psyche** Never mind me –  
darling, you look so pale.  
Are you feeling well?  
A cold on the chest?  
Have you been eating properly?  
Taking your rest?

**Cupid** As you only too well know,  
a few arrow pricks, a heart-ache  
and a splash or two of hot oil –  
nothing that can't be fixed  
if only I can have you back.

**Cupid** If only we could have each other back  
and cease to care,

**Both** discover again the lost pleasures  
of our delight,

**Psyche** reach to the burning dark of bliss –

**Both** our secret palace of the night.

**Psyche**                      And soon, my love,  
                                      this dream will all come true –  
                                      Juno and your mother  
                                      have given me the task  
                                      of fetching them some sort of casket  
                                      with a secret recipe inside.  
                                      It's a simple service  
                                      and once achieved –  
                                      then you'll have me

**Cupid**                      Then you'll have me

**Both**                        and once again, my love,  
                                      I shall have you.

**Cupid**                      Is that all?  
                                      A simple service?  
                                      A mere trip to Hell?  
                                      Through rivers and rocks,  
                                      pick up a box as well,  
                                      find the return track –  
                                      then afterwards  
                                      we'll have each other back?  
                                      Are you sure that's all?

**Psyche**                      I ... I ...

**Cupid**                      We have so little time –  
                                      pay heed, my dear,  
                                      and you may yet succeed.

                                     Take money for the boat-man –  
                                      one fare there,  
                                      the other back.

*[He gives her some money.]*

                                     A drowned man  
                                      in the river of black  
                                      will ask your aid –  
                                      return no sound.

                                     A lame man will ask for rope  
                                      to bind his load upon an ass –  
                                      offer him no hope.

                                     Three women at their spinning-wheels  
                                      will call for help –  
                                      feel no pity.

                                     Cerberus, the dog who guards the dead,  
                                      will let you pass  
                                      if you feed him honeyed bread –

*[He passes her a sandwich box, or other small food container.]*

                                     take one slice for entry,  
                                      another for escape.

                                     And, lastly,  
                                      when you take the prize,  
                                      open it not,  
                                      open it not, open it not,  
                                      its secrets are for Juno's eyes.

*[Cupid leaves quickly. Psyche slowly follows the exit taken by Proserpine and Charon.]*

*[Dancers enter to perform a dance that suggests the journey through Hell.]*

### **Slow Dance: The Journey through Hell**

*[At the end of the dance, the dancers leave slowly as Psyche enters attended by Proserpine and Charon. They have returned to the border of the Underworld, and the lighting begins to become less lurid and shadowed. Proserpine hands Psyche a small casket. As she does so, Charon lifts the black cloth from the altar and the stage is again the temple of Juno. The lights become radiant as Proserpine and Charon depart.]*

*[Psyche begins to inspect the box.]*

**Psyche**                    Such a long and  
                              frightful journey  
                              for such a trifling thing ...  
  
                              I wonder ...  
                              How I wonder  
                              what delicious scents  
                              and paints must lie within ...  
  
                              Surely it wouldn't hurt  
                              to open it the merest inch  
                              and then - perhaps -  
                              just try a pinch or two  
                              to please my Cupid,  
                              my Cupid ...

*[Psyche opens the box and peers inside, then yawns and falls asleep.]*

*[Long silence.]*

*[Cupid enters and stares at her with exasperation.]*

**Cupid**                    *[muttered]* Damnation.  
                              Not again!  
  
                              No sooner does she humble  
                              all the powers of Heaven and Hell  
                              than she stumbles  
                              on some small temptation.  
  
                              Yet she has now acquired  
                              the power let loose  
                              by that little box from Hell –  
*[Staring at her with unrestrained admiration.]*  
                              such beauty,  
                              such beauty, such beauty!

*[Shaking her, at first gently, then with increasing urgency.]*

Wake!  
Wake before we fail.  
Wake up.  
Wake, wake, wake, wake, wake.  
Wake, wake, wake, wake, wake.  
Wake up, wake up, wake up, wake up!  
  
Damn that box!

*[He pricks her sharply three times with one of his darts.]*

**Psyche** *[She begins to wake.]* Cupid – my darling,  
darling love ...

**Cupid** What have I done?  
To save her from her fate  
I've pricked her with my golden dart!  
As if we need this extra weight  
to bear – her beauty bolder  
and her love inflated.

**Psyche** Darling!  
My darling, darling love,  
my love!

**Both** We seem to have become  
but puny playthings caught  
in the convolutions  
of a monstrous fantasy.

**Psyche** When Gods bed mortals,

**Cupid** when mortals return from the dead,

**Psyche** when Goddesses ordain

**Cupid** yet girls treat their instructions

**Both** with disdain,

**Cupid** when desire is hazardous

**Psyche** and love grows dangerous,

**Cupid** when the path of pleasure

**Psyche** leads to the precipice of nightmare,  
when buoyant hope

**Cupid** becomes a leaden care,

**Both** we must no longer hide ourselves away  
but come to our senses,  
take our case to court –

Come to our senses,  
take our case to court –

*[The stage begins to transform for Scene 3. The columns are moved to form a semicircle.  
The table is no longer an altar.]*

**Cupid** and damn the consequences!

**Psyche** What consequences?

**Cupid** Damn the consequences!

**Both** Take our case to court.

*[They move to the side.]*

**End of Scene 2**  
(Scene 3 follows *attacca*)

### Scene 3

#### Lively Dance on Mount Olympus

*[Mount Olympus. The columns form a semi-circle. Dancers perform a swirling dance with ribbons or streamers. At first the dance is down-stage, but soon moves back as Juno and Venus enter and take a position centre-stage. Cupid and Psyche remain standing discreetly to the side. Psyche is still clutching the box from the Underworld. As the scene develops, the dancers are never too far away as entertainment for the Gods.]*

*[Venus is now standing imperiously centre-stage, accompanied by Juno, and is looking contemptuously towards Cupid and Psyche. The dancers have receded, but are still on-stage.]*

<b>Venus</b>	Surprise, surprise ... If it isn't little pussycat herself with her half-moon grin – and just look who she's dragged in: my very own brat.
<b>Juno</b>	Have you also seen that she has fetched –
<b>Venus</b>	Witchcraft!
<b>Cupid</b>	She brings the casket, mother –
<b>Venus</b>	Don't call me mother, wretched boy. From now on you shall ever address me as Star of Love, Queen of Joy. No more familiarities.
<b>Cupid</b>	So rich in charity ... How you have changed.
<b>Psyche</b>	How you have changed. Only a short time ago mortals exulted at your carnivals, festivals, carousels, public spectacles – orgies were held in your sacred name – but your cult is now forsaken – your light is dulled – Love's revelries insulted ... You have become ... You have become ...
<b>Cupid } Juno }</b>	Respectable!
<b>Psyche } Cupid } Juno }</b>	Look at what's happened to the world –
<b>Cupid } Psyche }</b>	humanity has turned its face away from love and pleasure,



<b>Psyche</b>	}	
<b>Cupid</b>		
<b>Juno</b>		men avert their eyes from charm,
<b>Juno</b>		moan to the heavens
<b>Psyche</b>	}	
<b>Cupid</b>		
<b>Juno</b>		and wish each other harm.
<b>Cupid</b>		<p>Women turn their heads away  from the best-known sport,  complaining that they're out of sorts  and grumble they've no interest  in the bed –</p>
<b>Venus</b>		<p>Don't blame me.</p> <p>Don't blame me  if I've become  a pillar of society.</p> <p>How can I  be faulted  when I'm so insulted?  Insulted.</p> <p>First this upstart girl  sows treason,  treason in men's hearts,</p> <p>then, then my lust-blind son  loses his reason,  assumes I wouldn't mind,  I wouldn't mind</p> <p>if he betrays my trust  and now blames me,  me, me, me, me, me, me, me,  because he finds</p> <p>the world's in a worse  than usual mess –  I have cursed</p> <p>humanity to punishment  and pain –  until they all repent.</p>
<b>Cupid</b>		But mother –
<b>Venus</b>		<p>I told you not to call me that ...</p> <p>My name is Star of Love,  Queen of Joy.</p>
<b>Cupid</b>		<p>For the sake of the future  of the world  relent ...</p>
<b>Psyche</b>		
<b>Juno</b>		Relent ...

<b>Cupid</b>	Have you not seen the regimented heart withers in disillusionment?
<b>Psyche</b>	Withers in disillusionment.
<b>Juno</b>	In disillusionment.
<b>Cupid</b>	And soon there'll be none left on Earth to worship you –
<b>Psyche</b> }	a Star burnt out,
<b>Cupid</b> }	a Joy of death ...
<b>Juno</b> }	Relent.
<b>Venus</b>	No!
<b>Psyche, Juno</b>	A small concession?
<b>Venus</b>	Impossible.
<b>Psyche</b> }	A formula,
<b>Cupid, Juno</b> }	that's all we ask –
<b>Venus</b>	No.
<b>Psyche</b> }	
<b>Cupid, Juno</b> }	something to satisfy
<b>Juno</b>	divine honour,
<b>Venus</b>	No.
<b>Psyche</b>	human need
<b>Venus</b>	No.
<b>Cupid</b>	and our predicament
<b>Venus</b>	No, a Goddess does not compromise.
<b>Cupid</b>	Well, what in the name of Jove are we to do?
<b>Venus</b>	I wish you hadn't called out that name "Jove".  Just imagine that he heard.

*[Jove enters, accompanied by Ganymede carrying jug and glasses.]*

<b>Jove</b>	I heard all right ...  Funny how they call on me.
<b>Jove</b> }	It's always:
<b>Ganymede</b> }	come and help us, run to save us, give us, please us, ease us ...  Give us, please us, ease us ...

**Jove** Why don't they yelp  
for Jove above  
when they're only having fun?

*[He notices Psyche.]*

You!

You, again.  
I thought ...

**Ganymede** A little drink  
to help you think?

**Jove** Make it a double, Ganymede –  
I've a notion  
I'm in trouble.

**Psyche** I think it so unfair, I think it so unfair, unfair –  
**Cupid** Let me appeal, let me appeal, appeal –  
**Ganymede** One at a time, one at a time –  
**Juno** Something must be done, something must be done, be done –  
**Venus** I wish to protest, I wish to protest, I wish to protest, I wish to protest, protest –

**Jove** Stop!

**Psyche** unfair –  
**Cupid** appeal –  
**Ganymede** one –  
**Juno** be done –  
**Venus** protest –

**Jove** Stop!  
What's going on?

**Venus** It's a scandal –  
this little schemer  
has flouted your divine command,  
refused to fly to a dark corner  
and die.

**Juno** That's only half of it –  
and not the entire truth.  
In fact, the girl  
seems to have survived  
each dire ordeal  
Venus has devised,  
and I must admit –

**Cupid** It's plain for all to see  
that Psyche is exceptional –  
All she has ever craved  
is warmth,  
understanding,  
deliverance,  
kindness  
and clemency.

**Ganymede** I shall search the cellars  
to see if there might be  
a drop or two of those forgotten virtues.

<b>Ganymede</b>	}	Plead with the Gods above –
<b>Juno</b>		they'll hear your point of view,
<b>Venus</b>		entertain each new request,
<b>Jove</b>		and nod their deep concern.
<b>Jove</b>		Well, Psyche?
<b>Psyche</b>		Great compassionate Jove, Father of the Gods, Ruler of the Skies –
<b>Venus</b>		Don't listen to that sycophantic rigmarole. One thunderbolt –
<b>Jove</b>		Quite, my dear.  Therefore, in judgement, after due consideration and a great sweep of examination of case history, unto, thereto and whereto, including interpretation and the weighing of all relevant –
<b>All the others</b>		Yesss?
<b>Jove</b>		And jurisprudential, legislationable, statuable, nomological –
<b>Psyche</b>		Nomological?
<b>Jove</b>		Enactments, edicts, statutes, orders and decrees – and taking into account amendment and revision –
<b>Cupid</b>		You mean you've come to a decision? Without a doubt or a hesitation?
<b>Jove</b>		Well ... Actually ... That's what I thought we ought to have a little chat about ...  Just you and me ...

*[Jove leads Cupid down-stage. The others remain mid-stage.]*

**Jove** *[not yet fully down-stage]*

Now, listen to me boy,  
I have a problem.

**Venus** They're cooking up  
some crooked impropriety –

**Juno** That's just jealousy –

*[Jove and Cupid are now right down-stage.]*

<b>Cupid</b>	A problem?
<b>Jove</b>	As you know I'm well set up on Mount Olympus –
<b>Cupid</b>	On Mount Olympus.
<b>Venus</b>	Before they return I can predict my case is lost.
<b>Jove</b>	There's Juno for romance and Ganymede for drink ...
<b>Cupid</b>	Romance and drink ...
<b>Jove</b>	And all a God could ask for ...  Except ...
<b>Cupid</b>	Except for light relief?
<b>Jove</b>	Brilliant. Brilliant. Straight to the heart of it –
<b>Venus</b>	My case is lost, lost.
<b>Jove</b>	The botheration is I have to make a trip  now and again and every so often  down to Earth – take a holiday from responsibilities.
<b>Venus</b>	Is lost.
<b>Cupid</b>	A little light-hearted rampage does no-one any damage ...
<b>Jove</b>	What did I say? Brilliant. Brilliant.
<b>Venus</b>	I promise this shall be a sad day for the Gods ...  And a sadder one on Earth.
<b>Jove</b>	Well, what I was coming to is, everything has changed.  They've gone strait-laced in every town on Earth,  Venus has closed the whole place down,  no-one cooperates ... And what I now propose –
<b>Cupid</b>	Say no more –

**(Cupid)** I feel I may  
be able to help.

Give me Psyche,  
give me Psyche  
and you've got a deal.

**Jove** No need for guaranties?  
No curtails, entails,  
or further details?

**Cupid** It's a gentleman's agreement –  
I accept your word.

**Jove** That's a relief.

**Venus** [*bitterly*] They look so pleased  
with themselves,  
smiling with sincerity.

**Juno** The very picture  
of fair trial  
and absolute legality.

**Ganymede** [*Moving down-stage, followed by Juno, Venus and Psyche.*]  
Speak – Great Law-Giver.

**Jove** First –

**Ganymede** First.

**Jove** In sense of royal and sublime  
propriety – *etcetera, etcetera* –  
I hereby condemn  
before Gods and men  
and general society – *etcetera, etcetera* –

**Ganymede** Who?

**Jove** This arrogant, upstart,  
uncontrollable braggart –

**Psyche** }  
**Ganymede** } Who?  
**Juno, Venus** }

**Jove** Cupid!

**Cupid** There's been  
some unforeseen mistake –  
you can't mean –

**Venus** You heard indeed!

**Cupid** me?

**Venus** And I take back  
all I said  
or since insinuated.

This is true justice.  
Love and honour are vindicated.

Great Jove, I swear,  
by earth, water, fire and air,  
you rule my ways for ever.

<b>Jove</b>	Very beautifully expressed. I shall hold you to your oath.
	Now, secondly –
<b>Venus</b> <i>[surprised]</i>	Secondly?
<b>Ganymede</b>	Secondly?
<b>Jove</b>	Secondly, to restrain the impertinence, extravagance, insolence, intemperance and malevolence of this young philanderer –
<b>Venus</b>	How excellently put –
<b>Jove</b>	I hereby disparage bachelorhood by passing sentence, passing sentence,
<b>All the others</b>	Yes?
<b>Jove</b>	passing sentence,
<b>All the others</b>	Yes?
<b>Jove</b>	passing sentence,
<b>All the others</b>	Yes?
<b>Jove</b>	passing sentence of marriage!
<b>Cupid</b>	Marriage?
	But, but, but –
<b>Venus</b>	You can't, you can't, can't – You may be father of the skies, but I'd rather not be mother-in-law to a –
<b>Jove</b>	You both gave me your solemn word. And that's the end of it.
<b>Cupid</b>	But I can't – not marriage.
<b>Psyche</b>	You silly man – of course you can.
<b>Juno</b>	And so you shall. Marriage is understood to be reckoned part of the providential plan – and as patroness of motherhood this comes within my jurisdiction – Thus I shall abide no contradiction: marry without objection.
<b>Ganymede</b>	With Cupid's worst excesses curbed and love returned to bless and purify

**(Ganymede)**                    the suffering heart-blighted Earth,  
                                       it only calls for one more article  
                                       to cure our thirst and  
                                       add a particle  
                                       to happiness.

**Ganymede** }  
**Juno**        }                    All we need is nectar ...  
**Jove**        }

*[Ganymede passes Jove the jug.]*

**Jove**                            Come, Psyche, drink  
                                       and join the company of the Gods.

*[Mid-stage, the Lively Dance that opened the scene begins again. The singers remain down-stage.]*

**Cupid, Ganymede** }            The company of the Gods –  
**Juno, Venus**        }            where all is truth  
**Jove**                   }            and light and reason.

**Juno, Jove**                    Where the complicated, treasonous,  
                                       twisted ways of men and women  
                                       are resisted.

**Ganymede, Venus**            Where the call  
                                       of moral good and justice  
                                       is our first command.

**Cupid, Ganymede** }            And faith and honour reign.  
**Juno, Venus**        }  
**Jove**                   }            Drink and be immortal.

*[As Psyche drinks, the dancers move close to the lovers. Once Psyche has drunk, Jove, Ganymede, Juno and Venus move away, leaving Cupid and Psyche with the dancers.]*

*[The dance around Cupid & Psyche becomes increasingly sensual and erotic.]*

<b>Cupid &amp; Psyche</b>	And now, my love, we have each other back and can cease to care,	} variously repeated
<b>Cupid</b>	and can discover again the lost pleasures of our delight,	
<b>Psyche</b>	reach to the burning dark of bliss –	
<b>Both</b>	our secret palace of the night.  My love, my love. Love, Love. <i>[etc]</i>	

*[Their singing becomes ecstatic tinged with desperation]*

*[The Gods are looking with wry amusement towards Cupid and Psyche, from whom they are well separated. The pair are in a passionate embrace and oblivious to their surroundings.]*

**Venus**                            Love is a liar

**Ganymede, Juno** }  
**Venus, Jove**        }                    Love is a liar  
                                       with a bloated smile,

**Venus**                            a heart of briars

**Ganymede, Juno** }  
**Venus, Jove**        }                    a heart of briars  
                                       and an eye of bile.

**End of the Opera**