

POSITIONS 1956

Conrad Cummings

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Positions 1956

An Instructional Opera

Music by Conrad Cummings

Libretto by Michael Korie

Inspired by Manuals of the 1950s



STORY & SETTING

“Positions 1956” explores the “positions” both sexual and societal of the mid-1950s as a newlywed Bride and Groom educate themselves with instructional manuals.

Part One, “Marriage Manual,” is set in a bedroom over the first few months of the Bride and Groom's marriage as they explore positions and begin to learn about each other.

Part Two, “Physique,” is set in a gym where the Groom goes to a Trainer to receive a course in physical fitness based on exercises from 1950s men’s physique magazines.

Part Three, “Social Dancing,” is set in a dance studio where the Bride and Groom learn how to dance from an Instructor using methods from “How to Dance” manuals of the 1950s.

PRODUCTION REQUIREMENTS

“Marriage Manual” requires a double bed, night tables and two lamps. In “Physique,” the bed is replaced with a gym mat, a bench, a stool, and a few weights. “Social Dancing” is set on a bare stage set up to look like a dance studio.

To support the “instructional manual” core on which the opera hinges, the chapter headings of each of the marital positions, exercises, and dances are projected in a visible manner, e.g. on the wall behind the bed, the gymnasium and the dance studio.

The opera features three principal singers accompanied by an instrumental quartet: violin, cello, woodwind and synthesizer. There are no pauses between the three parts of the opera. The few set changes are expedited in view of the audience.

CHARACTERS

Bride -- Soprano

Groom --Baritone

Trainer/Instructor --Tenor

In Part Two, the Bride briefly appears as Q & A Expert.

MUSICAL SEQUENCES & CHAPTERS

PART 1: “MARRIAGE MANUAL”

The Non-Virgin Bride
Foreplay
The Bride Must Remember
Standing Position
Missionary Position
Moral Position
Sideways
Anal Intercourse
Doggie and Astride Positions
Sitting Position
Face-Off Position
Coming of Age in Samoa
Manual Friction
Fetal Position

PART 2: “PHYSIQUE”

Physique
Why Get Pushed Around?
Muscle Power
Chest Development
Washboard Abs
Neck Development
Push-Up Those Shoulders
Vital Sex Questions
Pep
Military Press
Leg Extension
Gallery of Magnificence
Muscle Power (*Reprise*)
Why Get Pushed Around? (*Reprise*)

PART 3: “SOCIAL DANCING”

December, 1956
How to Be a Good Dancer
Beginners Tango
Essential Foxtrot
Basic Cha-Cha
Exotic Rhythms
The Time Step
The Waltz and Its Variations
How to Dance The Rock-And-Roll
Concurrent Positions



**marriage
manual**



part one positions 1956



(As the audience enters it sees on stage a double-bed. On each side is a night table. On each table is a lamp and a 1950s sex manual, one for him, one for her. The house and stage lights go to black. In silence, a projection appears:

JANUARY, 1956

The projection dissolves into another projection:

**“YOU AND YOUR SEX LIFE:
A MANUAL FOR NEWLYWEDS”**

The stage lights rise. Now, a newlywed couple occupies the bed: the BRIDE and the GROOM. The BRIDE still wears her bridal veil and pearls, along with her nightgown. The GROOM wears 1950s pajamas. Each of them picks up their marriage manual from their respective night tables.

Note: The BRIDE and GROOM keep their manuals in hand at all times through the opera unless otherwise noted. They strive to reach the standard set by the line-drawings in the books, but often find it more difficult than the books say.

With a tiny bit of trepidation, the BRIDE reaches for the hand of the GROOM and squeezes it as they each hold their manuals with their free hand. After a moment of that, the BRIDE opens her sex manual to page one, and lifts up her bridal veil. As she does, a chapter head is projected.)
Projection:



“THE NON-VIRGIN BRIDE”

CD 1 track 1

(The music begins as the BRIDE reads from her manual.)

BRIDE

“The non-virgin bride,
The bride no longer a virgin,
May have problems when she marries.”

(The GROOM reads from his marriage manual.)

GROOM

“The non-virgin bride
May have problems when she marries.”

BRIDE & GROOM

“Having tried it,
She is likely to think
Intercourse repugnant.
Having tried it on a sofa.
On the back seat of a car.
No wonder she did not like it.
On a blanket in the park.
In the back seat of a Dodge.
At the drive-in, on the sofa,
On the sand-dune, in the Dodge,
On the backseat with the steamy windows,
Blankets, zippers, toe-nails, Jockey shorts.
Having tried it, she is likely to fear
She is ill, or frigid...
No wonder she does not like it,
The non-virgin bride.”

(They turn pages to the next chapter, the next position.)





Projection: "FOREPLAY"
CD 1 track 2

BRIDE & GROOM

"Women vary as to foreplay,
Some like less play, some like more play.
Stroking of the bosom, licking of the nipples
May occasion either apathy or ripples.
Probing of the cervix, pressure with the penis
Nibbling at an earlobe, may awake a Venus,
Kissing and caressing may be seventh heaven
As for cunnilingus, turn to Chapter Seventeen."

GROOM

"Though considered safe and clean,
Women vary in hygiene."

(They turn their pages to the next chapter, the next position.)

Projection: "THE BRIDE MUST REMEMBER"
CD 1 track 3

BRIDE

"Your husband is eager to please you.
Of course, he loves you.
But he *is* a man.
A man who *wants* you.
The bride must remember
In each fiber of her core,
She must help and hew
To her duty and grave obligation.
For he is a man.
The pulse throbbing in his veins
Is the pounding of his elemental reproductive instinct."

BRIDE & GROOM

"He is alive with desire!
His organ must respond
In positions of intercourse
In the holy marriage bond!
In positions of intercourse
In the holy marriage bond!"

(The BRIDE is surprised to read the following passage:)

BRIDE

"She is equipped for pleasure
But hers is not essential.
Without his, her ecstasy
Is inconsequential."

BRIDE & GROOM

"He is alive with desire!
His organ must respond
In positions of intercourse
In the marriage bond!"

BRIDE

He is alive with desire...

Projection: "STANDING POSITION"

CD 1 track 4

(Obligingly, the BRIDE and GROOM stand, attempt to follow the diagrams while each continues to hold a manual with one hand, and reads it over the other's shoulder.)

BRIDE & GROOM

“Up against the wall.
Though difficult,
Up against the wall is done.
Up against the wall
Is difficult but fun.
Woman may be tall.
Husband may be small.
Husband fetches box,
Starts to slip and fall.
Husband wrenches back.
Woman wrenches back.
Tramples on a tack.
Next time he'll recall
Next time she'll recall
What you're up against,
Up against the wall.”

(They return to the bed. They put their manuals down on their night tables. Each turns off their bedside lamp. Illuminated by the spill of light from outside a window, the GROOM assumes the “usual” position, on top of the BRIDE. Beneath him, the BRIDE drifts away in private thought, not terribly gratified by his perfunctory attentions.)



Projection: "MISSIONARY POSITION"
CD 1 track 5

BRIDE

Big Bart... Big Bob... Big Bill...?
Why on earth do their clocks have names?
And the park. No, a church.
Either a church or a park named James.
And they eat fish and chips
Which they buy by a river
Called the "Tems"
But they spell it "Thames."
Ben! It's Ben!

GROOM

(Stops his motion)

Who's Ben?

BRIDE

Whaddaya mean "Who's Ben?"
Ben's a clock.
Big Ben!

(He returns to his endeavors, and she to day-dreaming.)

BRIDE (*continued*)

Jewels...

Family jewels. . .

Locked away for display in a tower.

Where you wait on line for an hour

And don't move...

GROOM

(*Losing his rhythm*)

Don't move!

BRIDE

Guards. Lotsa guards.

Guards in hats, beaver hats.

And the queen keeps 'em changing

'Cause she's horny and bored

So she keeps rearranging

Guards like furniture.

GROOM

Ah!

BRIDE

Furniture...

Which is just what *I* am,

Getting laid in the sack

Lying flat on my back

Thinking of England.

Thinking of England.

Thinking of England.

(The GROOM rolls off her. She turns her back to his and goes to sleep. Feeling remorse that he may have been selfish, the GROOM taps her shoulder. She doesn't budge. He sits up in bed, turns on his lamp, reads his manual.)



Projection: "MORAL POSITION"
CD 1 track 6

GROOM

"The morality of using auxiliary positions
For the wife's orgasmic priorities
Has long been recognized
By church and medical authorities..."

Projection: "SIDEWAYS"
CD 1 track 7

(Nestled in the GROOM's arms while lying on her side,
the BRIDE is fulfilled. She utters soft moans of pleasure.)

BRIDE

Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah!

GROOM

For *him*, this is sideways.
For *her*, it is the stars.

BRIDE

Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah!

GROOM

A galaxy of pleasure,
A milky way of ecstasy,
An orchestra fortissimo.
A mountaintop of love.
Her skin is flushed and warm.
Her pupils glaze and dilate.
Her nostrils are distended.
He basks in her fulfillment.
She is in heaven...

BRIDE

Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah!

GROOM

And he has brought her to this,
Her highest climax!
For *her*, this is sideways.
For *him*, it is the stars.
For *him*, it is the stars.



Projection: “ANAL INTERCOURSE”
CD 1 track 8

(Each of the night-table lamps snaps back on. The BRIDE and GROOM sit far apart from each other, on opposite sides of the bed. They each now wear reading glasses, and have their noses buried in their respective manuals. An air of tension is between them, a disagreement has surfaced.)

BRIDE & GROOM

“A man may wish his wife
To engage in anal intercourse.”

BRIDE

(Looks up from book)
She should not give in!

GROOM

He may wish his wife
To explore the possibility.

BRIDE

To “explore the possibility”?
She must not give in!
His wish is an expression

BRIDE (*continued*)

Of latent neurosis.
To acquiesce would only
Encourage psychosis!
The wife must urge the man
To engage a good psychiatrist!

GROOM

He should not give in!

BRIDE

She should not give in!

BRIDGE & GROOM

He should not... !
She should not...!
He should not... !
She should not...!
Give in!



Projection: **“DOGGIE AND ASTRIDE POSITIONS”**
CD 1 track 9

(The BRIDE and GROOM struggle to be on the top.)

BRIDE & GROOM

“Doggie-doggie. Doggie-doggie.
Doggie-doggie. Doggie-doggie, or Astride.
Who’s on bottom? Who’s on bottom?
Who’s on bottom, husband or his bride?
Man on his back, woman astride,
Buttocks on chest, knees either side
Thought by the ancient Romans the best,
Restful for man, woman does the rest.”

Projection: **“SITTING POSITION”**
CD 1 track 10

BRIDE & GROOM

“Sitting, the male is on a chair,
Feet on the ground.
Sitting, the female on his lap,
Legs wrapped around.
Sitting, the male sits up in bed,
Legs pointed out.
Sitting, the female on his lap,
Squirring about.
Sitting, the male is on a stool,
Enters from rear.”
Sitting, the female says enough.
Male doesn’t hear.
Sitting, the female gives the man
Swift upper hook.
Sitting, the female sits alone
Reading her book.



Projection: “**FACE-OFF POSITION**”
CD 1 track 11

(Musical interlude: The BRIDE and GROOM make the bed, straightening the blanket and plumping the pillows. The GROOM puts on his trousers and exits for work. The BRIDE puts on a robe, picks up a feather duster, and exits to houseclean. For a moment the stage is empty except for the bed. The lights change from morning to evening. The BRIDE returns to bed in an old torn nightgown and curlers, with a new book to read -- not her sex manual.)

Projection: “**COMING OF AGE IN SAMOA**
BY MARGARET MEAD”
CD 1 track 12

BRIDE

“In Samoa, in Samoa,
Public deflow’ring
Of the chieftain’s daughter
In Samoa, in Samoa,
Public deflow’ring
In the village square.
There’s a Soa in Samoa,
In Samoa, there’s a Soa,
A man’s ambassador in love affairs...”



(The GROOM re-enters in his pajamas, perhaps shirtless, clearly expecting interest from the BRIDE. But she is buried in her book. Ignored, the GROOM observes her irritably, climbing into bed and opening his sex manual to read.)

Projection: "MANUAL FRICTION"
CD1 track 13

GROOM

"The wife who sits in bed reading
In curlers and an old torn nightgown
Is tempting the fates, not her husband.
At those times when she is unpresentable,
Self-relief is un-preventable."

BRIDE

"Boys are circumcised in pairs in Samoa."

GROOM

"One would think a satisfying marriage
Would negate the need for manual friction."

BRIDE

"In Samoa, in Samoa..."

GROOM

“This, alas, is a fiction.”

(They shut their books, turn off the lamps, and go to sleep with backs to each other. In the darkness, each indulges private fantasies more interesting to them than each other.)

BRIDE

In Samoa
In Samoa
In the hot blinding sun
Twenty natives
With spears
Pounding a drum
I'd struggle but succumb
Sobbing “Help!”
They speak no English.
Wailing and sobbing
Pounding and throbbing
Help me help me help me
Till I fall asleece.

GROOM

The girl in the office
The girl in the office
By the water cooler
During lunch
Take a spin
An hour
During lunch
In her sportscoupe
At the Holiday Inn.
Kissing and hugging
Kissing and hugging
Help me help me help me
Till I fall asleece.

(Suddenly, the BRIDE turns on her night table lamp. Months have passed. We see that she is now visibly pregnant. A chapter heading is projected:)



Projection: “**FETAL POSITION**”

CD 1 track 14

(The BRIDE reaches out to the GROOM. She takes his hand, puts it on her to feel the baby sleeping inside. He does. He smiles nervously. She encourages him to go further. He declines, ever so solicitously, using her condition as a pretext for the “night off” he needs.)

GROOM

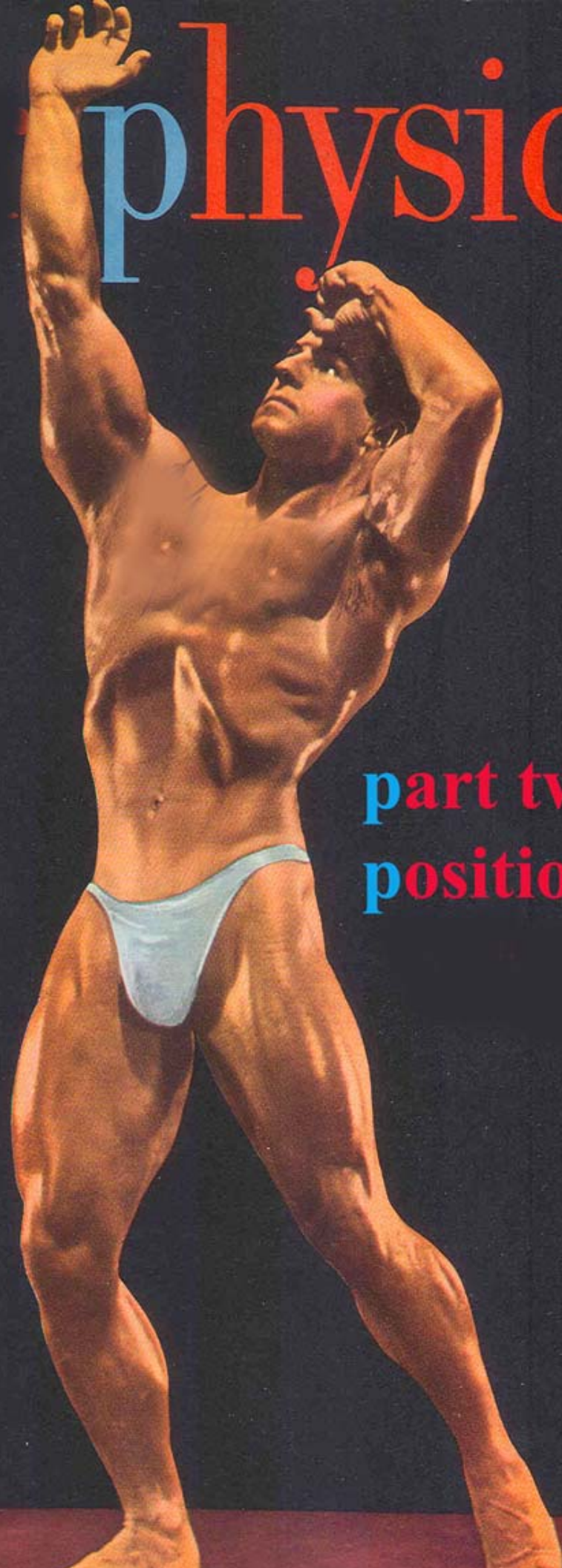
Not tonight, sweetheart.
The books all say to be careful.
I want to... be careful.
We have the rest of our lives.
I don't mind at all, honey.
Now just quit tryin' to please me.
No problem, you'll please me
After baby arrives.
This time, you owe me one.
Next time, I'll owe you one.
Isn't that how marriage survives?
Just another month, darling,
And things can go back to normal.
We're normal.
We're pregnant.
I love you.
We have the rest of our lives.
We have the rest of our lives.

(They look at each other and smile, then look straight out. They are in a matrimonial “time-out.” Their relationship has reached a stalemate. Nothing is exactly wrong with their marriage... and yet something is not quite right about it. The lights fade to black.

In the darkness, the BRIDE and GROOM exit as the bed and night tables are rolled off by STAGEHANDS.

During this, the TRAINER enters from the opposite side.)

physique



part two
positions 1956



(The TRAINER, mid-thirties, physically fit, wears gym shorts, T-shirt, white socks, sneakers. As the bed is moved offstage, he creates the space for part two, rolling out a large exercise mat across the floor. The year is still 1956. The positions have shifted from the bedroom manuals to the gym and men's fitness magazines. The TRAINER opens one such magazine, "Physique." A projection appears.)

"POSITIONS 1956"
PART TWO: "PHYSIQUE"
CD 1 track 15

TRAINER

“Today is an age
Of cold implicit violence.
The looming mushroom cloud
Of all-engulfing silence.
The television set
Anaesthetizing action.
The Vista-Vision flick
Of numbing stupefaction.
America is rich
With industry’s machines,
But weak in moral fiber
Like yesterday’s Marines,
At barbeques all guzzling beer
And blabbering about sports,
Their flabby buttocks bursting out
Of plaid Bermuda shorts!”

(Putting down “Physique Magazine,” he goes back to setting up the space with a training bench, a stool; a rack with a barbell, springy steel cables and free weights.)

TRAINER

Young Apollo!
Young Adonis!
Let a new age of brawn
Dawn upon us!
A virile age that resurrects
Antiquity’s ideal!
The legions of centurions
With bodies forged of steel,
Each a God, with a nod to the Greek!
Let today be the Age of Physique!
Physique!
Let today be the Age of Physique!

(He glances back at the magazine, reads aloud.)

“Today’s lost young men
Join gangs to smoke and loiter.
They park in cars with tramps
With whom they reconnoiter.
Teen Circes with red lips,
They see men as their ticket.
Their drug of choice is sex,

TRAINER (*continued*)

And how few men can kick it!
The enemy within
Pervades our manly ways;
The government, the army;
Our schools and PTAs.
Guys eat their TV dinners
And embrace the status-quo.
We need a breed of Supermen
To rise and face the foe!”

(He goes back to setting up the gym. He hangs a calendar
on the wall, and a red marker pen on a string beside it.)

Young Adonis! Young Apollo!
Ancient Greece is a good goal to follow!
Look back upon Discobolus, Apollo Belvedere!
Apoxyomenos, Hercules, and recreate them *here*,
In the gym, every limb at its peak!
Let today be the Age of Physique!
Physique!
Let today be the Age of Physique!

(The TRAINER exits. The GROOM appears in street
clothes, as if coming from work. He carries a gym bag. In
his hand is a different fitness magazine.)



Projection: “**WHY GET PUSHED AROUND?**”
CD 1 track 16

GROOM

“Why get pushed around?
Why get pushed around?
When you pass a tough guy
Do you look down at the ground?
Could you stand to gain some weight
Or drop an extra pound?
Why get pushed around?
Ask yourself why?”
(Looks up, wonders aloud)
Why?

GROOM (*continued*)

“Is your income low?
Work-advancement slow?
Do you have a dead-end job
With little room to grow?
Have the signs of marital
Discord begun to show?
Are things “touch and go”
More than you know?”
Uh-oh...!
“Why get pushed around?
New research has found
Isometric training
Builds a body to astound.
Time you said ‘Enough’
To the local tough,
Guys who call you “Toothpick,”
“Fatso,” “Donkey-Butt,” and stuff.”
“Donkey-Butt”...?”

(The GROOM enters the gym. The TRAINER re-enters.
He sees the GROOM, and gives him a “sales pitch.”)

TRAINER

Build a new physique,
Like an ancient Greek!
Leave the louts who heckled you
Too thunderstruck to speak!
Find your inner force,
Masculine resource,
Through the core positions
Of a military fitness-training course!

GROOM

“Donkey-Butt”?
“Toothpick”?
“Broomstick?”

GROOM

A military fitness-training course....?

(The TRAINER compares his physique to the GROOM’s,
showing him what kind of body he could have.)



Projection: “**MUSCLE POWER**”
CD 1 track 17

TRAINER

From this... to this,
In thirty-five days!

GROOM

From this...
(Indicates magazine photo)
To this?

TRAINER

In thirty five days,
Due to muscle power!

GROOM

“Muscle power”?

TRAINER

Muscle power!

GROOM

Muscle power!

TRAINER

Power to achieve
A body to amaze!

(The GROOM is convinced. The TRAINER indicates the bench. The GROOM goes to the bench, sits, takes off his suit jacket and trousers, shirt and tie, handing them to the TRAINER who folds them neatly, puts them down. The GROOM disrobes to his gym shorts, T-shirt, sneakers.)

TRAINER

From flab... to beef
In thirty-five days!

GROOM

Beyond... belief
In thirty-five days.

TRAINER

Trust in muscle power!

GROOM

Muscle power.

TRAINER

Muscle-power!

GROOM

Muscle-power!

TRAINER

Power to re-learn
Your lax and lazy ways!

TRAINER

Gain self-confidence, respect!
New friends
In your Community
And Church.
Or girlfriend.
Mocked because you're thin!
Age, religion, skin!
Fitness training will reveal
The better you within!
(Shows his magazine)
"Physique Magazine"!

GROOM

A brighter outlook on life!

Less backtalk from the wife –

Mocked because you're thin!
Age, religion, skin!

The better you within!

TRAINER (*continued*)

Ready?

In thirty-five days!

From this to this

In thirty-five no-fooling

Grueling days...!

GROOM (*continued*)

(*Shows his magazine*)

“Muscle Power”!

Let’s begin!

In thirty-five days!

From this to this

In thirty-five no-fooling

Grueling days...!

Projection: “**CHEST DEVELOPMENT**”

CD 1 track 18

TRAINER

Out-of-shape men tire easily.

(*Slaps Groom’s butt*)

Their food

Is not digested properly.

(*Pats Groom’s stomach*)

Prone to poor blood

They’re anemic.

(*Pulls down skin under Groom’s eyes, peers*)

With low disease resistance,

They often call-in sick.

Correctional measures

TRAINER (*continued*)

Are impossible unless

Something is done

To break this chain of weakness...!

(The TRAINER produces two sets of springy steel hand-held cables and instructs the GROOM in their usage by example.)



TRAINER & GROOM

Cables of steel
Can build a mighty chest!
A barrel chest that grows and grows
To fill your clothes completely!
No longer feel
Ashamed to get undressed!
In locker rooms no longer be
The scapegoat of a bully!

TRAINER

How's *this* for muscularity?

GROOM

Witness this striking pose!

BOTH

Increase your popularity!

Build a chest that shows

Your muscles fill your clothes!

(As the GROOM works the steel cables, he tires.)

TRAINER

Exhale! Inhale!

With increased lung power,

You'll start to feel those pecs of steel!

In less than half an hour!!

Cables of steel

Can build a mighty chest!

A barrel chest that grows and grows

To fill your clothes completely!

No longer feel

Ashamed to get undressed

GROOM

Exhale!

Inhale!

Exhale!

Inhale!

Exhale!

Inhale!

TRAINER & GROOM

In locker rooms no longer be

The scapegoat of a bully!

A bully! A bully!

Exhale!

GROOM

(Exhale!)

(The GROOM exits. The TRAINER goes over to the calendar on the wall, and X's out a day with the red marker. Lights lower. Music. The lights re-arise, another day. The GROOM is in position, lying on the gym mat doing sit-ups. As he does, the TRAINER holds his ankles in place.)

Projection "WASHBOARD ABS"
CD 1 track 19

TRAINER

A fact about abdominals
The layman may not know --

GROOM

Twenty-five... Twenty-four...

TRAINER

That so-called "washboard tummy"
All the bodybuilders show --

GROOM

Twenty-two... Twenty-one...

TRAINER

Those deeply chiseled ridges
Grecian sculptors found aesthetic --

GROOM

Nineteen... Eighteen...

TRAINER

Have life-prolonging benefits
As well as ones athletic.

BOTH

Washboard abs!
Washboard abs!
Chiseled lines of meat in slabs!
Washboard abs!
Washboard abs
Help deflect...

GROOM

Twelve... Eleven...

BOTH

– Life's jabs!

TRAINER

A heavy-smoker fellow
Who I personally knew –

GROOM

Ten... Nine...

TRAINER

Had three-martini lunches
And his belly showed it, too –

GROOM

Eight.... Seven...

TRAINER

A rupture caused by coughing
Brought a pint of blood he spit up –

GROOM

Six... Five...

TRAINER

He'd not have needed surgery
If he'd have done one sit-up!

GROOM

Three, Two, One, *done!*

BOTH

Washboard abs!
Washboard abs!
Chiseled lines of meat in slabs!
Washboard abs!
Washboard abs
Help deflect life's jabs.

(The GROOM lays back on the mat, sighs from exertion.
The TRAINER gives him a hand, assists him to his feet.
They stand side-by-side, slowly rotating their necks.)

Projection: "NECK DEVELOPMENT"
CD 1 track 20

TRAINER & GROOM

A word about necks:
The opposite sex
Is keenly aware if it's scrawny.
Uncovered by clothes,
The neck you expose
Ideally is sturdy and brawny.
If your neck is weak,
Your feeble physique
Will show what's below your white collar.
Don't ever avoid
Your Sterno-mastoid,
And sex will be "X on the dollar."

(The GROOM marks another "X" on the calendar.)

TRAINER

Ain't done yet.

(The TRAINER and the GROOM arrange three stools or a bench and a chair into a triangle to do push-ups on them.)



Projection: "**PUSH-UP THOSE SHOULDERS**"
CD 1 track 21

TRAINER

Form a triangle of chairs,
Feet on one and hands on two.
Stretch your body like a board,
Elbows in and not protruding.

(GROOM does push-ups straddled over the bench and
stool.)

BOTH

Pushup... those shoulders!

TRAINER

Work those puny triceps!

BOTH

Pushup... those shoulders!

GROOM

Upper arms and biceps!

TRAINER

Men who flex have better sex
With granite pecs of steel

GROOM

Like boulders.

TRAINER

Pushup!

GROOM

Pushup!

TRAINER

Pushup!

GROOM

Pushup!

TRAINER

Feel that latent power whoosh up!

(As the GROOM's gut starts to sag, the TRAINER reaches around his middle and pulls him up, perhaps accidentally brushing the GROOM's groin area with his hand. The GROOM notices but doesn't think anything of it.)

GROOM
Pushup!

TRAINER
Pushup!

GROOM
Pushup!

TRAINER
Pushup!

BOTH
Pushup... those shoulders!

(The TRAINER X's out another day on the calendar. He glances to look at the GROOM, wondering... and exits.)

(Alone on stage, the GROOM goes over to the bench to change – the bench represents the locker room. But before he changes, there on the bench the GROOM discovers the Trainer's magazine, "Physique." Curious, he opens the magazine, flips through it, and reads. As he does, the BRIDE appears, elsewhere, abstractly, perhaps wearing eyeglasses as if she was the Physique Magazine's Q & A EXPERT. Or so the GROOM imagines her to be...)



Projection: "VITAL SEX QUESTIONS"
CD 1 track 22

GROOM

"Physique Magazine"

Answers Vital Sex Questions.

Question:

Is it healthy for a man
To sleep in the nude?

Q & A EXPERT (BRIDE)

Answer:

A man's skin is porous

It needs air.

It breathes when he sleeps bare.

GROOM

Question:

Will too much exercise

Impair my sex life?

Q & EXPERT (BRIDE)

Answer:

It may increase it.

Well-developed muscles

Hold allure to one's wife, or girlfriend.

GROOM

Question:

My right testicle is hanging
Lower than my left one, lately.
Is this due to too much exercise?

Q &A EXPERT (BRIDE)

Answer:

I doubt it greatly.
Last question.

GROOM

Sometimes, when I exercise
I get an erection. Why?

Q & A EXPERT (BRIDE)

Answer: tight gym shorts
Wear a new, looser short
And tighter athletic supporter,
The sort with a built-in cup.

GROOM

No cup! This is exercise, not hockey!

Q & A EXPERT (BRIDE)

Fine. Don't wear one.
Just don't come crying
To "Physique Magazine"
If you disgrace yourself
In the shower of the men's locker.

(The Q & A EXPERT/BRIDE vanishes. Lights change. It is now another day. The GROOM is in the locker room. TRAINER enters, shirtless, toweling off from a shower.)

Projection: "**PEP**"
CD 1 track 23

TRAINER

Boy, do I feel *great!*

GROOM

Pep?

TRAINER

Boy, oh boy, do I---

GROOM

Pep!

TRAINER

Nothing like a bracing---

GROOM

Workout...

TRAINER

Followed by a cool---

GROOM

Shower...

TRAINER

And a brisk

GROOM

Rubdown...

TRAINER

With a rough...

GROOM

Towel...?

TRAINER

My body is alive and tingling.

BOTH

Pep!

TRAINER

With the energizing feeling---

BOTH
Pep! Yep!

GROOM
You do, you do seem peppy.

TRAINER
Yep.

BOTH
Pep.

TRAINER
Because I feel I'm *feeling* peppy.
I feel...I feel like I could hold my own
Locked inside a cage of raging panthers.

GROOM
Wow.

TRAINER
Wow.

GROOM
How?

TRAINER
And you'd feel that way, too.

GROOM
How?

TRAINER
Wow! Just the way that *I* do---

GROOM
Pep!

TRAINER
Yep!

GROOM
When you learn how to work-out...?

TRAINER
Pep!

GROOM

Yep!

TRAINER

With barbells.

GROOM

Barbells...?

TRAINER

Yep, with barbells.

GROOM

Barbells... do I have to?

TRAINER

Barbells, now!

GROOM

Do I have to?

TRAINER

Yep!

Projection: "**MILITARY PRESS**"

CD 1 track 24

(The TRAINER instructs the GROOM in the use of a barbell.)

TRAINER

What defines the chiseled cut
Of weightlifting success?

BOTH

Yes, man, yes:

GROOM

It's the military press!

TRAINER

What firms up a flabby gut
Through dint of pure duress?

BOTH

Yes, man, yes:
It's the military press.

TRAINER

Growing repetitions.

GROOM

Graduated steps.

TRAINER

Escalating extra sets of ten to twenty reps.

GROOM

Ten to twenty reps?

TRAINER

How'd I build the *gluteus*
Of granite I possess?

GROOM

Let me guess: with the military press?

TRAINER

Yes. Sundays, and holidays,
Do it all day long.

GROOM

I hate this --

TRAINER

Supplement with nutriments
To build your vigor up for rigor!
What shows off a man's physique
Beneath his business dress?
I profess --

GROOM

More or less --

BOTH

Yes, man, yes, it's the necessary --

GROOM

Grueling --

TRAINER

Very --

BOTH

Legendary military press!

Projection: "LEG EXTENSION"
CD 1 track 25

(The GROOM sits on a bench. The TRAINER presses down on his leg as the GROOM pushes up with it. The GROOM is somewhat taken aback by the body contact.)

TRAINER

The leg extension exercise
Accentuates your thighs,
Affording them the masculine
Development you prize.

GROOM

In order for my muscles
To have pressure to resist –

TRAINER

You need an able body
Who is willing to assist.

BOTH

Get a partner!
Let a partner
Put pressure on your rising limb
As you push into *him*.

TRAINER

Get a partner!
Let a partner
Assist you with your legwork
Both at home or at the gym.

GROOM

(Growing uncomfortable)
Both at *home*...?

TRAINER

That's right.
Or at the gym.
And if you have no bench –

GROOM

No bench.

TRAINER

A kitchen dinette chair --

GROOM

No chair.

TRAINER

Will do you in a pinch --

GROOM

Don't pinch.

TRAINER

Providing he is there --

GROOM

Who, where?

TRAINER

To press down on your calf --

GROOM

Hold on.

TRAINER

And hold it in a clinch.

GROOM

Don't clinch!

TRAINER

Before you know,
Your size will grow
From six to seven inches!

GROOM

Huh?

TRAINER

Your partner presses down as you arise.

GROOM

Uh, yeah, but --

BOTH

The leg extension exercise
Accentuates your thighs.

GROOM

Gotta go, man.

TRAINER

Ciao. See ya' Wednesday.

(The GROOM quickly stuffs his street clothes into his gym bag, retrieves his "Muscle Power" magazine, and exits. The TRAINER X's out another day on the calendar. He removes his sweaty T-shirt, looks at himself in a mirror. Satisfied, he climbs up the climbing-wall to an alcove above. There, he reclines on one elbow and reads aloud from "Physique Magazine," admiring the bodybuilders featured in the magazine's "Gallery of Magnificence.")



Projection: "GALLERY OF MAGNIFICENCE"

CD 1 track 26

TRAINER

"In The Gallery of Magnificence;
This month's Gallery of Magnificence
Meet Nick Di Guiseepe, bodybuilder.
Steel-spring cables, Weider Barbells,
And High Protein Powder Shake
Have earned him our cover spread,
Physique Magazine's newest namesake
In the Gallery,
This month's Gallery of Magnificence."

TRAINER (*continued*)

(*Turns the page*)

“In the Gallery of Magnificence
This month’s Gallery of Magnificence
What abdominals! What abdominals!”
It is hardly necessary to identify
The fellow with the chiseled stomach
But in case you don’t know
It’s Vic Seipke, 21,
Now in the U.S. Navy.”
“And a nod to Rico Provenzale,
Runner-up Mister Muscles of Parsippany
In the Gallery
This month’s Gallery of Magnificence.”

(A light clicks on in the distance behind the TRAINER. At home, the GROOM sits in a chair reading “Muscle Power” magazine. He reads a warning from the editor and realizes that there are *two* kinds of fitness magazines – and that his TRAINER is reading “Physique,” the kind read by homosexuals. Behind him, the BRIDE crosses the stage testing a bottle of baby formula, then exits.)

GROOM

“Muscle Power warns its readership
Of certain magazines, perverted magazines,
That dirty little book they call “Physique”
Devoted to the so-called “Greek Ideal,”
More suited to the *freak* of nature!
The Homo-trade!
The Pansy Boys of Fairy-land!
Beware the sissy fitness magazine
On your newsstand!”

(The BRIDE re-enters from the other direction with an armload of laundered diapers. The GROOM pays no mind and continues reading his magazine. The BRIDE exits.)

GROOM

In the guise of exercise,
They peddle pornography
To the “invert” trade:
Naked buttocks...!
Tight, little loincloths...!
Bulges grotesquely displayed! Smut!”

(The BRIDE re-enters from the other direction reading the temperature on a baby rectal thermometer. The GROOM's loud rantings annoy her and she loses her patience.)

BRIDE

For God's sake, *shut up!*
You'll wake the baby.

GROOM

Sorry, sweetheart.

(During this, the TRAINER climbs down from his alcove above, leaving his magazine there. Abstractly, as the lights change, he enters the space where the GROOM and BRIDE live. He stands behind the GROOM, who doesn't see him as he continues to seethe over the editorial in the magazine. The TRAINER transfers his admiration of the athletes in the magazine to the GROOM, for whom he has clearly developed feelings. With an uncharacteristic tenderness, the TRAINER lightly brushes the side of the GROOM's face with his hand, tousles his hair. The GROOM, of course, does not notice; it's all in the TRAINER's imagination.)



TRAINER

“Frank Bowman;
Jim Finn;
Arthur Ullrich;
Quentin Price
Weighs one-ninety-eight,
Standing five-foot-ten.”

(He touches the Groom’s face.)

Nice...

GROOM

“Boys, take care in locker rooms.
Watch out for men
Biding their time
To mislead you.
To corrupt you.
To misguide you.
And induct you
Into decadence!
Promiscuity!
Teenage delinquency!
The cesspool of homosexual slime!”

TRAINER

“Walt Walters
Keeps fit
And trim
Building
A fence.
Huge forearms
Inducted him
In the Gallery
Of Magnificence.
This month’s Gallery
Of Magnificence!”

(By now, the GROOM and TRAINER have transitioned back to the gym. The lights change. The TRAINER arrives there first, and X’s out another day on the calendar. The GROOM enters, still in his street attire, glaring in fury at the TRAINER. He feels that his manhood has been violated, and blames the erection he got on the Trainer. The TRAINER sees the GROOM, indicates the calendar.)

Projection: “**MUSCLE POWER** (*Reprise*)”
CD 1 track 27

TRAINER

Hey, Bud, you’re early. It’s only Tuesday.

GROOM

I guess I couldn’t wait to see ya.

TRAINER

You aren’t changed.

GROOM

Oh, no. I’m changed...

(Having built himself up over the past “Thirty-Five Days,” the GROOM proceeds to beat the shit out of the TRAINER. The TRAINER stands there and takes it, not fighting back.)

From wimp, to buff
In thirty-five days.

(He pats the Trainer’s butt, as the Trainer did to him. The Trainer doesn’t know if he’s kidding. Then he finds out.)

From simp, to tough
In thirty-five days

(He slugs the Trainer in the gut.)



Due to muscle power!

(He slugs the Trainer in the gut again.)

Muscle power!

(A hard right to the Trainer's chin)

Power to achieve
A body to amaze!
From shrimp, to stag,
And look at me now!

(A slug to the Trainer's solar plexus)

Hit back, you fag.
You oughta know how,
Thanks to muscle power!

(He knocks the Trainer down to the ground.)

Muscle power!

(He straddles the Trainer and spits in his face.)

Power to resist
Your sick, perverted ways!

(The TRAINER lays on the mat crumpled up in pain. The GROOM finds the "Physique Magazine," tears it up, and throws the pieces on the TRAINER. Suddenly frightened by his own anger, the GROOM grabs his jacket and goes. Flat on his back, the TRAINER gazes up at the ceiling, wondering, to a reprise of "Why Get Pushed Around?")



Projection: “**WHY GET PUSHED AROUND?** (Reprise)
CD 1 track 28

TRAINER

Why'd I fight the war?
Who'd I fight it for?
Serving with distinction
In the Navy Signal Corps.
Discharged in dishonor
When they needed me no more.
“Go to Hell, G.I.”
Ask yourself why?
Why?

(He sits up, wipes a trickle of blood from his mouth.)

Working in a gym.
Barely scraping by.
Could be teaching Phys Ed
If I'd been a college guy.
Put in for the G.I. Bill
But didn't qualify.
“Blue slips can't apply.”
Ask yourself why?
Why?

TRAINER (*continued*)

(He stands up and rubs his chin where he was slugged.)

Why don't I hit back
When they call me fag?
Why do I just stand there
Like a human punching bag?
Will I always live a lie,
Or start to stand my ground?
Live or die,
Why get pushed around?

(*He looks down at his hand.*)

Why get pushed around?

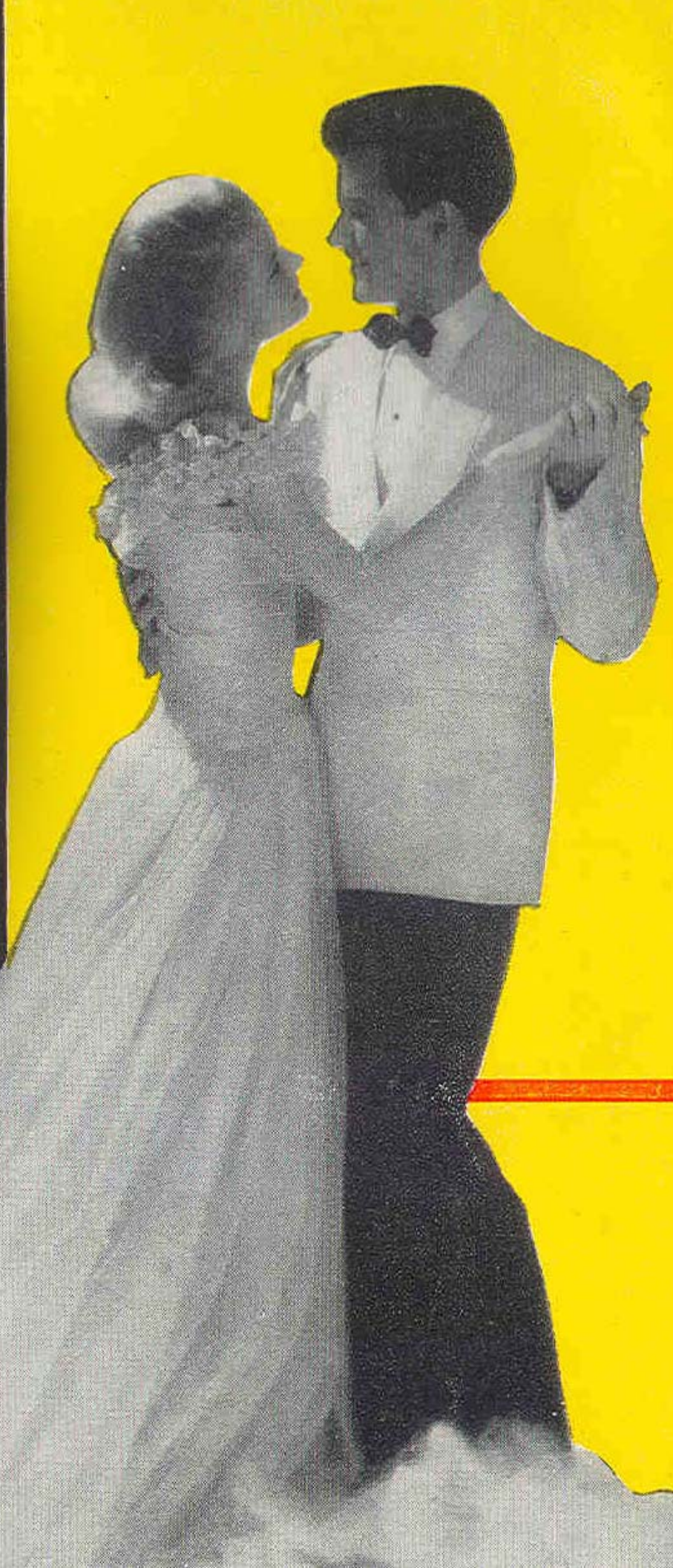
(*He curls his fingers into a fist.*)

Why get pushed around?

(The TRAINER looks down at his fist, curled as if to do a barbell exercise, only now he is beginning to see a different kind of power in it, and in himself. He stands there staring at his fist as the light fades slowly to black.)



*Part 3:
Social
Dancing*



(Transition: in the darkness, we hear the screams of a baby, the BRIDE and GROOM's baby, driving them crazy.)

(When the lights rise, the BRIDE is walking down an aisle of the audience. She wears a winter coat with a Christmas corsage. She holds a handbag and her trusty "Marriage Manual." A projection shows time's passage.)

Projection: "DECEMBER, 1956"

CD 2 track 1

BRIDE

"After dating and marriage
And childbirth occur
The bride may discover
Her husband prefers
To read a good book
Or watch the TV,
Demurring from marital intimacy."

(Looks up from book)

That's Larry to a "T".

(Continues reading)

"The bride has a duty
To hew and remember
Her task to rekindle
The fire from its ember
With shared activities
To re-arouse romancing,
Like tennis..."

Nah.

"Or hunting..."

No!

"Or Yoga..."

(Never heard of it)

Yo-what?

"Or lessons in social dancing."

Oh....!

Instruction in social dancing!

(Remembering, she takes a coupon from her handbag)

"Five dollars off

A class at Arthur Murray.

Coupon expires this Christmas,

So hurry, Couples, hurry."



Projection: **“HOW TO BE A GOOD DANCER”**

CD 2 track 2

(By now the gym has been turned into a dance studio. The back brick wall of the studio is exposed. A metal coat rack with hangers and a hat shelf has been rolled on. Beside it is a standing mirror, one of the old-fashioned ones on wheels.

The BRIDE enters the dance studio. She hangs her coat on a hanger. She checks her reflection, smiles, and looks around the studio, empty but for a bench upon which is a portable phonograph player and dance records. Next to it she notices a book. She sits, picks up the book and reads:)

BRIDE

“How to Be a Good Dancer.”
“Helpful Steps for Him and Her
To Make You a Confident Partner.”

(The GROOM enters and hangs his coat on a hanger on the coat rack. He checks his reflection in the mirror. He looks a little ruffled from a long hard day at the office. He glances at his watch, grimaces that he is late, enters the studio and nods to his wife, though he doesn't really want to be here.)

GROOM

I'm here, dear.

BRIDE

(Not looking up from book)
You're late.

GROOM

But I'm *here*.

BRIDE

Late. I've been waiting.

GROOM

Right.
With all the work on my desk,
My craziest time of the year –

BRIDE

Oh!
Like I'm not totally
Crazed and frantic, too,
Finding a new baby-sitter?
Jessica quit!

GROOM

What, another one? Why?

BRIDE

Colic! Why do you think?
That kid -- he never stops screaming!
He screams all day, he screams all night,
He's driving me to Kingdom Come,
I feed him juice, he gulps it down,
And throws another tantrum!

GROOM

Well, dear, it's clear.
What we need is ear-plugs,
Not Arthur Murray!

(He takes his coat off the hanger. She hurries over, takes it
and starts to hang it again. They wrestle over the hanger.)

BRIDE

I do! We do!

GROOM

Some other time we'll do it.

GROOM

No, now!
You agreed to it!



(The INSTRUCTOR enters and hangs his coat on the coat rack. He checks his reflection in the mirror. At one time he may have been a pro but he's let himself go a little. The BRIDE and GROOM continue to argue without taking notice of him. He gently guides them to the center of the room, positions them in dance position for the first lesson.)

GROOM

Yeah, sure,
In the middle of the football game!
I only agreed to shut you up!

BRIDE

Too late now!
I *pre*-paid,
For a five-lesson series!

GROOM

You pre-paid- for five?!

BRIDE

Five!

(The INSTRUCTOR has positioned them in starting position for Tango, though they have hardly noticed. He walks over to the portable phonograph and chooses an LP.)

INSTRUCTOR

The minimum is five.

GROOM

Before we even tried one?!

BRIDE

(Vehemently)
I was saving us money!!



Projection: "BEGINNER'S TANGO"
CD 2 track 3

(The "record" begins, a Tango of disagreement. The awkward couple is guided by the INSTRUCTOR in one direction and then in the other in the steps of the tango.)

BRIDE, GROOM & INSTRUCTOR

No two people ever feel the same
At the same time!

INSTRUCTOR

One is feeling:

GROOM

I showed up for *her*.

INSTRUCTOR

One is feeling:

BRIDE

Don't blame me for child-murder.

BRICE, GROOM & INSTRUCTOR

No two people ever feel the same
At the same time!

INSTRUCTOR

One is feeling:

GROOM

Who brings home the cheese?

INSTRUCTOR

One is feeling:

BRIDE

Who stays home and diapers babies?

ALL THREE

True,
There are ebbs and flows
God knows,
As the saying goes
But still,
When the flows don't flow,
The ebbs can kill
The old libido.

No two people ever feel the same
At the same time and place!

INSTRUCTOR

(Pushing them cheek-to-cheek)

They need someone new
To help them see face-to-face!

(To Groom)

Tie your shoe-lace.

GROOM

Screw you.

ALL THREE

Somebody new
To help teach the two
True grace.

(The BRIDE and GROOM glare at each other as the
INSTRUCTOR changes the record.

The music segues to a lilting foxtrot. The INSTRUCTOR walks
past the GROOM and dances with the BRIDE.)



Projection: **“ESSENTIAL FOXTROT”**
CD 2 track 4

INSTRUCTOR

Press your dress and shine your shoes.
When ya’ got post-partum blues,
Try dancing...!
The Fox-trot!

(The INSTRUCTOR takes the woman’s position with the groom, “following” while he teaches the GROOM to lead.)

When your love-life’s down the drain,
Seek the rainbow through the rain
By dancing...!
The Fox-trot!

(The INSTRUCTOR switches back over to the BRIDE.)

When bills are overdue
And the lights go black,
Just arch your back.
Key to marriage:
Upright carriage!

(The INSTRUCTOR switches back to the GROOM.)

INSTRUCTOR (*continued*)

Brush the mothballs off your tux.
Lookin' like a million bucks,
Show your lady-love deluxe
Romance!
You've got
A Fox-trot
To dance!

(Music: The INSTRUCTOR pushes them together. The couple tries to foxtrot, looking down at their feet.)

INSTRUCTOR (Cont'd)

No lookin'!

(They jerk their heads back up, put on forced smiles.)

Now you're cookin'!

BRIDE

And when the baby bawls
And the stew is burned --

GROOM

Keep feet out-turned.

INSTRUCTOR

Light 'n breezy:
Make life easy.

GROOM

Pat some Aqua-Velva on.

BRIDE

Wear a cloud of pink chiffon.

INSTRUCTOR

Never mind where passion's gone
Astray --

ALL THREE

Fear not,
And Fox-trot
Away!

(The INSTRUCTOR changes the record as the music segues to a Cha-Cha. The INSTRUCTOR begins first with the GROOM, teaching him the steps. The BRIDE mimes: “Me, too?” The INSTRUCTOR mimes: “Him first.” She stands to the side watching. To her surprise, the GROOM seems to do better with the INSTRUCTOR.)



Projection: “BASIC CHA-CHA”
CD 2 track 5

BRIDE

For Cousin Natalie’s wedding,
I hatched my plan of attack.
She gave us hand-me-down bedding.
I planned on giving her back...

BRIDE (*continued*)

... Me and Larry in the Cha-Cha!
Me and Larry in the Cha-Cha!
Me and Larry like Marge and Gower,
And how she'd glower to see...
Me and Larry lookin' sexy,
To my cousin's apoplexy...
The only trouble is Larry's better than me.

GROOM & INSTRUCTOR

Cha-cha-cha!

(Music: The men switch positions. The GROOM leads, with growing ability. The BRIDE watches uncertainly.)

BRIDE

He's not a natural dancer.
He's wound too tightly to move.
There's some mysterious answer
Why he just seems to improve...
...With the teacher in the Cha-Cha!
With the teacher in the Cha-Cha!
Overnight he's like a Cuban Desi,
The next Arnaz of TV!
So I think I better catch-up
To this unexpected match up
And teach the teacher
The rules according to me...!

(She cuts-in between the two men.)

And teach the teacher
The rules according to me!
Cha-cha-cha!

(Leaving the GROOM to fend for himself, the BRIDE escorts the INSTRUCTOR over to the coat rack, tosses him his coat, takes hers, and exits with him for a heart-to-heart at the Woolworth's soda fountain.)

The "record" ends. Silence. Alone now in the studio, not sure what just happened, the GROOM scratches his head, confused. He goes over to the stack of records, picks one out, and puts it onto the phonograph player.)

Projection: "**EXOTIC RHYTHMS**"
CD 2 track 6

(The exotic yet confusing rhythms of Latin dance appeal to the Groom... but he cannot tell one dance from another. Though he doesn't realize it, or cannot say so aloud, his confusion over the dances is really about his sexuality.)

GROOM

Exotic Rhythms
Are kinda messin' my mind up.
Those Latin dances
Are hell to tell 'em apart!
I start out doin' the Rumba,
And end up doin' the Mambo,
But when I'm doin' the Mambo,
It's a Samba!
Ay Caramba!

(Fantasy moment: lights change. The BRIDE appears on one side of the stage isolated in a spotlight. She is a heightened version of herself crossed with Carmen Miranda. She holds a pair of maracas and wears a fruit turban.)

BRIDE

Boom-Chica-Chica-Chica,
Boom-Chica-Chica-Chica,
Boom-Chica-Chica-Chica, Boom-Boom!

(She vanishes. The lights and the GROOM return to reality.)

GROOM

Exotic Rhythms
Are murder keepin' em' lined up.
Erotic fancies
Keep creepin' into my heart...
I *think* I'm doin' the Tango,
And find I'm in a Meringue,
But try and do the Meringue,
And they gotcha!
It's the Cha-Cha!

(Fantasy moment: Lights change. The GROOM has a second fantasy. Enter the INSTRUCTOR with a conga drum strapped over his shoulder, the kind carried by Desi Arnaz on “I Love Lucy.” He beats out the rhythm.)

INSTRUCTOR

Babaloo! Babaloo!
Babaloo! Babaloo!
Babaloo! Babaloo! Babaloo!

(He vanishes. The lights and the GROOM return to reality.
The GROOM wonders: “What is going on with me?”)

GROOM

Man...!

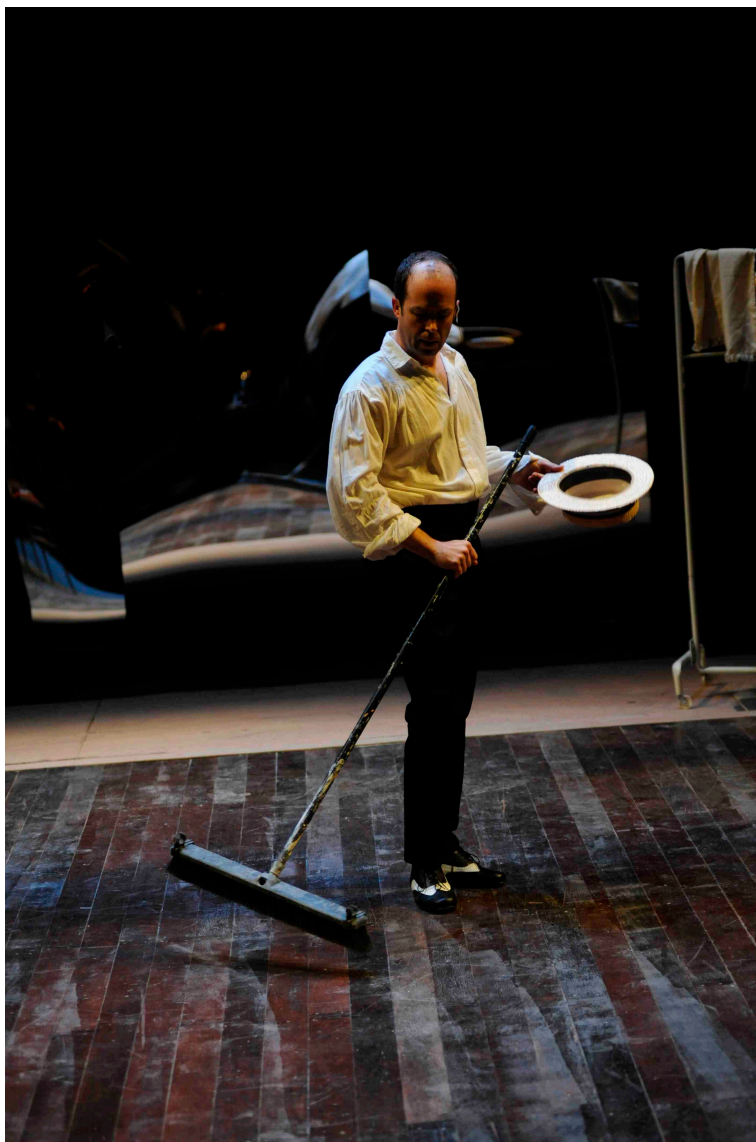
Exotic rhythms,
I’m fucked wherever I wind up!
I’m like a horse
Goin’ off the course at the gate!
Whichever tempo I maul,
With steps I never recall,
I feel aroused by ‘em all,
I mean, they’re great!
Just... great!
I just can’t keep ‘em straight!
Can’t keep ‘em straight!

(He takes his coat off the coat rack, exits.)

Can’t keep ‘em straight!

(As the GROOM exits in one direction, the INSTRUCTOR enters from the other side. He hangs up his coat on the rack.

He stops as he notices an old straw hat on the hat rack. He takes it down. The music segues to a soft shoe. There is no record. He hears it in his mind. He begins a shuffle, coming to center stage. He raises the straw hat in the air, pauses.)



Projection: "**THE TIME STEP**"
CD 2 track 7

INSTRUCTOR

Still can do...
My old soft shoe...
From '42....
In "Take a Bow,"
On Broadway.

4-F.
This ear here -- deaf.
But I could hoof...
In "Take a Bow,"
On Broadway.

INSTRUCTOR (*continued*)

(*Raises his arms supporting an imaginary partner.*)

Those lifts...!

Those girls I twirled...!

I miss the world I missed

(*He lets one wrist go limp*)

When someone crushed my wrist,

A twist of fate...

Then I gained weight.

Tough shit, too late.

(*Down on one knee, brassily*)

I took my bow!

(*Stands up*)

And I'm okay...

Where I am now....

(*Looks around*)

Way, way, way

Off Broadway.

(He returns the straw hat to the hat rack where he found it, takes his coat off the hanger and exits. From the other side, the BRIDE re-enters and hangs her coat on the coat rack. Alone, she goes to the records, picks one and puts it on.)

Projection: "**THE WALTZ AND ITS VARIATIONS**"

CD 2 track 8

BRIDE

Mambo, Shmambo. I confess:

I like a Viennese waltz.

(Smooths her dress.)

Floating in a floor-length dress

Hides a plethora of faults.

(Takes the hand of an invisible partner.)

Circling with some Nobleman

'Round a mirrored hall.

Not my All-American.

He knows "the ball game," that's all.

Give me... a ball!

A glorious ball!

(The music soars as she sees it all in her mind, waltzing gracefully around the stage like a European Princess.)

BRIDE (*continued*)

La la la la la la...!
I like a Viennese waltz!

La la la la la la...!
Splendors nostalgia exalts!

(She stops waltzing, grows more introspective.)

One of my escapist dreams
When I feel...perplexed.
Like... thinking of England,
Wondering...

(The GROOM and the INSTRUCTOR enter together,
hanging their coats up on the coat rack. She sees them.)

...What comes next?

GROOM

(*Kisses her on the cheek*)

Dear.

BRIDE

Darling.

(*Looks from one man to another*)

Still thinking of England,
And wondering...
Wondering...
Wondering...

(The INSTRUCTOR puts on a new record. The beat
suddenly changes to early Rock and Roll. The BRIDE and
GROOM look up, mystified by this new sound.)

GROOM

What's that?

INSTRUCTOR

Something new.
Just a fad, but droll.
The dance the kids all call...



Projection: “HOW TO DANCE THE ROCK AND ROLL”
CD 2 track 9

GROOM

(reading album jacket)
“The Rock...”?

BRIDE

“And Roll”...?

(The INSTRUCTOR demonstrates the very square, and very white essentials of early “Rock and Roll” dancing, beginning with simple up and down arm movements. To the BRIDE and GROOM, it is completely revelatory.)

INSTRUCTOR

It’s the change sweepin’ over the nation,
Like a stone rollin’ over a knoll!
Like a fire burnin’ over
The wire of your telephone pole!

BRIDE

Your burning pole.

GROOM

Shush.

(The INSTRUCTOR adds steps – the BRIDE and GROOM follow him, getting into this new thing.)

INSTRUCTOR

It's the beat of the "cool" generation,
In the heat of a Marlboro smoke!
With the whoosh of a riot,
You push off society's yoke!

BRIDE & GROOM

Push off that yoke!

INSTRUCTOR

ROCK AND ROLL --

BRIDE & GROOM

THE ROCK AND ROLL!

ROCK AND ROLL –

THE ROCK AND ROLL!

ROCK AND ROLL --

THE ROCK AND ROLL!

ROCK AND --

(Suddenly, with a look of shocked realization and panic, the BRIDE touches her belly. She is pregnant again.)

BRIDE

Oh!!
Baby-baby-baby-baby!

GROOM

What?!

BRIDE

(Nods, holds up two fingers, their second)
Baby-baby!

(The GROOM turns with a look of utter horror to the INSTRUCTOR, as if to say, "Oh no, not another one!", then wipes that expression from his face and changes it to one of simulated joy as he turns to embrace the BRIDE, as if all their uncertainty was suddenly made right.)

GROOM

Baby-baby?

BRIDE

Baby-baby.

BOTH

(Embracing, resigned)

Baby-baby...

(All walk slowly over to the coat rack, take their coats off hangers and put them on. And as they do, the music begins to fracture and overlap as the GROOM continues to intone the “Rock and Roll” chorus, the BRIDE waltzes, and the INSTRUCTOR goes back into his old soft-shoe shuffle.)

GROOM

Rock and roll...

Lose control...

Rock and roll...

Light my soul...

Rock and roll....

Rock and roll...

Like a stone

Down a knoll...

Rock and roll...

Rock and roll...

Take a stroll...

Nat King Cole...

Rock and roll...

Rock and roll...

Light my soul...

Rock and roll...

Like a stone

Down a knoll...

Rock and roll...

Rock and roll....

Rock...

BRIDE

La la la la

La la la...

I love

A Viennese Waltz...

La la la la

La la la...

Splendors

Nostalgia exalts...

La la la la

La la la....

Give me a ball...

I see a ball...

I love a waltz,

For all its faults

I love a waltz...

Thinking

Of England...

Thinking...

INSTRUCTOR

Still can do...

My old soft shoe...

From '42...

In “Take a Bow,”

On Broadway.

Still can hoof...

The way I did...

Back as a kid

In “Take a Bow,”

On Broadway...

(Half-way out the door, the BRIDE suddenly remembers something she forgot to do. She rushes back to the coat rack. The GROOM and the INSTRUCTOR pause.)

BRIDE

Thinking... thinking of...wait!

I nearly forgot *this*.

(She takes a bag off the hat shelf of the rack and takes out a gift-wrapped present she hands to the INSTRUCTOR.)

BRIDE (*continued*)

For you, Frank.
Merry Christmas.

INSTRUCTOR

Well... Thank you, Denise. Larry.

(Before he opens it, the INSTRUCTOR turns and takes a bag off the coat rack shelf, and takes out two gifts wrapped in newspaper, one for the BRIDE, one for the GROOM.)

BRIDE & GROOM

Oh! We love books!

INSTRUCTOR

I know. Merry Christmas.

(They all open their gifts. Each has a new book.)

Projection: "**CONCURRENT POSITIONS**"
CD 2 track 10

INSTRUCTOR

"I saw the best minds of my generation
Destroyed by madness,
Starving hysterical naked..."

BRIDE

"A woman's role in society
Is imposed on her by men
Who make her into 'The other.'
The Mistress, the Muse, and the Mother..."

GROOM

"Profiles of eight American Senators
Who Showed Remarkable Courage..."

BRIDE

Simone de Beauvoir...
Who is she?

INSTRUCTOR

Allan Ginsberg...?

GROOM

John Fitzgerald Kennedy...

BRIDE

Him, I think I've heard of.

INSTRUCTOR

We need to go, guys.

Haul ass.

The room is booked for the advanced class...

(Music. They walk forward reading their books. Behind them, STAGEHANDS push the bed center stage. The location has changed to the bedroom the opera began in. Still engrossed in their books, the three friends take off their coats and clamber onto the bed. The INSTRUCTOR sprawls across the foot of the bed. The BRIDE and GROOM sit at their regular sides propped against pillows. The BRIDE rips open a bag of potato chips and passes it around.)



INSTRUCTOR

"I saw the best minds of my generation..."

BRIDE

"The Mistress, The Muse, and the Mother..."

GROOM

"Eight American Senators..."

INSTRUCTOR

“Destroyed by madness....”

GROOM

“Remarkable courage...”

INSTRUCTOR

“Starving, hysterical...”

BRIDE

“Imposed on her by men....”

INSTRUCTOR

“Looking for an angry fix...”

BRIDE

What exactly *is* “Sexual Politics”?

Projection:

“Le Deuxième Sexe”

“Howl and Other Poems”

“Profiles in Courage”

1956

(The lights fade slowly to black as the three friends
continue reading their books and eating potato chips.)

END OF OPERA

Photos by Clinton Brandhagen from the 2012 production at
UrbanArias featuring:

The Bride: Amedee Moore
The Groom: Jesse Blumberg
The Trainer/The Instructor: Vale Rideout
Stage Direction: Noah Himmelstein
Music Direction: Robert Wood