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Libretto for contemporary Ukrainian opera

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Scene 1. Unexpected Prelude

As the spectators are taking their seats, musicians in the pit are tuning their instruments.

At some point when the play is just about to begin, there comes a distant sound. It grows steadily and, eventually, becomes quite noticeable. The orchestra is slowly fading away. The singing from behind the curtains becomes more distinct. The choir is singing – louder and louder. Going quiet one second, then getting louder again, picking up the theme played by the orchestra. The sound of chaotic movement, yells and footsteps is seeping from behind the curtains. Darkness falls upon the audience and the curtain goes up.

Things are set in motion out there, the day when nature's wrath against the humans is in full swing. The circle of the singing choir is steadily closing around a lone human. Simultaneously, a battle dance is going on, symbolizing the elements and the fury of the nature. The dance is nearing its peak.

The choir is singing about how everything has consequences, the ties are unbreakable and one cannot simply stay alive without sensing or at least being aware of them. But breaking the ties will unleash the infinite evil.

Choir.

Can you hear the scream?

It is yours.

Can you see us writhe in pain?

This pain is yours.

Do you see smoke over horizon?

Then we are coming to you!

(the choir is closing the circle tighter)

So are you the maker, the dreamer, the seer of visions?

Or just the infernal beast in human disguise?

Who do you think you are? The king of all kings?

So yours is the dreadfully hideous path,

And infinite woes will await you at the doorstep!

(music chords soar)

At the peak of the moment, the human straightens abruptly, throwing his hands up. Everything comes to a stop. The lights start to dim.

The spotlight in the remote corner on the left of the stage finally settles on an unconscious man lying prone on a sickbed. A woman sits next to him, holding his hand. Her stare never wavers from the sick man. The curtain rolls down like an avalanche. The houselights go on again. The tuning of the instruments in the orchestra pit resumes.

Scene 2. "Doctor! Doctor!"

After a short pause filled with the orchestra tuning sounds, a woman runs out from behind the curtain to the front of the stage and screams to the spectators "Doctor! Please! Any doctors here? Please! Over here! My brother is sick!" A spectator jumps up and runs over to the stage. A group of people brings a man to the front of the stage. The doctor feels his pulse, gives the unconscious man a once over and yells "Somebody call the ambulance! Quick!" The lights go out. The orchestra falls silent.

Scene 3. Under the Table

The curtains pull apart, the lights on the stage go on. Two grownups – a man and a woman – sit under the table in the center of the stage.

W. – Well? Is it coming back yet?

M. – No. What about you?

W. – I'm trying.

M. – There's something flickering in my head but ...

W. – Maybe we should close our eyes?

Both close their eyes. A pause.

M. – Got it!

W. – What?

M. – That day before Christmas... We sat under the table just like now, holding hands. Like this. (takes her hand)

W. – Right! That's it! Delicious smells coming from the kitchen... And Mom is singing ...

M. – And the music ... Don't know what it was, but it went kind of like this. (starts humming)

She picks up the tune and both start singing.

M. – I don't even know how I remember this. Never sung this one before.

W. – Me neither.

M. – And the Christmas tree was always in that corner.

W. – Mmm, that smell ... oh how I love it ... Do you put up a Christmas tree these days?

M. – An artificial one.

W. – Me too. Got to admit it, I miss that pine smell so much... Wasn't even aware just how much ...

M. – And the desk stood over there!

W. – And Dad would always keep the gifts locked.

M. – Remember how we tried to sneak a peek at them through a crack?...

W. – Remember how we would sit on the window sill and watch the snow fall?

M. – Awesome. But for the cold glass and the chill seeping in through the cracks.

W. – Us hiding in the closet?

M. – Your hair smelled of mothballs afterwards.

W. – Do you think yours smelled better?

M. – Are you kidding? Did it really?

Both sit and laugh, holding each other's hands.

W. – Look, Tyltyl, so happy ...

M. – Yeah... Where has it all gone...

W. – Don't know, little brother. Makes me wonder how come we live like this... And why ... And it all is right here, nigh at hand. I haven't had a good laugh like this for ages.

M. – Neither did I... Wait! What did you call me?

W. – What do you mean? Little brother?

M. No-no... You said – Tyltyl?!

W. I did?

M. – But it's ...

W. Oh, that's just... came right out of subconscious ...

M. Tyltyl and Mytyl! Remember? You got to remember that! We must have played this game, like, forever!

W. - Awesome!.. I would have never remembered.

M. – Where did these names come from anyway?

W. – I have no idea.

M. – It must have been some fairy tale... Should we dig it up?

Both close their eyes again.

W. – Not a clue.

M. – Same here, Mytyl. Kind of annoying. Keeps bugging me, as if it's important somehow.

W. – Same here, Tyltyl Curious, isn't it?

W and M look at each other and burst out in a happy laughter...

M. – No, seriously, let's grab this tiny piece?

W. – I'm in!

M. – This will be our tiny secret.

W. – My first secret in about twenty years...

M. – There! This will keep bringing us back there bit by bit. Even better than this table.

W. – Well, Tyltyl?

Tyltyl – Yes, Mytyl! Great idea, by the way. This is no table, it's a time machine. Thank you!

Mytyl – Are we stepping out already? (whining like a small girl) Nooo! No way!

Tyltyl – I don't want it either, but we must.

Mytyl – Same old song all the time. Now we'll drown in this all.

Tyltyl – Okay, let's sit a bit longer...

Pause

Mytyl – It just dawned on me why we have never sold this apartment.

Tylyl – Must look weird to an outsider... Not selling, not renting out, just staying in from time to time...

Mytyl – Yep. Neighbors must be thinking we are two whackos...

Tylyl – Oh, who cares anyway... Can't explain it to everyone. Come think of it, aren't yours freaking out when you disappear like this?

Mytyl – No, they're fine... Doesn't take that long anyway... Almost asked about yours... Sorry...

Tylyl – No worries. Water under the bridge.

Mytyl – Nothing from her?

Tylyl – Nada. Long beyond caring, really... I may hang out here for weeks on end when I need to recharge.

Pause.

Tylyl – Honestly, though... It's getting so scary... sometimes.

Mytyl – Come here (gives a hug). Don't worry, little brother, I'm here for you.

Pause.

Mytyl – The Blue Bird.

Tylyl – What?

Mytyl – A movie or a book... Tylyl and Mytyl come from there.

Tylyl – Doesn't ring a bell...

Mytyl – A travel or something...

Tylyl – A travel... What was so impressive about it?..

Mytyl – Not a clue.

Tylyl – Google it up, maybe?

Mytyl – Later.

A doorbell rings.

Tylyl – Oops!

Mytyl – Waiting for someone?

Tylyl – No. No one here... Justus.

Mytyl – Wonder who's there.

Tylyl – Kids, maybe...

Mytyl – Let them have fun. They'll go soon.

Doorbell rings again.

Tyltyl – Stubborn!

Mytyl – No one knows we're here, right. Those in the know wouldn't ring.

Tyltyl – Let's ignore it!

Mytyl – Yep.

Doorbell rings again.

Tyltyl – Stubborn bugger.

Mytyl – If it rings again...

Doorbell rings.

Tyltyl – That's it. Come on, let's go.

Helping each other from under the table.

Mytyl – We'll be back, sweet table!

Tyltyl – Hush! What if they're gone already.

Mytyl – (whispering) Let's listen first!

Both tiptoe to the door. Straining to hear. Look at each other and start giggling soundlessly.

Mytyl – (whispering) Looks like they're gone!

Doorbell rings. Tyltyl opens the door. The Neighbor steps inside.

Scene 4. Neighbor

Neighbor – May I?

Mytyl – Top of the day to you!

Neighbor – Same to you. May I?

Tyltyl and Mytyl exchange perplexed glances. The Neighbor comes in.

Tyltyl – Excuse me. I don't think we've met...

Neighbor – Exactly – sort of.

Tyltyl – Meaning what?

Neighbor – Haven't we, now?

Mytyl – No...

Tyltyl – No. I mean, you live somewhere here? You look familiar, though.

Neighbor – Indeed.

Tyltyl – Got it! You live above?

Neighbor – Not bad!

Tyltyl – Exactly. You got a daughter? Or is it a daughter? We say hi to each other, occasionally.

Neighbor – It's a daughter, alright.

Mytyl – Please sit. (gestures toward the table, patting the surface) Hold on!

Neighbor – Talking to your furniture, huh?

Mytyl – (laughing) Oh, this here table is a very special friend of mine. Just kidding. Please sit!

The Neighbor inspects the table carefully, peeking underneath as well.

Neighbor – Curious.

Tyltyl – How is that?

Neighbor – Now I understand what took you so long to answer the door.

Tyltyl and Mytyl exchange glances.

Mytyl (grinning). – Afraid to even imagine what you are thinking.

Neighbor – I wasn't thinking, just watched.

Mytyl – Well, just in case... Tyltyl, tell her!

Tyltyl – Tell her what?

Mytyl – We are siblings!

Neighbor – Curious. Tyltyl? That means Tyltyl and Mytyl?

Tyltyl and Mytyl exchange glances.

Neighbor – How long?

Tyltyl – Hmm... Since childhood. I mean...

Mytyl – How do you know?

Neighbor – I just know, that's all.

Mytyl – What are these names? Do they mean anything at all? We even recalled some Blue Bird here.

Neighbor – Even!..

Tyltyl – Nonsense! Three nutcases rambling...

Mytyl – All the time! It's all funny somehow... Do you really know this story?

Neighbor – Certainly.

Mytyl – What's it about?

Neighbor – The travel of Tyltyl and Mytyl. Searching for the Blue Bird.

Tyltyl – What bird?

Neighbor – Nobody knows.

Mytyl – How's that?

Neighbor – That's how.

Tyltyl – What's the point?

Neighbor – It's there, exactly.

Tyltyl – Let's stop here, shall we. Just tell us what you came for.

Mytyl – Indeed, I didn't mean to pounce like that... Just curious how it all fits in with our memories.

Neighbor – Do you believe in coincidence?

Tyltyl and Mytyl glance at each other.

Neighbor – Fine. Here's my answer. Imagine that your dearest one is dying. Day after day. And there's nothing you can do.

Mytyl – Are you talking about...

Tyltyl – ...your daughter?

Neighbor – Yes.

Mytyl – Is she ill?

Neighbor – Yes, she is.

Tyltyl – But... is it curable?

Neighbor – (looking him in the eye) Not with the healthcare system like ours... no.

Mytyl – How awful. I'm so sorry.

Tyltyl – Abroad, maybe?

Neighbor – Afraid not.

Tyltyl – Who would have thought. She looks, kind of... She looks fine. Her eyes are always so bright.

Neighbor – (watches him closely) Interesting...

Tyltyl – What?

Neighbor – You are more observant than I thought.

Tyltyl – I don't follow...

Neighbor – That's the thing.

Mytyl – You are talking riddles.

Neighbor – No, I'm not. There's nothing to explain, that's all.

Tyltyl – So what do we have to do with it?

Neighbor – Can I have a glass of water, Mytyl?

Mytyl – Sure. Be right back. (leaves the room)

Neighbor – Well, Tylytyl, I am glad you recalled at least something.

Tylytyl – This makes no sense. Since when are we on first-name terms, anyway?

Neighbor – No one can make sense. One can only experience it. Alas, I have no choice. The time is running out and she is fading away.

Tylytyl – I’m sorry. But what’s this all about?

Neighbor – Nothing. (stands up) What is that?

Tylytyl – Where?

Neighbor – Don’t move! Just a second! Do you remember your childhood? Remember the words, “Tylytyl, bring back the diamond”? Remember! (Touches his forehead with a gesture that seems to drag on forever).

At the touch of her fingers, the entire stage seems to transform. Objects become “fluid”, as if made of resilient material. The natural light bursts into all color of the rainbow. In an eyewink, the entire world changes for Tylytyl completely.

Tylytyl – What’s wrong with me? God, what’s going on? I’m scared! Bring me back!

Tylytyl begins to rock, gulping for air, trying to stop and catch the balance, finally, unable to comprehend these changes, collapses listlessly. The Neighbor breaks his fall.

Mytyl (comes back with a glass of water, rushes to her brother) – What’s wrong with him? What has happened?

Neighbor – Nothing. I got him (takes the glass and tosses the water into the face of Tylytyl who remains unconscious).

Mytyl and Neighbor draw back from Tylytyl, catch each other’s eyes and stare at each other as if remembering something.

Eventually, Mytyl gets up nervously. Looks down at her brother again, rushes back to him, shakes him, slaps him on the cheeks, glances wildly up at the Neighbor, then runs to the front of the stage, yelling “Doctor! Please! Any doctors here? Please! Over here! My brother is sick!”

Lights begin to dim.

Two women are heard talking in the darkness but their voices are not coming from the stage:

Neighbor – Don’t worry...

Mytyl – Is he coming back?

Neighbor – Would you rather have *him* to return?

Mytyl – Is he coming back?

Neighbor – He needs help.

Mytyl – I recognized...

Neighbor – I know...

After a pause, the overhead spotlight picks out a sickbed in the far left corner of the stage. Tytyl, unconscious, lies upon it. Mytyl is holding his hand and watches her brother motionlessly.

The lights are dimming out.

Scene 5. At the Doorstep

Tytyl finds himself in a strange space where his motions seem to change something around him. And his every next move seems to bring him into another world. Shadows are creeping in, some vague shapes appear, shapeless things fly in. Overall picture: a human lost in limbo of the space and time. The entire scene is fluid and made of music – the play of light and shadow filled with incomprehensible sounds, sudden motions and high-pitched female vocals. Eventually, the stage sinks into darkness.

Scene 6. Meet the Ancestors

After a pause, Mytyl is heard singing a lullaby in the darkness. The overhead spotlight finds her in the remote left corner of the stage. She is singing over her brother's bed.

When the lights go on, the stage turns into a space of white. A long table stretches out through the stage, with Tytyl sitting at the head of it. – On his either side, people sit, split into couples of men and women of every age – young and old – all dressed in white. The far end of the table goes beyond the curtains. Everyone is looking at Tytyl. A long pause.

Tytyl – Mom? Dad?

The man and the woman closest to him exchange glances.

Tytyl – Grandma? Grandpa?

The man and the woman farther back grin and nod.

Tytyl – Is this a dream?

People at the table shake their heads.

Tytyl – I missed...

People grin back.

Tytyl – Haven't seen you even in my dreams ... for years.

Everyone grins.

Tytyl – Say something, please! Mom! Mom, you have no idea how I miss your voice! Today we just recalled your singing ...

Tytyl's mother watches him closely and begins signing a lullaby... One by one, every woman at the table picks up the tune. Mytyl can be seen singing along, just above the bed.

Tytyl – Mom! (reaches out to her)

Mother – (draws back, singing). No, my son, no!

Tylyl – (perplexed) Mom?

Mother – (singing) My son, beloved Tylyl! You cannot touch us! I cannot open my arms. You are with us but it's not your time yet...

Father (singing) – You're just a visitor around here!

Tylyl – I don't understand! It makes no sense... And why... Mom, why do you call me Tylyl?

Mother – (in a singsong) Because that's your name.

Tylyl – My?... I don't get it.

Father (singing) – You, my son, are here, and Tylyl is your name!

Tylyl – How is that possible. Very strange... I wish I could have a talk with you... eye to eye. And stay with Grandpa and Grandma a while...

Father (singing) – You are with us!

Mother – (singing) You are with us.

Grandmother – (singing) You are with us.

Grandfather (singing) – You are with us!

All – (singing) You are with us, son! And we are with you, Tylyl! We are your kin, your living roots. We're all your line, from the beginning of the time!

Tylyl – Oh Dear, all my line is here!... Forgive me, for I don't know anyone of you...

All – (singing) But you are with us now, and all of us have always been with you!

Tylyl – Please, no more singing, I implore... Let's all just have a talk!

Father (singing) – I'm not getting you, my dear son, for this is how we talk to you!

Tylyl – That's singing, not talking!

Father (singing) – I'm not getting you.

Tylyl – So you are all forebears or mine! Who would have thought you'd be so many! So is this where I will sit as well?... Some time, maybe, soon ... For life, it seems, has ran out of sense...

Father (singing) – Oh you're unbearable fool! Stay quiet! Wait! There is no rush. Grim Ripper is never late, you'll see. And it will rip its harvest without outside help. Just keep on living, for that's what you are for.

All – Just keep on living, as long as you can. And if you falter, we are here for you. We are your life-giving endless line that goes back deep into the ages, survived like a flower in a cave without sun or air or water. Kept hanging on for dear life, bit hard and fought. We lived our lives so that you would come. We lived our lives to make you happy. You'll fail us threefold, if you just squander this priceless, splendid, endless and sublimest gift!

Tylyl – Tell me about yourselves! Mom!... Dad!... I know so little about your lives... I always meant to ask you, what were you like as kids?

Mother – (singing) There’s nothing to tell, my sweetest Tytyl. The war just ended. All we’d dream about was a bite of bread. We grew up like the roadside weeds.

Father (singing) – I also had it tough as a child. Remember picking roots from time to time, just something for the family to nibble on. Grew up, studied, got a job. Got married, then you and your sister came along, which meant for me three times harder work. Job-home-travels-busy-busy...

Mother – (singing) I also had to leave you two alone. A shame we spent so little time together. This life, now it seems like wretched endless struggle... Oh how I would love you and your sister now! Oh how you’d feel my love to you...

Tytyl – We feel it, Mom! We always do!

Father (singing) – Too late for going so far back in time! No point in dwelling on the days long gone, when nothing can be changed. When nothing can be changed at all ...

Grandfather (singing) – But there are still those whose wear the flesh! Who breathe and feel their own heartbeat. Those who can act, those who can live like that... Like no one else before has lived the time allotted.

Tytyl – Live how, Grandpa?

Grandfather (singing) – Don’t know, my sweet child, it’s all yours. And you alone can find it out...

Tytyl – Just what, exactly?

Grandfather (singing) – I can’t go on, Tytyl! All words are just a waste of breath. There’s only this – that all’s in vain, and every word you hear will shed its shine and flicker out, just like shooting stars in August... Leaving no sense, like a balloon that shrivels as the air goes out... Like that blue bird, no sooner in your hands – just winking out of existence... Like quiet rain, like tasteless water. You got to find your own answer, just like anybody else, so, dear Tytyl, there is no answer until you’ve found it yourself...

Tytyl – Just how come we never had a chat like this?

Grandfather (singing) – We never really talked about anything important ... Because I died young, and because...

Tytyl – How did you die, Gramps?

Grandfather (singing) – The wounds in combat... Those fragments deep inside and then – life ended in a blink. The war’s abomination, grandson...

Grandmother – (singing) Abomination, Tytyl, don’t you forget.

Tytyl – My sweetest Grandma! How are you?

Grandmother – (singing) All is well, Tytyl. Just fine, my boy! And how are you? Tell me you are happy. Say all is fine. And all these fears, all that boredom I see deep in your heart, and that despair are nothing but imagination.

Tytyl – They are, indeed... Not worth a thing... You know... I’m feeling kind of lost.

Grandmother – Well, then find yourself. And lose no more... No more...

Tytyl – I will. I won’t...

Other Grandfather (singing) – Let me take a closer look at your face. I could only dream of an occasion like this!.. I think I see myself in all these features, and the eyes..., through years... see myself...

Tyltyl – Can it be.... Grandpa, is it you? There's just one photo left and no one would talk about you... I looked for clues, but...

Other Grandfather (singing) – Tyltyl, my child, the times were awful, they were tough... I'm praying even here, never again, just never once... Do you understand?

Tyltyl – I think I do.

Other Grandfather (singing) – They came at night, took me away, your Dad... he was just a baby. He did well, though, he did survive, and he took root. Escorted under guard down to the labor camp, to serve my twenty-five years. Shot on the run, point blank.

Other Grandmother – I toiled away, as best I could. Across the battered country, looking for a shelter. There was no help out there at all, so we would help ourselves. And saved your Dad. I found good people who would take us in. But I was sick, it took me long, so sick to fade away until I...

Tyltyl – God, that is awful! Not a single happy life?

Everybody's exchanging glances.

Female voice – Yes, I was happy. Maybe too happy – eight long years. Oh that was love that swept away... Until the war did us part.

Male and female voices (singing in duets) – And we were parted by great famine.

Male and female voices (singing) – The Spanish flu...

Male and female voices (singing) – The Black Death!

Male and female voices (singing) – Years of forced labor...

Male and female voices (singing) – Death camp and Holocaust.

Male and female voices (singing) – Barbarian raids.

Male and female voices (singing) – Conspiracy to overthrow.

Male voice (singing) – Through hanging.

Female voice (singing) – Burned at the witch's stake.

Female voice (singing) – The siege and famine.

Male voice (singing) – Bitter naval battle.

Female voice (singing) – The night of torture.

Male voice (singing) – Torturing and jail.

Female voice (singing) – The war.

Female voice (singing) – The siege.

Female voice (singing) – The plague.

Male voice (singing) – The war.

Female voice (singing) – The war ...

Tyltyl (screaming) – Enough! Can't take it any longer! Please, stop!...

Father (singing) – Now, my sweetest Tyltyl, you know how your life fought for the sun and air...

Tyltyl – Yes, Daddy!

All (singing) – No, wait, our little son! Let Him now talk to you!

Tyltyl – Who?

Father (singing) – Our Ancestor. The Forefather of all those you see now at the table, and even those you hardly can discern...

Tyltyl – The Forefather?

Father (singing) – Yes, it's Him.

Everyone turns away from Tyltyl and fix their gaze on the opposite end of the table that is lost in the curtains. The voice of the Forefather, however, is coming down from above.

Forefather's voice (singing) – Hello, my boy, hello, my kid! Been reaching out through centuries and seas, through eons and the continents, for just one little touch but alas... alas. Yet you seem to evade like this one endless dream, like moonlight, like horizon. You are my breath that went through ages and grew the flesh. You are my tiny particle, a drop of blood that travels around the world, with changing faces and bodies. The one I cannot catch up with, the one I cannot touch or take a closer look or talk. You mean the world to me. A particle of many billions of mine - of your brothers and sisters. One out of billions – and the only one in the universe! One of the kind, same as your brothers and sisters who rule everywhere. But do you have the first idea of who I am? I am your cosmos deep inside, your subconscious, instinct, passion, lust for life – what you have brought into this world, so shall you take with you. I am your clan, I am your pillar, I am the one who urges you on both now and always, no matters what's happening around you. So live it to the full, carry on! Do find your gift, your flame that warms the world around you. And live on, my Tyltyl! Live on and give it all you've got! Remember this, go find yourself and know your life! This is what really matters, all the rest is junk, my son!

All (join in the singing) Know your life before your die, Tyltyl This is what really matters, all the rest is junk, my son! Live as long as you've got the strength to carry on! And if you falter, we are here for you. We are your life-giving endless line that goes back deep into the ages, survived like a flower in a cave without sun or air or water. Keep hanging on for dear life, bite hard and fight. Go find yourself and do not let this magic, splendid priceless gift go to waste!

The curtain falls. The lights dim out eventually. The orchestra plays the final chords of the oratorio.

Scene 7. Musicians and the Cemetery

The Conductor's cell phone goes off suddenly. He brings the finale to a stop and grabs it.

Conductor (turning towards the spectators) – So sorry, can't switch it off. It's the Doctor. My wife is giving birth (rushes out of the pit, speaking into the phone). Yes, yes! No, now is not the best time, but go on! Something's up? What? Just a sec, can't hear you here... (runs away)

Heavy pause sets in. The musicians begin to chatter.

Cello – Yeah, I don't know anyone beyond grandma and grandpa as well...

First Violin – Neither do I.

Voices: Yeah! Same here! Me too!

Third Violin – I seem to remember great grandma, but, otherwise, well...

First Violin – It was all different, you know.

Second Violin – Where?

First Violin – In "The Blue Bird" by Maeterlinck.

Second Violin – By what?

First Violin – Maeter... Are you kidding me?

Second Violin – What do you mean?

First Violin – Maeterlinck!

Second Violin – What's that?

First Violin – It's a who, not a what! He's the one who wrote The Blue Bird!

Second Violin – A composer?

First Violin – Jesus... Enough! Drop it.

Third Violin – I think it's a writer.

First Violin – You think! The guy got a Nobel Prize in literature!

Cello – Just what is different with him?

First Violin – Everything! This here's a remake or something! Originally, there were kids. They met their grandparents... the dead ones. A sweet scene, really, all lyrical...

Cello – We got dead people here as well!

First Violin – Come on, what's this all about? Whose libretto is that anyway? (leafing through sheet music) Some guy Ternovyi. That explains it. A remake, just as I said!

Third Violin – What are you driving at?

First Violin – I told you – it's a kid's tale. The Blue Bird for kids – it's a sure-fire crowd pleaser, see? Full house three times over. There's a fairy, items spring to life, kids traveling the worlds. Running here and there, searching for this blue bird. Running away from the tress... This is the Blue Bird we need!

Second violin (interrupts) – Why do they run away?

First Violin – Who cares?! A forest wanted to kill them.

Second Violin – A forest???

First Violin – Yes.

Second Violin – The kids?

First Violin – The kids.

Third Violin – But why?

First Violin – Don't remember anymore. Their dad was a woodcutter or something. A lot is going on there... Doesn't matter! This is not the point. We need kiddy stuff in our repertoire! So much is going on there, the kids would find themselves at a cemetery, or...

Second Violin (jumps in) – Looking for the bird at the cemetery?

First Violin – Yes.

Cello – Must be deep in the night.

Third Violin – How very innovative. Kids looking for a bluebird at the cemetery in the night!

Second Violin – Is this really a tale for kids?

First Violin – You don't understand. It's all symbolic...

Third Violin (interrupting) – That's exactly what I'm saying – all symbolic. Where else should they be looking for...

First Violin – No! The Blue Bird is a symbol of happiness...

Third Violin (interrupting) – Exactly. Happiness at the cemetery!

Second Violin – Have they found it anyway?

First Violin – Nope.

Second Violin – Too bad!

Cello – Were they really looking for this bluebird among the dead all the time?

Third Violin – I see you are not getting the symbolism of it all!

Cello – Hey, it's a merry tale...

First Violin – Get lost y'all! Read up on stuff from time to time!

Cello – I just know what it's like at a night cemetery!

Second Violin – How is that?

Cello – Had to... way back as a kid.

Third Violin – What brought you there anyway?

Cello – On a dare, of course.

Second Violin – Did you win it?

Cello – Come on, my hair almost turned gray.

Third Violin – Saw someone there?

Cello – Heard. The night is so full of noises you don't really have to see a thing. Scary like hell.

Second Violin – Do tell!

Cello – What's there... Well, imagine yourself sitting in the grass, amid knolls and crosses. Darkness. And the wind suddenly goes - poof! Everything is moving, shadows dancing, some creatures flying overhead, something's rustling. You jump up and your feet are tangled in the grass, as if something's holding you. I was barely ten back then. Long story short, I ran faster than wind.

Double Bass – Yeah, running like crazy, hearing your own feet slapping the ground and thinking that somebody's running after you. And all you can think of is "Never look back! Never look back!"

Cello – Exactly!

Double Bass – The faster you run, the closer it's getting to you. And then – ta da! (produces a sound on the double bass so sharp and sudden that everyone jumps) – a hand grabs your shoulder!

Cello – And you realize it's just a branch. But you are scared out of your boots! As if the trees are in cahoots with them. (strums a sound)

Double Bass – You struggle out of the grip, you shirt tears. And it feels as if something rips inside you. (produces a sharp sound)

Third Violin – The street is empty, not a souls in sight. (makes a grinding noise)

Second Violin – And – wham! – a black cat! With glassy eyes! (drags out a meowing sound)

Double Bass – And your heart leaps into your mouth. You want to scream but can't, just like in a dream. (produces a sound)

Other instruments jump in, the babbling grows, as musicians talk faster one after another, adding ominous sounds from their instruments.

- Aaand then it leaps on you (sounds)

- and you go – aaaaaaaahhh! (scamper of feet)

- and – off you go (stampede)

- and it rushes right after you (sounds)

- and you find yourself running back! (sounds)

- to the cemetery! (sounds)

- Terror grips you! (sounds)

- all graves stand open! (sounds)

- and nobody around! (sounds)

- and roaring laughter – Haw! Haw! Haw! (sounds)
- and you – bang! – wake up (sounds)
- while you Mom is baking pancakes! (sounds)
- Phew! Total bliss! (sounds)
- Alive! (sounds)
- no death! (sounds)
- just pancakes!!! (sounds)

Musicians laugh and make a cacophony of sounds to keep each other “freaking out”.

Conductor (returns to his spot) – What’s going on here?

Musicians switch the cacophony mode abruptly as if busy tuning their instruments.

Conductor (to the audience) – Sorry again. False alarm. (to the orchestra) What have we got here?

First Violin – The “Luxuries of the Earth”.

The Conductor raises his hands, the silence falls, the orchestra plays intro to the “Luxuries of the Earth”.

Scene 8. Neighbor and Daughter

When the curtain opens to the stage where the Neighbor sits next to her Daughter. The Daughter sits in an armchair wrapped in a blanket, staring into an open laptop.

Conductor (stops the music) – What is this?

First Violin – Neighbor and her Daughter.

Conductor – You said Luxuries!

First Violin – The question was “What have WE got here?” Luxuries are next on the list. And here we don’t play at all.

Conductor – Oh snap! Okay, not playing this. (to the audience) Sorry, bad day!

Neighbor – Some tea?

Daughter shakes her head.

Neighbor (watches her for a while) – Maybe have a bite? It’s time, you know.

Daughter shakes her head.

Neighbor (after a pause) – Okay, won’t bother you.

Daughter – You don’t.

Neighbor – What are you doing?

Daughter (closes the laptop) – Okay, Mom, let’s have a talk.

Neighbor – Sorry for the bother.

Daughter – Now you did.

Neighbor – Poems?

Daughter – What does it matter? There's no point here anyway.

Neighbor – Well, it depends.

Daughter – Mother, don't start.

Neighbor – I'd better make myself some tea.

Daughter – Can I go on then?

Neighbor – Sure.

Daughter – Do you realize that as soon as I open my laptop, there's going to be another question to me?

Neighbor – Why are you talking to me like that?

Daughter – Sorry.

Neighbor – By all means. Do whatever you want.

Daughter (opens the laptop) – Thank you.

Pause.

Neighbor – Sorry, I really forgot. Do you know the neighbor on the seventh floor?

No response.

Neighbor – The one who lives here from time to time?

No response.

Neighbor – He's in the hospital now.

Daughter – Very useful information. Thank you.

Neighbor – I think I should visit him. Want to join me?

Daughter – Oh, that's something new.

Neighbor – I happened to be next to him when it... He appeared to be all alone...

Daughter – What about his sister?

Neighbor – You are more observant than you let on. Yes, but that's not the point... I'd like you to go with me.

Daughter – No.

Neighbor – No?

Daughter – You got my answer.

Neighbor – Why?

Daughter – Because.

Neighbor – I don't know how to talk to you at all.

Daughter – Mother, I don't know what's on your mind, but what you suggest looks weird and crazy. We don't know each other at all.

Neighbor – You are sitting with your computer all the time. Time to get some air.

Daughter – In a hospital? Mother! I have not time. As you well know it.

Neighbor – Everything can change.

Daughter – Really? And how is that, pray tell? You even cut me off my meds. You know things better than any doctor. So how is that?

Neighbor – Cut you off? I just told you they were poison, that's all. It was all up to you, to keep taking or to dump them.

Daughter – Indeed...

Neighbor – And yes, I do know better. And proved it time and again.

Daughter – Fine, Mom, that's enough, I'm sorry.

Neighbor – Listen, I understand all this (points at the laptop). But poetry is not all that's left from us. There is life, here and now. Just look closer.

Daughter – I do. Every day. Not interesting.

Neighbor – You must be looking at it wrong. Would you like me to help you?

Daughter – I do. Just not now. No, not now.

Neighbor – And what do you need now?

Daughter – All I need now is quiet and freedom.

Neighbor – Well, there's something else...

Daughter – Exactly. Indeed, you know better. (Raises)

Neighbor – Where are you going?

Daughter – Out. Take a closer look at life. (heads to the door)

Neighbor – Wait! Are you really going out like this?

Daughter – Here we go again..

Neighbor – But, firstly, that's home clothing...

Daughter stops abruptly, clutching the air. Neighbor jumps up and carefully catches her.

Neighbor – Are you okay?

Daughter brings finger up to her lips. Stands quietly for a moment.

Daughter – Yes, I am. I’m okay now.

Neighbor – Here, sit a little.

Daughter – Can’t anymore. I’ll go now.

Neighbor – Well, you could at least dress up a little.

Daughter – I know how it will go with you: this doesn’t match that, nothing does. I like it this way anyhow. I love you, Mom, but now – bye-bye!

Neighbor – Okay.

Daughter steps out.

Neighbor (yells) – Dammit! Dammit! Dammit!!!

Stands a while with her eyes closed, trying to pull herself together, then, finally, a smile lights her face.

The lights begin to dim and the stage sinks into darkness.

The overhead spotlight picks out a sickbed in the remote left corner of the stage. Mytyl is kneeling beside her brother, her ear on his chest, listening to his heartbeat. The spotlight dims and goes out.

The curtain falls.

Intermission

Stage 9. “Luxuries of the Earth”

An overture to the next scene. The curtain opens. The table now stands across the stage, running down the middle of it. On either side of the table, people dressed in rich red are feasting. It’s an orgy so the singers are allowed to sit by the table, on the table and beneath the table. Some of the waiters may be party to the scene. Dancers, also dressed in red, are writhing in dance of passion and desire close by. Tytyl in the corner of the stage is taking the scene in, until he is noticed and invited to join the diners at the table.

Choir sings (more like rapping)

First – What are we doing in this life for ages?

Second – Trying to catch the moment with our hands!

Third – And keep hold of the one and only that equals the happiness, if only for a minute!

Choir – So bring us all those rarest dishes, switch on our favorite show, seduce the flesh, confuse the mind, be it a performance, or some games, or sex, or...

Instrumental break (pieces of familiar pop music)

First – It’s a bliss, yes it is, but oh so fleeting!

Second – Can’t hold the flavor as it slips away! So brings the new luxury, and hurry!

Third – Make us forget about the death, the void, the foul weather!

Choir – Wish we could try something brand new! To reach sensations never felt before! So hurry, bring it all, higher and wider! We gonna try it and... and... and... and!..

Dancers (sing along, flinging promo slogans at the audience)

Have fun as we keep working!

Guess why? Because you're worth it!

Take all you can from life!

If you don't want it, here we come!

Choir sings.

First – What's getting through our heads wherever?

Second – Just ads and ads!

First – What do we see with our own eyes?

Second – The same, the same!

Third – Go grab some money then! Go quick!!!

First – Go quick and buy!!!

Second – And eat! And eat!!!

Choir – Eat all you want and find your flavor, find your new world and even new faith! Black Friday's coming – whoop-de-do! But money's short, oh no, no, no!!!

Instrumental break (pieces of familiar pop music)

First – I wanna try all beasts on Earth!

Second – I wanna try all fish and birds!

Third – Aren't you great boys! You both get an 'A"! Myself, I'd settle for all woods and mountains!

Choir – I want to gobble it up and lay back on the soft bed, to watch TV, with cat and dog on either side – cuteness overload!

Instrumental break (pieces of familiar pop music)

Dancers (sing along, flinging promo slogans at the audience)

New generation chooses poison!

Try something new today!

Melt in mouth not in hands!

Get life by the horns! By the horns! By the horns!

Choir sings.

First – Come to us now, come, Tytyl!

Second – You’ll find here flavors beyond any imagination!

Third – We’ll make your deepest desires come true!

First – Anything is possible with us! Just imagine - anything!

Choir – Here you can have just any girl or boy! This or that, whatever, we’ll provide. Try it and find the ultimate happiness, ultimate experience and super-super-super duper!

(Young boys and girls gather round Tytyl and lead him to the table)

First – Oil and gas no longer cut it.

Second – No longer good for our appetite.

Third – Serve us in a platter the entire Earth, we’ll carve it pole to pole!

Choir – Carve it, grill it, gonna eat it! Need some special spices, so please cut this scenic peninsula off and add those two continents! La-la-la-la-la-la!

Everybody stops abruptly, peering deep into the audience as if into a screen. Sounds of switching channels and bits of newscasts

- Global GDP went up two per cent last year
- Typhoon keeps battering the Pacific Islands
- Domestic consumer demand is steadily on the rise, experts say
- Strong volcanic activity: earthquakes can be expected in most unlikely regions
- Annexed Crimea is dying for freshwater
- Mineral reserves on this planet will run out in 50 years
- The UN announces climate emergency
- Screening of candidates for the first Mars mission has commenced

First – Global GDP keeps growing and growing.

Second – Consumer demand keeps going and going.

Third – We yearn for that and we want this. The things that no one has or everybody.

Choir – For better life we lack just this one little thing, we’re lurking close by, just one step away from happiness. We’re drawing nearer, grabbing – yet it evades. So we want more! More! More!

Instrumental break (pieces of familiar pop music)

Choir – Stay, Tytyl! Just stay with us!

Here, you will find the sense of purpose

We’ll help you bury your talents in the field of dreams in the Land of the Fools!

Until they spring up, finish this one bit! And off we go – to try new planets! We’re gonna eat the Sun as well along with other stars, nothing else matters as long as there’s a pussy waiting you back home! Nom-nom-nom.

Dancers (sing along, flinging promo slogans at the audience)

Obey your thirst!

Take the best of life

New generation chooses poison!

I'm loving it, I love to eat!!!

Choir (to Tyltyl)

Stay with us! Stay with us!

Enjoy the trends and newest brands!

Here's football and the stadium! Plays here Dynamo!

Here's politics! Here's Trump and there's Obama!

Here you will get three lives and your pick of ammo!

You'll outmatch here any hero!

Toot-toot some happy dust?

Number 13 or some skag? Or would you rather take some speed?

Somebody switch his favorite show on!

Give him a full blast of that funny ad!

And fog his brain with erotic dreams!

Stay with us! Stay with us!

Consumption and living – it's all the same

We'll teach you to desire all!

Stay, Tyltyl! Stay with us!

Together we'll get more, more, more!

Stay, Tyltyl! Stay with us!

Stay with us! Stay with us!

(repeat this phrase, sinking into whisper, until everyone is frozen)

Overhead spotlight picks out Mytyl leaning over her brother, their foreheads touching. Her voice float up.

Mytyl's voice – Tyltyl! Sweetest brother, Tyltyl, turn the diamond! Can you hear me?

Overhead spotlight lands on Tyltyl who brings his palm up to his forehead and let it drop after a while. Everything goes quiet.

The lights on the stage begin to dim.

Scene 10. The Judgment Day

At length, the darkness fill with the sounds – the voices of nature. The storm wind, the pouring rain, the roar of thunder, a volcano eruption, loud sea tide, a forest full of sounds.

As the lights go on, a live green wave (the choir and the dancers) is slowly moving from the deepest recesses of the stage toward Tytyl who seems to be frozen in the middle of the front stage. The dancers slowly begin to move, their moves eventually merge into the battle dance that represents the elements and the fury of the nature.

The choir starts singing first, then the orchestra joins the oratorio. The choir slowly pulls around Tytyl, closing the circle.

Choir (singing)

What are you doing on this Earth, ye Human?

Can't you wake up, to see and hear

The moaning wind, the screaming water,

And the whole planet

Is trembling and crying?

The alien, a spirit in the flesh that came

To learn the ways and secrets of the Life

The bearer of love, the eyes and hands of God,

What makes you think that everything around

Belongs to you? How dare you? How could you?

Your warmth and mercy are enough

To keep entire world from freezing

But where are they? Show us the lands!

What have you done? Just cold and indifference ...

What has you clouded mind done?

Earth, fire, water, wind –

The one whole chain, alive without end.

Your cradle and your home, your world and garden, -

All shattered to pieces on your own whim.

The Sun is dead and rolls straight down to Hades.

Can you hear the scream?

It is yours.

Can you see us writhe in pain?

This pain is yours.

Do you see smoke over horizon?

Then we are coming to you!

(the music strikes)

The choir almost closes the circle around Tytyl. Just when it almost happens, Tytyl suddenly stands upright, throwing his hands up. The orchestra and the choir seem to carry on with their powerful performance and signing, but no sound comes through. The dancers are almost static, only rocking slightly as if a long wave. (the orchestra plays soundlessly, so the next stanza can be presented as roller captions)

So are you the maker, the dreamer, the seer of visions?

Or just the infernal beast in human disguise?

Who do you think you are? The king of all kings?

So yours is the dreadfully hideous path,

And infinite woes will await at the doorstep!

Catching everyone by surprise, himself included, Tytyl begins to sing his own song, eventually getting up to his feet.

Tytyl – (singing)

When stars explode black holes appear

I soak myself in sulfur fumes and aftertaste of pain...

As intergalactic winds whistle overhead, -

These are my wings I'm flapping high above.

Do you see stars a-shimmer and ablaze?

They are my eyes, as I watch myself from Heaven,

Do you see the sunrise and the sunset?

This is my pulse as blood runs down my veins.

Do you hear the whispering of the sea? – That is my breath

Flying between the worlds, just like a wave.

Do you see this fragile body on the crossroads?

That's me, trying to grow through darkness up towards the light.

I'm growing like a wild grass through the ages,

A new leaf that breaks through the bark of the clan,

Growing through the deaths and blood of the millennia -

Toward myself – the one who is and who has never been before

And every moment do I carve onto the table of the time

Spinning the Universe, turning the wheels of Destiny,

Sharing my warmth with the endless space

Bowing down to each blade of grass around me.

Can you hear that roar so far back away?

It's me screaming.

Do you see

This world writhing in pain?

That pain is mine.

Do you see smoke over horizon?

It's me coming to myself...

To my own self...

It's me...

It's me...

It's me...

The dancers slowly leave the stage while the choir slowly breaks the circle and retreats from Tytyl.

The lights go out.

A lone overhead spotlight in the far left corner of the stage picks out the sickbed. Mytyl grins, looking down at her still unconscious brother.

The light winks out.

Scene 11. Tyltyl and Neighbor

The light picks out Tyltyl and Neighbor who sit on the floor in the opposite parts of the stage, facing the audience, and appear to be engaged in a conversation without looking at each other. It is important to make their voices loud, amplified (to sound like voices in an endless space).

Neighbor – Did you