

PREFACE

Why *Symposium*? There are so many Platonic dialogues to choose from! I could've done the *Apology*, the *Crito*, and the *Phaedo* as a package deal; I could've done two short plays with the *Lysis* and the *Charmides*; I could've done the *Republic*. I would've hated doing the *Republic*, it's too long, but the point is that I had many options. Why *Symposium*?

There are two instances from which the idea of adapting Plato's *Symposium* into a musical came into being. The first came from Morris, who said a friend of his had taken up the task and successfully adapted it as a musical, but, to quote Morris, "the bastard up and died" on him before he could send the demo recordings from Colorado to New York. The project, though completed, was lost like the second half of Aristotle's *Poetics*. I knew right then and there that I had to adapt Plato's *Symposium* as a musical, not just for Morris, but because it seemed like an excellent idea and a worthwhile endeavor. The second instance came after watching Peter Hall's 1983 staging of Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, translated, very britishly, by Tony Harrison. The production utilized this stylistic, rhythmic way of half singing, half speaking, that only seemed to musically intensify at the most critical parts of the plot. There's scholarship to suggest that music was used during theatrical productions in ancient Greece in a somewhat similar fashion to how modern-day musicals use music. With these two occurrences, not adapting Plato's *Symposium* for the stage and as a musical in particular seemed like a downright stupid idea.

Why a musical? Ancient Greek plays are performed all the time without an ancient musical backdrop, and I could easily adapt Plato's *Symposium* as a simple play. But there are nuances to consider when writing a play or a musical.

The easy, yet still lengthy, route would be to adapt it as a play. *Symposium* already functions as a play on the page. As some of you know, Plato originally studied playwriting as one of a couple career paths in Athens, the other being politics; but the death of Socrates seemed to change the course of his life almost instantly. Instead of joining the rich tradition of playwriting, Plato instead founded formal western philosophy, using his playwriting skills, assumably, to invent the Platonic dialogue: a play-like philosophical text where two or more characters discuss an abstract concept to somewhat a conclusion, usually open-ended. These dialogues, though play-like, are not supposed to be performed, only read. As a result, the personalities of the dialogue's speakers can be easily missed upon the first read-through, and the lack of physical expression to accompany the text lends itself to numerous interpretations rather than one understanding. One could adapt this piece as less sexual due to the lack of physicality on the page. For these reasons, I thought adapting it for the stage would be more than appropriate.

Ultimately, I chose to write a musical; but why a musical and not a play? First, a play would not give me as much interpretive room as a musical. If I were to adapt *Symposium* as a play, I would have to use *only* *Symposium*, and the *Phaedrus* would not be included (unless I wanted to adapt both dialogues in full, which did not interest me). Songs rather than spoken speeches gave me more interpretative room to play around with language and extract the most vital parts of each speech rather than

copying word for word what everyone says according to Aristodemus. If I am being honest, not everything that Pausanias says is necessary, and summarizing his speech in a song does him some justice, in my opinion. Second, Plato never makes an appearance in his dialogues, and even makes it a point in some dialogues to inform the reader that he is not present; the most famous example of this is the *Phaedo* (the dialogue where Socrates dies, and Plato is unfortunately too sick to see Socrates before he takes hemlock). A play adaptation would uphold this Platonic avoidance. A musical, however, has the opportunity to disregard it altogether. Third, Plato's *Symposium* is ultimately an ensemble piece, whether on the page or on the stage. It's no secret that one can easily forget the speeches made by every party attendee—except for Aristophanes. Aristophanes' speech is so well remembered in the social consciousness that I, as a child, knew the concept of “finding your other half” before I could possibly know where that concept comes from. But every other speech can be easily forgotten. Putting each speech on a stage without any changes wouldn't help this problem. These, I think, are sufficient reasons why adapting it as a play would be, for lack of better terms, a waste of my time.

A musical adaptation fixes almost all of these issues. Firstly, Plato's *Symposium* implies a great deal of personality among the party and its attendees. But these personalities are never truly confirmed, and upon the first read-through, some jokes and potential motives on part of each speaker can be easy to miss. As a result, the work comes across much more subtle than vibrant. This, I think, is no fault of Plato's, but rather the medium of the Platonic dialogue. Next, the plot isn't very action heavy, and though this isn't necessary to make a play truly engaging, there isn't any important decision making in *Symposium*. As a solution, forming songs based around the speeches grants the entertainment that action in plays usually satisfies. Another reason to adapt this as a musical is that a musical gives me an opportunity to tie up loose ends, like how Socrates never gives his own account of love *Symposium*, or how Alcibiades was rumored to have committed a crime of impiety on the night *Symposium* takes place. I can include the historic rumors of Alcibiades' impiety in a song, and I can include pieces of the *Phaedrus*, another Platonic dialogue, as a way to force Socrates to make his very own speech on love. But the most important reason to make this a musical rather than a play, in my opinion, is to make a philosophical text accessible to a non-academic and/or non-philosophic audience. This project is an excuse to make my family read Plato without really reading Plato. But in all seriousness, I had a thousand reasons to write *Symposium* as a musical. It's a beautiful account of a group of competitive friends talking about their experiences with love, and I think it's a good place to start when considering what love really is.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

PLATO	The narrator. Also portrays Aristodemus and Diotima; is only acknowledged by Aristophanes.
SOCRATES	A shabby, old, wise man. He is uncharacteristically groomed and wearing fancy sandals.
AGATHON	The tragic playwright, host of the party, and most beautiful man in Athens.
PHAEDRUS	A man interested heavily in literature and oration. He is reserved around people, but not Socrates.
ARISTOPHANES	The comic playwright, cynical and single.
PAUSANIAS	A statesman, and Agathon's boyfriend.
ERYXIMACHUS	A doctor, and Phaedrus' boyfriend.
ALCIBIADES	A promising, ill-tempered general in Athens, and Socrates' boyfriend.
ZOE	Also known as <i>the flute girl</i> .
HEDONEIDES	A slave of Agathon's.
CHORUS OF WOMEN	A group of five women.

STAGE REQUIREMENTS

- Four couches.

ACT I

(Enter Plato, spotlight on him. Behind him, in the shadows, are some couches.)

HELLO, MY NAME IS PLATO

PLATO

Hello, my name is Plato.
I wrote many works in my time.
My subject was a mentor of mine.
And he died prematurely.

This man was deemed the wisest.
The Gods found no one wiser than he.
He bestowed his wisdom upon me.
I made sure to tell the world.

Memory is a power,
A legacy into the beyond,
Of which immortality is fond.
Memory connects to what was.

Guilt becomes a memory.
It helps us sing what was unsung.
Guilt is what keeps us all so young—
Though it increases with age.

Today, I have been summoned
Through the mem'ry of one I know not
Who demonstrates she hasn't forgotten
The stories we told of love.

The story tonight is one of a dinner party among
Athenian citizens after the festival had begun—
Where the theatre indulged is where Grecian hymns are
sung.

And Dionysus makes the wine sweeter, just for fun.
Playwrights compete for the honor of most tragic tragedy,
Comedians try, but the crowd tends to want fierce agony.
This year, the winner is Agathon, a man of true beauty,
His party's where our subjects engage.

Let me help set the stage.

(Enter Pausinias.)

Pausanias, a statesman.

(Enter Phaedrus.)

Phaedrus, a literary fanatic.

(Enter Eryximachus.)

Eryximachus, a doctor.

(Enter Aristophanes.)

Aristophanes, a comic playwright.

(Enter Agathon.)

Agathon, a tragic playwright.

(Plato picks up a hat and a veil. Socrates does not show up yet, but a spotlight waits for him.)

And Socrates, the wise.
Tonight, I'll be disguised as

(Plato puts on his hat for Aristodemus.)

Aristodemus, a follower,
And Diotima, a pious woman.

(Plato holds the veil above himself, then tosses it to an offstage Socrates.)

Tonight, we drink to Eros,
the god of passion, love, and desire.
The truth of love will blossom and transpire.
So, let the party begin!

(Enter Zoe and Hedoneides, standing at the edges of the stage, nearest to the wings. Zoe plays her flute quietly. Plato, dressed as Aristodemus, encounters Agathon.)

AGATHON: "Welcome, Aristodemus! What perfect timing! You're just in time for dinner! I hope you're not here for any other reason—if you are, forget it. I looked all over for you yesterday, so I could invite you,

but I couldn't find you anywhere. But where is Socrates? How come you didn't bring him along?"¹

PLATO: "It was actually Socrates who had brought *me* along as his guest."¹

AGATHON: "I'm delighted he did,' [...] 'But where is he?'"²

PLATO: "He was directly behind me, but I have no idea where he is now."²

AGATHON: Slave! "Go look for Socrates,' [...] 'and bring him in.'"²

(Hedoneides exits.)

AGATHON: "Aristodemus,' [...] you can share Eryximachus' couch."² Feel free to wash up first.

(Plato exits. Agathon looks longingly out the window.)

ERYXIMACHUS: Am I really falling victim to sharing a couch with Aristodemus?

ARISTOPHANES: You wouldn't be if Socrates didn't invite whoever he runs into on the street.

ERYXIMACHUS: How tragic. I wanted to sit with my dear Phaedrus.

PAUSANIAS: I'll keep him warm, Eryximachus.

ERYXIMACHUS: You're more fit to sit with Aristodemus than me!

PAUSANIAS: If I can't sit with Agathon, then you can't sit with Phaedrus. It's only fair.

ARISTOPHANES: Wait. Why can't you sit with Agathon?

PAUSANIAS: He's set on sitting with Socrates.

ERYXIMACHUS: Hey, Aristophanes, why don't you sit with me?

ARISTOPHANES: Zeus, no. I want my own couch.

(Hedoneides reenters.)

¹ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 459, 174e.

²Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 460, 175a.

HEDONEIDES: “Socrates is here, but he’s gone off to the neighbor’s porch. He’s standing there and won’t come in even though I called him several times.”²

AGATHON: “How strange,’ [...] ‘Go back and bring him in. Don’t leave him there.”²

PLATO: (*Offstage:*) “No, no,’ [...] ‘Leave him alone. It’s one of his habits: every now and then he just goes off like that and stands motionless, wherever he happens to be. I’m sure he’ll come in very soon, so don’t disturb him; let him be.”³

AGATHON: “Well, all right, if you really think so’.” (*To Hedoneides:*) “Go ahead and serve the rest of us.”³

(Hedoneides starts serving the guests.)

AGATHON: If only Socrates took more interest in my gatherings than he did the clouds. One would think he would since he missed the first party yesterday.

PAUSANIAS: The whole of Athens is interested in you, Agathon, and you care for the interest of one man?

AGATHON: Don’t sound so jealous, Pausanias. No need to worry if Socrates is really as ugly as everyone says. Is he?

**ALL BUT
AGATHON:** He’s the ugliest man in Athens.

PHAEDRUS: But don’t let that fool you. He’s brilliant.

ERYXIMACHUS: And he cares nothing of the physical aspects of life.

ARISTOPHANES: He cares only for the contents of the soul. For if he didn’t, he would not be outside, trying to glimpse the heavens before falling back down to Earth with the rest of us.

AGATHON: I hope he comes down soon. I’m impatient.

PHAEDRUS: I am, too, Agathon. The way he talks is, for lack of a better term, seductive! If you translated his wisdom into beauty, he would have you beat.

³ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 461, 175b.

- AGATHON:** This only makes me more impatient, Phaedrus.
- PAUSANIAS:** Agathon, as wise as he is, Socrates isn't interested in your undeniable beauty. For if he cared about beauty, he would still devote time to Alcibiades.
- AGATHON:** Alcibiades is with Socrates? Alcibiades never said a word!
- ARISTOPHANES:** It's complicated.
- PAUSANIAS:** Alcibiades has a temper like Hera. He's very clever when it comes to war, but he treats his friendships and love life like battlegrounds.
- PHAEDRUS:** And Socrates is kind of a flirt. He won't be able to resist flirting with any beautiful boy.
- ARISTOPHANES:** Put them together, and you have a union between Priapus and Ares.
- PAUSANIAS:** What a foul image, Aristophanes. You should be ashamed!
- ERYXIMACHUS:** So, it's conclusive? Alcibiades is no longer Socrates' beloved?
- PAUSANIAS:** If he was, Socrates wouldn't have brought just anyone off the street.
- AGATHON:** A very good point. He seems beloved-less, poor Socrates. I shall make him feel less lonely by offering my couch to him!
- ERYXIMACHUS:** How noble, Agathon.
- PAUSANIAS:** If only that was the true reason.
- PHAEDRUS:** Shouldn't we confirm with Socrates that Alcibiades is still his boyfriend?
- AGATHON:** Nonsense! Aristodemus is all the proof we need!
- ARISTOPHANES:** Besides, Socrates never gives a straight answer anyways. He speaks like a labyrinth. Gets on my nerves...
- AGATHON:** Oh, I can't take it! I must speak with him! Maybe we should send for him again?

(Agathon stares out the window. Plato enters.)

PLATO: Let him be. He'll retire soon.

ERYXIMACHUS: There's no use in longing, boys. Eat while you wait!

(Agathon lounges on the couch farthest from the window, and everyone begins to eat. Socrates enters soon after, looking shabby except for his golden sandals.)

SOCRATES: Hello, my friends.

(Phaedrus, Eryximachus, Pausanias, Plato and Aristophanes all at once.)

PHAEDRUS: Socrates!

PLATO: There he is!

ERYXIMACHUS: Hello!

PAUSANIAS: It's about time.

(Aristophanes waves to Socrates.)

SOCRATES: I haven't missed anything, have I?

ERYXIMACHUS: Hardly. We just started eating.

AGATHON: "Socrates, come lie down next to me. Who knows, if I touch you, I may catch a bit of the wisdom that came to you under my neighbor's porch. It's clear you've seen the light. If you hadn't, you'd still be standing there."⁴

SOCRATES: "How wonderful it would be, dear Agathon, if the foolish were filled with wisdom simply by touching the wise. If only wisdom were like water, which always flows from a full cup into an empty one when we connect them with a piece of yarn—well, then I would consider it the greatest prize to have the chance to lie down next to you. I would soon be overflowing with your wonderful wisdom. My own wisdom is of no account—a shadow in a dream—while yours is bright and radiant and has a splendid future. Why, young as you are, you're so brilliant I could call more than thirty thousand Greeks as witnesses."⁵

⁴ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 461, 175c-d.

⁵ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 461, 175d-e.

(Aristophanes produces a retching noise. Zoe laughs to herself.)

AGATHON: “Now, you’ve gone *too* far, Socrates!”⁶

ARISTOPHANES: And he plans to go further...

**AGATHON &
PAUSANIAS:** Aristophanes!

ARISTOPHANES: *(Ignoring them. To Socrates:)* Seriously, Socrates, what of you and Alcibiades?

SOCRATES: No mention of him tonight, please. He has finally gone mad—!

ARISTOPHANES: Which has inspired your current conversation with Agathon?

AGATHON: Aristophanes, if you can’t keep your jealousy to yourself, finish your dinner. *(To everyone:)* As I was saying, “Dionysus will soon enough be the judge of our claims to wisdom!”⁷

(Hedoneides exits. Agathon leading, they all pour libation and sing a hymn to Dionysus.)

PAUSANIAS: “Well, gentlemen, how can we arrange to drink less tonight? To be honest, I still have a terrible hangover from yesterday, and I could really use a break. I daresay most of you could, too, since you were also part of the celebration. So let’s try not to overdo it.”⁸

ARISTOPHANES: “Good idea, Pausanias. We’ve got to make a plan for going easy on the drink tonight. I was over my head last night myself, like the others.”⁹

ERYXIMACHUS: “Well said, both of you. But I still have one question: How do *you* feel, Agathon? Are you strong enough for serious drinking?”⁹

AGATHON: “Absolutely not, [...] I’ve no strength left for anything.”¹⁰

DOCTOR’S ORDERS

ERYXIMACHUS

⁶ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 461, 175e.

⁷ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 461, 176.

⁸ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 176a-b.

⁹ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 461, 176b.

¹⁰ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 462, 176b.

“What a lucky stroke for us,”¹¹
the lightweights!
Don’t have to keep up drinking
with the likes of you!
Heavy drinkers, especially
Socrates;
“Can drink or not and [...] be
[happy] whatever we do.”¹¹

Doctor’s orders,
Refrain from drinking tonight.
Nurture yesterday’s hangover.

(Hermai statues, a chorus of women with strap-ons, quickly flood the stage. Enter Alcibiades with a hammer in one hand, a beer in the other, and a garland atop his head.)

ALCIBIADES

A drunken rampage suits me,
doesn’t it?

(Alcibiades hammers off one phallus.)

Your temp’ramental, impulsive
Little golden boy

(Alcibiades hammers another off.)

Appointed Gen’ral, by Athens
Finally!

(Alcibiades hammers off another.)

But can you bother to be
less than overjoyed?

A supporter would
congratulate me!
But you continue to act ashamed.

ERYXIMACHUS & ALCIBIADES

Dionysus may have blessed the wine.
There is fine excuse for drunkenness.

¹¹ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 462, 176c.

But as long as we are intertwined,
I have but only one request:

Pace the liquor!

(Alcibiades hammers off another phallus.)

ALCIBIADES

Tomorrow night.

PHAEDRUS

If we know what's good for us,
We'll listen.
Eryximachus is
A doctor, after all!

ERYXIMACHUS

If we insist on talking
The night away,
Might I suggest a subject
That Phaedrus exalts?

PHAEDRUS

Oh, please, doctor, don't!
You're embarrassing me!

ERYXIMACHUS

Don't you complain of this
Frequently?
You say,

ERYXIMACHUS & PHAEDRUS

“Isn't it an awful thing?”¹²

No hymns
to honor Eros.
I've read a book
about table salt!
Books so trivial
go to show
Not even once
has an author dared
To offer praise,
let alone compose

¹² Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 462, 177.

A proper hymn
the power of love.
Shouldn't there be
no greater prose?

ERYXIMACHUS

Beloved, "in my judgement,
[you're] quite right!"¹³
"We [should] spend the whole evening,"¹⁴
Giving praise to Love!

ALCIBIADES

Call me Apollo because
Eros hates me!
His two arrows have struck us!
Look what he has done!

ERYXIMACHUS

Doctor's orders,
Refrain from drinking tonight.
Nurture yesterday's hangover.

EVERYONE (But Alcibiades)

Dionysus may have blessed the wine.
There is fine excuse for drunkenness.
But as long as we are intertwined,
We, instead, shall hold a fun contest!

EVERYONE

Pace the liquor!

ALCIBIADES

Tomorrow night.

(Alcibiades hammers off another phallus.)

ALCIBIADES

Chopping off phalluses,
Dreaming of fallacies,
Repressing reality...
The golden boy of Greece...
Chasing after ugly, old Socrates.

¹³ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 462, 177c.

¹⁴ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 462, 177d.

(Alcibiades sits down, surrounded by the desecrated Hermai.)

TOO WISE TO LOVE

ALCIBIADES

You look just like Silenus.
Like all other satyrs, too.
Had you carried a “flute [...] in [your] hands,”¹⁵
You’d model for his statues.
And like statues of Silenus,
If I split you right in half,
You’d be full of teeny-tiny gods
Begging you for a bath.

Satyrs would chase me.
But you don’t.
Why not?

You said you were my only lover—
Any other only loved what I had.
When my youth started to fade,
They all went away
like I was some passing fad!
But you saw I was “beginning to bloom.”¹⁶
A journey beauty could not interrupt.
And you said, “[You] shall never forsake me,”¹⁶
Unless Athens made me ugly and corrupt!

Well, Athens wants me!
But you don’t.
Why not?

Are you too wise to love?
Am I too stupid to see
That being in love doesn’t fit
into your philosophy?
Is your head stuck in the clouds?
Won’t reason let you free?
Are you too wise to love?

I can persuade
Athens to ditch
any prominent man of power.

¹⁵ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 497, 215b.

¹⁶ Plato, *Alcibiades*, pg. 591, 132.

Let me invade,
 Let me assist;
 I'll become the man of the hour!
 You can persuade
 any beautiful boy
 To abandon what he should desire.
 I question myself.
 Day after day.
 As siren, you sing,
 I can't turn away.
 You're killing me.
 This is killing me!
 I can't live like this!
 I can't live without this!
 Without you.
 You!

Are you too wise to love?
 Am I too stupid to see?
 That being in love doesn't fit
 into your philosophy?
 Is your head stuck in the clouds?
 Won't reason let you free?
 Are you too wise to love
 me?

(Alcibiades stumbles to his feet.)

ALCIBIADES: If only I had not missed Agathon's party last night... I would not be drinking tonight *alone*... perhaps, it's not too late to drink with him...

(Alcibiades exits and the hermai statues follow him off. The stage is remade for the party, everyone arranged in the following order: Phaedrus, Pausanias, Plato, Aristophanes, Eryximachus, Agathon, Socrates. The only difference is that Zoe and Aristophanes flirt in the background.)

ERYXIMACHUS: So, all, what do we think of that?

PHAEDRUS: Eryximachus, you love to embarrass me!

AGATHON: Phaedrus, what a beautiful idea! Not embarrassing at all!

PHAEDRUS: Are you sure? We don't have to talk about it if you men don't want to...

PAUSANIAS: We could all benefit from a discussion on love, don't you think, Agathon?

AGATHON: Absolutely!

SOCRATES: How could I say "No," when the only thing I say I understand is the art of love?"¹⁷

ERYXIMACHUS: Aristophanes?

ARISTOPHANES: Yeah, sure, whatever.

ERYXIMACHUS: Then it is settled!

ERYXIMACHUS & PLATO: Should we rid ourselves of the flute girl? Surely, she has no place in a man's discussion on love.

AGATHON & PLATO: Good Thinking, Eryximachus.

(Plato and Agathon clap their hands.)

AGATHON & PLATO: You are dismissed, flute girl. This conversation's for the boys only.

ARISTOPHANES: She has a name, you know. (To Plato:) *You* know that. Make them call her Zoe.

PLATO: I don't believe I understand what you mean, Aristophanes. I, *Aristodemus*, couldn't have possibly known that. Anyway, gods forbid we are distracted by incessant flute playing.

(Aristophanes glares at Plato, and Plato smuggly looks at his nails. He gestures with a wave to Zoe to leave. Aristophanes, in disbelief, watches Zoe join the pit. She blows him a kiss as she leaves.)

ARISTOPHANES: No girls, no wine. What a party, Agathon.

AGATHON: Now that we've no distractions, Phaedrus, would you like to start?

PHAEDRUS: I suppose.

¹⁷ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 463, 177e.

(All eyes turn to Phaedrus, he gets his own spotlight. The first four measures of the song play, and he is too nervous to sing. The men encourage him to sing. The music starts itself over as he gathers his courage.)

YOU HAVE TO BE BRAVE

PHAEDRUS

(Shyly.)

According to Hesiod,
From Chaos, Eros sprang.
Love is an ancient god.
He guides us through pride and shame.

“I mean a sense of shame at acting shamefully
and a sense of pride in acting well.”¹⁸

Love compels us
To be brave.
You have to be brave.

SOCRATES: Speak up, Phaedrus!

AGATHON: You’re doing great!

PHAEDRUS

(Louder.)

What if I told you:
If a man in love was found ashamed,
what would pain him most
Is if his beloved didn’t see him the same!

If only we could start “an army [...] of lovers,”¹⁹
Each would “rather die a thousand deaths!”²⁰

Just to impress us
by being brave.
You have to be brave.

(Phaedrus looking to Eryximachus.)

PHAEDRUS

(Passionately.)

“No one[’s] so base that true Love could not inspire him with
Courage[!] [...]”

¹⁸ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 463, 178d.

¹⁹ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 464, 178e.

²⁰ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 464, 179.

When Homer says a god ‘breathes might’ into some [...] heroes,²¹ that’s Love.

(Turning to the audience.)

PHAEDRUS

(Nervously.)

I will now cite three sources to prove my praise of Eros.
These three sources, I pray, will prove my argument enough!

PHAEDRUS: Agathon, Aristophanes, if you don’t mind?

(Agathon and Aristophanes assume their positions as the characters Phaedrus uses as his examples of bravery and love. Agathon will play Alcestis, Eurydice, and Achilles, and Aristophanes will play Admetus, Orpheus, and Patroclus. The lights go out, everything is black as the music changes to something more triumphant. Lights up on only: Agathon as Alcestis, and Aristophanes as Admetus. The other men—Pausanias, Socrates, Plato, and Eryximachus—sit in the darkened part of the stage with light up masks, depicting them as Olympians, watching—Ares, Zeus, Apollo, Hades. Behind them sit the chorus of women, also as Olympians—Hera, Athena, Artemis—one as Thetis, and one as Persephone. The music rises. Agathon and Aristophanes act out their characters in front of the panel of gods, starting with Alcestis and Admetus.)

PHAEDRUS: My first example is Alcestis.

PHAEDRUS

Admetus
finds himself on the day of his death.
Apollo
can reverse this fate with one breath.

PLATO

You can live as long
As someone one else dies for you instead.

AGATHON

Take me instead!

ARISTOPHANES

Alcestis!

AGATHON

²¹ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 464, 179-b.

Take me instead!

PLATO, SOCRATES, PAUSANIAS, ERYXIMACHUS
& CHORUS OF WOMEN

Alcestis!

(Music drops. Agathon sings alone.)

AGATHON

My love will not permit me to stay
If I can give my lover one more day.
Take me to Hades. Let him live.

(The music revives.)

PHAEDRUS

His wife was willing to die in his place.
Alcestis found herself in good grace
With the gods.

PLATO, SOCRATES, PAUSANIAS, ERYXIMACHUS
& CHORUS OF WOMEN

What courage!
What bravery!
Alcestis,
we award you
What is “reserve[d]
For a handful [...] of [...] heroes.”²²

PHAEDRUS

“They sent her soul back from the dead.”²³

(The lights go out, except on Phaedrus. He stands lit as Agathon and Aristophanes prepare for their next roles: Eurydice and Orpheus.)

PHAEDRUS: “The eager courage of love wins highest honors from the gods.”²³
(Pause.) My next example is Orpheus.

(Lights back up. Agathon and Aristophanes assume position. In the background, Aristophanes sings a series of la-la-las while strumming an air-lute.)

PHAEDRUS

Eurydice

²² Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 464, 179c-d.

²³ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 464, 179d.

Finished out her mortal life.

Orpheus

Descended into Hades to bring home his wife.

Hades

Proposed a challenge to him instead.

ERYXIMACHUS

Walk out of here

without looking back, or she stays dead.

ARISTOPHANES

How hard can walking be?

AGATHON

Don't worry, I'm right behind you.

How much further? Can you see?

ARISTOPHANES

Are you there or too good to be true?

PHAEDRUS

His doubts grew towards the top.

They grew so large, he stopped.

He looked back.

PLATO, SOCRATES, PAUSANIAS, ERYXIMACHUS
& CHORUS OF WOMEN

We knew he was soft.

He plays the cithara.

He stepped into Hades

Alive. Selfish.

Cowards cannot

labor for love.

PHAEDRUS

They sentenced him to death

At the hands of women.

(The lights go out, except on Phaedrus. Agathon and Aristophanes prepare for their next roles: Achilles and Patroclus.)

PHAEDRUS: Orpheus is a poor example of love. He went against the gods to see his beloved again. Most unhonorable of him. *(Pause.)* My last example is Achilles.

(Lights back up. Agathon and Aristophanes assume position.)

PHAEDRUS

Patroclus

Died in Achilles' armor when he would not fight.

Achilles

Planned to avenge Patroclus despite

Thetis

Warning him against revenge instead.

WOMAN OF THE CHORUS AS THETIS

"End [your] life as an old man."²⁴

Go home, Achilles. Understand:

If you avenge him, you will die!

(Music drops. Agathon sings alone:)

AGATHON

I must avenge him, mother!

I'll revenge! I'll kill Hector!

I cannot live while he is dead.

(The music revives.)

PLATO, SOCRATES, PAUSANIAS, ERYXIMACHUS
& CHORUS OF WOMEN

Achilles, you delight us.

"Choos[ing] to die for Patroclus, [...]

A man whose life"²⁴ has ended.

Your life will follow behind.

We reward such a flame

That burns on the battlefield.

PHAEDRUS

In Hades, Achilles was made a king.

²⁴ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 464, 180.

(Lights go out, except on Phaedrus, and the light-up God masks disappear into the darkness.)

PHAEDRUS: The gods reward self-sacrifice, whether it saves a lover or honors one. Courage is the mother of all self-sacrifice, and nothing other than love brings courage forth.

(Lights back up, Agathon and Aristophanes are back in their original positions as well as the other men. The chorus of women are totally gone.)

PHAEDRUS

A beloved follows his lover.
A lover follows in the footsteps of God.
Dying for each other
Disproves any potential facade.

If my lover were ever in any danger,
I hope I muster all the courage I own.
Love makes us prone
To being brave.
Love alone
Makes us so brave.
Zeus, I hope
One day to be brave!
You have to be brave!

(Everyone applauds for Phaedrus.)

ERYXIMACHUS: What a wonderful start, dear Phaedrus!

AGATHON: Marvelous, Phaedrus!

SOCRATES: Brilliant work!

PHAEDRUS: I'm just happy to go first. The speeches can only get better from here.

AGATHON: Right you are. Pausanias, I believe it's your turn.

PAUSANIAS: I believe you're right. Excellent start, Phaderus. But "I'm not quite sure our subject has been well defined."²⁵ Let me add something, won't you?

²⁵ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 465, 180c.

- PHAEDRUS:** Well, of course, Pausanias. What is it?
- PAUSANIAS:** Simply enough, you've requested we are to "speak in praise of Love. This would have been fine if Love himself were simple, too, but as a matter of fact, there are two kinds of Love."²⁵
- AGATHON:** Two kinds of love?
- PAUSANIAS:** Well, isn't it true that there are different kinds of love? Like how there are two Aphrodites?
- ARISTOPHANES:** Two Aphrodites, Pausanias? Are you feeling alright? There is a doctor in the house, you know...
- AGATHON:** Oh, shush, Aristophanes! I want to hear about the two Aphrodites!
- PAUSANIAS:** Very well.

THE APHRODITES SONG

PAUSANIAS

There
is
common Aphrodite—
"Love felt by the vulgar,"²⁶
Who only care to complete the act.

And
heavenly Aphrodite,
Love felt by the cultured,
That only real men feel, in fact.

(While Pausanias puts on tap shoes:)

PAUSANIAS

"But Pausanias,"
You may say,
"Can I tell these Aphrodites apart?"
And to that, I would say,
What a question! How smart!
Here's how to tell each lover apart.

²⁶ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 466, 181b.

(Any amount of tap dancing can start here, but be conscious that a designated tap section will be noted.)

Heavenly is the lover
Whose heart begins to flutter
At the sight of a handsome, young man—

One showing the first traces
Of a beard growing on his face is
The kind of boy you want to expand

The horizons of his new mind.
Pray to Eros that he will find
Your Heavenly Aphrodite
To steer him in
The right direction
In time.

Common is the man who
Advances on the boy too
Young to be more than a child;

Who intends to deceive him,
And knows he'll believe him
When he pulls out his masculine wiles.

Vulgar men don't care who they trick,
S'Long as the boy's inexperienced.
Common Aphrodite
Just wants fresh flesh—
And that's sick.

(While music continues:)

PAUSANIAS: That goes for all the lovers in the room. Lovers, are you all following along?

**ERYXIMACHUS,
SOCRATES &
ARISTOPHANES:** Yes.

PAUSANIAS: Superb. Beloveds, this part is for you.

PAUSANIAS
The customs here, in Athens,

Are superior, it so happens,
To customs found around the globe.

Loving a child's fine in Boeotia,
And loving's illegal in Persia!
Foreign law is based on no self-control!

But in Athens, men have some poise.
We are passionate for older boys!
Our Heavenly Aphrodite
Guarantees patience
Before a
lover
makes a
Choice.

(While music continues:)

AGATHON: So, a lover is a man who loves young men?

PAUSANIAS: Yes.

AGATHON: And here in Athens, our lovers are the best kind of lovers?

PAUSANIAS: Exactly.

AGATHON: And how does a lover go about pursuing young men?

PAUSANIAS: Let me tell you!

(As Pausanias readies himself, the music cuts as he steps up. The next part should be choreographed with the rhythm to which he speaks.)

PAUSANIAS

A lover declares.
A lover proclaims.
A lover exclaims
the truth of his love.
No truth of his love
shall go unclaimed
If the lover loves aloud;
To the public,
The crowd surrounding
The lover displaying
His deepest affection.

And, by extension,
 His affection should
 inspire contempt,
 voyeuristic shame—
 Embarrassment!
 Yet, we refrain.
 We Greeks, we feel proud
 When a lover loves aloud;
 When a lover begins his chase,
 He pleads his case,
 “In pressing his suit
 He [goes] to his knees
 In public view
 And [begs],”²⁷ a boy,
 Beloved by he,
 To love him back.
 Won’t he love him back?
 ‘Til he loves him back,
 He’ll sleep on his stoop.
 He’ll spend the night,
 Outside and cold.
 He’ll beg to hold
 The hand of the boy.
 He’ll follow beside
 And beg some more
 For him to love him back.

(Tap dancing halts.)

PAUSANIAS: Now, what does the beloved do? Does he accept or reject his lover? “In my opinion, the fact of the matter is this. [...] love is [...] complex. [...] it is neither honorable nor a disgrace—its character depends entirely on the behavior it gives rise to.”²⁸

(Tap dancing resumes.)

PAUSANIAS

“To give oneself to a vile man
 In a vile way”²⁸ is vile, and
 To give oneself to an honored man
 Honorably is honorable.
 Now, each man
 Is responsible,

²⁷ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 467, 183.

²⁸ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 468, 183d.

If the love they give
 Is the love they seek,
 To upkeep
 The dignity
 and honor of the other.
 Both beloved and his lover
 Must seek the proper love.
 Heavenly Aphrodite
 Is what they must think of!
 Heavenly Aphrodite
 is—and listen up!—
 When the lover can teach
 the boy how to be
 A better member
 of society;
 “And when the [boy’s] eager,”²⁹
 To learn from the lover
 To better himself,
 Is when love’s most honored.
 It’s honorable then,
 And only then,
 for a boy
 to take
 a lover.

(Tapping ceases.)

AGATHON: *(Almost to Socrates:)* But what about a young man who finds himself surrounded by suitors? If a young man is both beautiful and promising, every lover will throw himself at his feet, and then who is he to choose? Especially when older men can be so charming, how is he to know who the best lover is? And is there any harm in following the charm? Especially if it is for the purpose of growing wiser?

PAUSANIAS

(Looking to Agathon; capturing Agathon’s attention:)

Agathon, my darling,
 Lovers may seem charming.
 But the only one they’re harming
 is you.

Agathon, beloved,

²⁹ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 469, 184d.

you think you are above it,
But sweet nothings only lead
To what's lewd.

Agathon, my treasure,
You won't be young forever.
Listen to what I'm about
To tell you:

You are more than sweet nothings.
More than one-night wonders.
More than Socratic speeches
Leading from one couch to another.
You are the pride of this old man.
You're beloved by a crazy lover.
I'm not trying to reprimand.
I'm just helping you remember.

There
is
common Aphrodite—
"Love felt by the vulgar,"²⁶
Who only care to complete the act.

And
heavenly Aphrodite,
A pure kind of hunger,
That only real men could never lack.

(Everyone claps, Agathon clapping the loudest.)

PAUSANIAS: *(Out of breath:)* Beat that, Socrates!

SOCRATES: Oh, but how could I? Your speech was too brilliant, Pausanias! And it is not even my turn yet!

AGATHON: Socrates humbly accepts defeat. That's not very lover-like of you.

SOCRATES: According to Pausanias, it's not.

PAUSANIAS: I'm glad you noticed, Agathon.

AGATHON: I do find it charming, nonetheless!

(Aristophanes hiccups.)

- AGATHON:** You are so attention-seeking tonight, Aristophanes!
- ARISTOPHANES:** This was not (*Hiccup.*) intentional. Though, it is the most (*Hiccup.*) exciting thing to happen tonight.
- PAUSANIAS:** Don't tell me you're trying to get out of your turn, Aristophanes?
- ARISTOPHANES:** On the (*Hiccup.*) contrary. This is my speech.
- PHAEDRUS:** Very funny, Aristophanes.
- ARISTOPHANES:** But seriously, (*Hiccup.*) no more joking around. I don't want laughter when I recite my (*Hiccup.*) tragic tale of love.
- ERYXIMACHUS:** We may laugh if you tell the story under this condition. Perhaps, I should try to cure your hiccups with some home remedies. And while you recover, in the meantime, I shall switch turns with you?
- ARISTOPHANES:** Excellent idea.
- ERYXIMACHUS:** Marvelous. Now, first, "you should hold your breath for as long as you possibly can. This may well eliminate your hiccups. If it fails, the best remedy is a thorough gargle. And if even this has no effect, then tickle your nose with a feather. A sneeze or two will cure even the most persistent case."³⁰
- ARISTOPHANES:** Tell me when (*Hiccup.*) to start.
- ERYXIMACHUS:** Before you do, I just wanted to commend Pausanias on his speech! My friend, you've "introduced a crucial consideration,"³¹ that being the two types of love. "Though in my opinion [you] did not develop it sufficiently."³¹ Let me therefore try to carry out [your] argument to its logical conclusion."³²

(Eryximachus counts the band in. The music begins. Aristophanes begins to hold his breath.)

HARMONIA

ERYXIMACHUS
Forgive me, *but* I must mention

³⁰ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 469, 185d-e.

³¹ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 470, 185e.

³² Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 470, 186.

Yet again my medical profession.
Let the doctor teach you a short lesson
On the workings of love!

Love not only lives in the human soul.
For all living things, he plays a major role.
Love lives within plants and animals,
He orchestrates from above!

Love is re - spons - i - ble for
All living things and their increase,
From birth to when they are deceased.
Love's re-spons-i-bil-it-y is—

(Aristophanes gasps for air, interrupting the song. The music does not stop, however.)

ERYXIMACHUS

(Late on/messing up his rhythmic cue:)

Harmonia.

(Aristophanes begins hiccuping again; he hiccups off-beat.)

ERYXIMACHUS

Love manifests in health and disease.
Loves splits into different breeds:
One is noble, the other, ugly.
They occur naturally.

There is a balance to be maintained
In the body of the healthy or the pained.
And as long as that balance is sustained,
There's love, don't you see?

(Aristophanes sips his water, and then gargles along with the Eryximachus' chorus:)

ERYXIMACHUS

Love is re - spons - i - ble for
All illness and its re-me-dies;
The body, and how it repletes.
Love's re-spons-i-bil-it-y is
Harmonia.

(Aristophanes swallows the water, and then continues to hiccup.)

ERYXIMACHUS

There's a simple harmony going on
In the depths of our biology and beyond!
The world works like a beautiful song
Conducted by love!

Music, like medicine, functions the same:
Harmony is bliss, discord causes pain!
Like the appetite, we must refrain
From having more than enough.

(Aristophanes gargles along with the Eryximachus' chorus:)

ERYXIMACHUS

Love is re - spons - i - ble for
The rhythm, me - lo - dy and beat;
Greek Po-e-try's lyr-i-cal feats;
Love's re-spons-i-bil-it-y is
Harmonia.

(Aristophanes starts choking on his water. The music continues. Eryximachus pats Aristophanes on the back, Aristophanes gestures to communicate that he's alright. Eryximachus readies himself to continue:)

ERYXIMACHUS

Even divination and impiety
Is love's contribution to the orderly.
The treatment of the gods in society
Is to love properly.

One could consider love absolute.
But he's greater when the good is his pursuit,
And of every good thing, he is the root.
So, he's here, don't you see?

(As Eryximachus begins to conduct everyone, Aristophanes begins to tickle his own nose with a feather. He sneezes discordantly throughout this last chorus:)

EVERYONE, BUT ARISTOPHANES

(Harmoniously:)

Love is re - spons - i - ble for
All living things and their increase,
From birth to when they are deceased.
All illness and its re-me-dies;

The body, and how it repletes.
 The rhythm, me - lo - dy and beat;
 Greek Po-e-try's lyr-i-cal feats;
 The treatment of gods, properly;
 And all things, universally!
 Love's re-spons-i-bil-it-y is
 Harmonia.

(Aristophanes sneezes, which is signified by an off-beat, cymbal crash performed by Zoe. Everyone claps for Eryximachus, and Aristophanes claps a little late.)

ERYXIMACHUS: Did that help at all?

ARISTOPHANES: The speech, or the treatments?

ERYXIMACHUS: The treatments.

ARISTOPHANES: *(Freed from hiccups.)* “The hiccups have stopped all right—but not before I applied the Sneeze Treatment to them. Makes me wonder whether the ‘orderly sort of Love’ in the body calls for the sounds and itchings that constitute a sneeze, because the hiccups stopped immediately when I applied the Sneeze Treatment.”³³

ERYXIMACHUS: “You’re good, Aristophanes[, ...] but watch what you’re doing. You are making jokes before your speech.”³³

ARISTOPHANES: “Good point, Eryximachus. So let me ‘unsay what I have said.’”³⁴ I don’t want to muddle my tale with humor beforehand. It will make the tragic parts indiscernible.

PLATO: It’s quite alright, Aristophanes. I never seemed to laugh at your jokes anyway.

ARISTOPHANES: Quite the insult coming from a party-crashing, Socrates wannabe. What I was trying to say (*to everyone:*) is that “I’m not worried about saying something funny[. ...] What I’m worried about is that I might say something ridiculous.”³⁵

PHAEDRUS: I doubt that you would say anything more ridiculous than I did, Aristophanes.

³³ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 472, 189.

³⁴ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 472, 189b.

³⁵ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 472, 189b.

ARISTOPHANES: That's very kind of you, Phaedrus. But when discussing matters of love, ridiculousness presents itself like a satyr to a bathing nymph.

PAUSANIAS: Speaking of presenting, Aristophanes, do you plan on giving praise to Eros or not?

ERYXIMACHUS: *(In good fun:)* Especially since you have no problem giving your opinions on my speech!

ARISTOPHANES: Of course, of course! “Indeed, I do have in mind a different approach to speaking than [...] you and Pausanias. You see, I think people have entirely missed the power of Love, because, if they had grasped it, they'd have built the greatest temples and altars to him and made the greatest sacrifices[, ...] For he loves the human race more than any other god[. ...] I shall, therefore, try to explain his power to you”³⁶. *(The inklings of music arise, specifically the chorus music of the song. To everyone, and the audience:)* And if you understand the awesome power of love, please tell everyone of my tale.

JUST IN LOVE

(Two of the Chorus lends themselves to Aristophanes as a backing vocal. Any musical opening should feature a defiant flute melody.)

ARISTOPHANES

CHORUS

(Background vocals.)

Once upon a time,
there were three types of people:

Two men as one,

son of the sun;

Two women as one,

daughter of the Earth;

Each gender together,

child of the moon.

Sharing a spine,
Everybody had a double.

We would cartwheel around,

instead of run;

We were spherically-bound

³⁶ Plato, *Symposium*, pgs. 472-473, 189c-d.

We had two sets of everything.

Four arms, and four legs.
Four hands, and four feet.
One head, and two faces.
Sixty-four teeth.
Together in one body
With two of each
Organ and part.

We were alive.

We were powerful.

We were alive.

Now we're just in love.

Just in love.

Now, around this time,
We were scheming up some evil.

Let's take on the gods! —

Though we had good odds,

They ran off to brainstorm

A problem arrives
Due to this upheaval.

If they killed us all,

If we carried on, things

We could storm Olympus!

Zeus and the Olympians
didn't like it one bit
That three types of people

with a wide girth;

We were attuned.

With two hearts.

Like the sun, earth and moon.

We spelled out certain doom.

Ooh-ooh, ooh-ooh.

Just in love.

Just in love.

And they were stunned.

we failed at first.

while we loomed.

who would worship them?

would only get worse.

They'd be doomed.

could make them submit.
So, Zeus and the Olympians
decided to split us apart.

Us, apart?

We could've died.

We bled out from our wounds.

Lying side by side.

What a sad afternoon.

Some of us died.

Too soon, too soon.

Some of us are in love.

Just in love.

Some of us are in love.

Just in love.

(Stage lights dim, and a spotlight on Alcibiades and his chorus of women—the remaining three—in the aisles of the audience, on their way to Agathon's house.)

ALCIBIADES

You look just like Silenus.
Like all other satyrs do.
You are the ugliest man I've ever met.
But I still want you.

(Music changes.)

ALCIBIADES

I am dripping in women.

CHORUS

Dripping in women.

ALCIBIADES

Yet, jealousy persuades you not.
If dripping in women,

CHORUS

Dripping in women.

ALCIBIADES

Was what I wanted, then I would not want.

I would have.
But I want to be had.

I want to be wanted so bad!
Oh, you're driving me mad!

(Alcibiades and the Chorus disappear from the aisle as the music shifts. Music changes from the second half of Aristophanes' song; this part is more upbeat, something to dance to.)

ARISTOPHANES

Nearly killed by lightning, cauterized,
then sewn up
by Apollo.

Being half of who you once were
Is hard enough
to swallow.

No more cartwheels, or duets.
Just heartache and regret...
Just in love.

CHORUS

Just In Love.

ARISTOPHANES

Just our luck.

CHORUS

Just In Love.

ARISTOPHANES

Now "love is born into every"³⁷one,
After Zeus bred
Our sorrow.

Then Zeus put everyone's genitals
Between our legs.
Sex followed.

Gifted blessing after curse,
The human race could give birth.
Well, some of 'em.

CHORUS

³⁷ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 474, 191d.

Just in love.

ARISTOPHANES

Some of 'em.

CHORUS

Just in love.

ARISTOPHANES

Some of us have children.
Others live two by two.
Once you meet your other half,
There's nothing you'd rather do
Than have Hephaestus offer
To conjoin both of you
there and then.

CHORUS

Whole again.

ARISTOPHANES

But we are alone!

Your thoughts are not my own!

Sep'rate and alone!

Just in love!

Just in love!

(The music switches up. The flute copies the vocal melody, and the band starts to really jam. Dancing is encouraged.)

ARISTOPHANES

Love is not a god.
Love's a reminder.
Love is not the wine,
He's the thirst.
Love's not the object,
He's the designer.
He's not what follows.
He's what comes first.

Love is not a god.

Love's a condition.
 Love is not the crime,
 He's the proof.
 Love is not the cure,
 He's the affliction.
 Love isn't a hunter,
 He's the pursuit.

(Softer music, maybe change up in music?)

ARISTOPHANES

"'Love' is the name for our pursuit of wholeness,"³⁸
 Love's "our desire to be complete."³⁹
 "Love does the best that can be done,"⁴⁰ for now.
 Love heals us from our defeat.

(Flute copies the last verse's vocal melody along with the chorus; at this point, the remaining chorus girls enter carrying Alcibiades, who drunkenly rambles about being incomplete.)

CHORUS

"'Love' is the name for our pursuit of wholeness,"³⁸
 Love's "our desire to be complete."³⁹
 "Love does the best that can be done,"⁴⁰ for now.
 Love heals us from our defeat.

(The remaining chorus girls with Alcibiades exit before a more upbeat version of the final verse is played, flute and Aristophanes harmonizing together.)

ARISTOPHANES

"'Love' is the name for our pursuit of wholeness,"³⁸
 Love's "our desire to be complete."³⁹
 "Love does the best that can be done,"⁴⁰ for now.
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"'Love' is the name for our pursuit of wholeness,"³⁸
 Love's "our desire to be complete."³⁹
 "Love does the best that can be done,"⁴⁰ for now.
 Love heals us from our defeat.

(The song ends abruptly soon after, stopping on a tableau of Pausanias, Agathon, Aristophanes, Socrates, Plato, Phaedrus, and Eryximachus. Those who

³⁸ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 476, 194e-193.

³⁹ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 476, 193.

⁴⁰ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 478, 193d.

were dancing stayed paused dancing. Aristophanes and Plato glare competitively at one another. Socrates, center of the tableau in a Last Supper-esque way, remains calm and collected in the tableau, looking up toward the sky in deep thought. Everyone else presents great emotion, caught up in the moment. Once claps happen, anyone not listed in the tableau is seen leaving the stage as lights go out.)

END OF ACT I

ACT II

(The tableau-ed actors return to the tableau from the end of Act I, except Plato is missing. Enter Hedoneides with a broom. Enter cautiously the chorus of women, Hedoneides and Zoe, as moving characters. The chorus of women flock to the handsome young men on stage, while Zoe sits in Aristophane's lap.)

- HEDONEIDES:** Sober discussion leaves less mess.
- CHORUS:** Sober discussion leaves less mess!
- HEDONEIDES:** It leaves less time to second guess—
- CHORUS:** It leaves less time to second guess!
- HEDONEIDES:** —the escapades of the night before.
- CHORUS:** The escapades of the night before!
- HEDONEIDES:** Leaves me less chores, that's for sure.
- CHORUS:** Leaves him less chores, that's for sure!
- HEDONEIDES:** Girls?
- CHORUS:** Yes?
- HEDONEIDES:** Don't you have anything better to do than following after me? Why not talk to Socrates? He loves to talk more than a busy slave such as myself.
- CHORUS:** Oh, Hedoneides, you silly man. Plato's onstage! Waiting to speak for him!
- HEDONEIDES:** Plato is gone.
- CHORUS:** Plato is gone?!
- HEDONEIDES:** Plato is gone.

(The chorus flocks to Socrates. Zoe plays her flute around Aristophanes.)

I KNOW NOTHING

CHORUS

Old man, can we get you to budge?
Old man, tell us what you think, please!
Old man, can we ask you to judge?
Tell us what you know, Socrates!

(The music really begins.)

CHORUS

Who do you think is right?

SOCRATES

Tell me: what is right?

CHORUS

Whose speech is the best?

SOCRATES

Tell me: what is best?

CHORUS

We don't know what you mean!

SOCRATES

We can't know what we mean
If we don't know what is what.

CHORUS

...what? Anyway!
Whose speech is most true?

SOCRATES

Tell me: what is true?

CHORUS

What speech is most just?

SOCRATES

Tell me: what is just?

CHORUS

We don't know what you mean!

SOCRATES

We can't know what we mean
If we don't know what is what!

CHORUS
What is what?

SOCRATES
You there! Do you know what is right?
You there! Do you know what is best?
You there! Do you know what is true?
You there! Do you know what is just?
Until we define our terms,
We won't know much.

CHORUS
What is there to know?

SOCRATES
What does it mean to know?

CHORUS
How can we know what
it means to know?
We don't know what you mean!

SOCRATES
We can't know what we mean
If we don't know what is what!

CHORUS
What is what?
We were talking about love!

SOCRATES
Ahh... what is love?

CHORUS
The party thinks that you know!

SOCRATES
I can't say I know.

CHORUS
We don't know what you mean!

SOCRATES

We can't know what we mean
If we don't know what is what!

You there! How do you know that you know?
You there! Do you know what knowing is?
You there! Can the soul know like the mind?
You there! What's Love got to do with this?
Until we define our terms,
The truth's dismissed.

I don't know.
I desire to know.
I want that which I lack.
I want knowledge.
Fools don't know
That they don't know.
A man is wiser once
that's acknowledged.

Once you know that you
know nothing,
Then you seem to know
a hell-of-a-lot!
Once you know that you
know nothing,
You seem to know more
Than you ever thought!

CHORUS

We don't know what you mean!

HEDONEIDES

I think I know what he means.
He means you can't be made a fool.

If I don't suppose to know,
Then I can't fall from the height
Of a wise man's pedestal!
I can never be wrong, or right.
Let others define your terms
Everytime.

(Music, lightly, continues.)

SOCRATES: Very clever! What is your name?

HEDONEIDES: Hedoneides.

SOCRATES: What an ironic name for a slave! Granted, Agathon treats you well?

HEDONEIDES: After the work's done, Agathon commands me to be as free as a guest in his home.

SOCRATES: Tell me, Hedoneides, how does the son of pleasure become a slave with a mind for wisdom?

(Two of the Chorus girls act out Hedoneides' tale.)

HEDONEIDES: Hedone, daughter of Eros and Psyche, the goddess of pleasure, is my mother. While mortal-watching a temple enshrined to Athena, she spotted Sophia, the high priestess in Athens at the time. When Hedone first spoke to Sophia, she learned the pleasure of thoughtful debate and speech. She returned each day to talk to the priestess, eventually falling in love. Upon noticing her own feelings, Hedone planned to steal a golden arrow from her father, Eros, to prick the hand of the wise woman. Only then, could they run away and be in love together. But Hedone's newfound wisdom crept in. Hedone could not coax Sophia out of her pious devotion to Athena. She did not want to derail the wise woman's life, especially if that derailing would be for her own gain. She wanted Sophia to be happy, to stay happy, as she already seemed. Hedone did not steal the arrow. Yet, Hedone visited and spoke with Sophia everyday. Along the years, Sophia grew more and more generous, gifting wisdom to anyone who would simply pass by, rather than just those who sought advice from her. She would sometimes faint with how busy she'd gotten, but Hedone would watch over her until she woke. Eventually, Sophia grew sick, and like humans do, Sophia grew old, and Hedone stayed with her, in wait for Hermes, gentle guide to Hades. In their last moments together, Sophia soothed the devastated Hedone: "The wisdom I bestowed upon people who sought it," she said, "was wisdom I tried to rid myself of, for without it, I could love you without second thought." And in her arms, Sophia died. True love, I think, causes one to act wisely rather than foolishly. Love is not wanting to possess the goodness of another; Love is wanting to preserve the goodness of another, even if that means never being able to call it one's own. This is why loss of love is so great, why mortal love is so bittersweet. It was out of this immense grief I was born to pleasure and wisdom.

SOCRATES: You should join our competition, Hedoneides.

HEDONEIDES: No, no, Socrates, though I am commanded to act free, I am not. A slave joining such a discussion is out of the question. I'm at least afforded the pleasure of listening in.

SOCRATES: Suit yourself, Hedoneides.

CHORUS

Wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait!
Is his speech any good?

SOCRATES

Tell me: what is good?

CHORUS

Oh, not this again!

SOCRATES

Tell me: What is *this*?

CHORUS

You don't know what we mean?

SOCRATES

We can't know what we mean
If we don't know what is what!

I don't know.
I desire to know.
I want that which I lack.
I want knowledge.
Fools don't know
That they don't know.
A man is wiser once
that's acknowledged.

So, you there! Do you know what is good?
And you there! How are we judging?
You there! Do you know what to say?
You there! What are we discussing?
Until you define our terms,
I know nothing.

CHORUS: If he knows nothing, there's nothing left to say. Let the party re-begin, I guess. Where did they leave off? After Aristophanes' depressing tale? I thought he wrote comedy? His speech wasn't very funny...

(The chorus of women flutter offstage, their conversation fades with their presence. Zoe returns to the pit. And Hedoneides returns to the background of the party. The tableau unfreezes.)

ARISTOPHANES: “That [...] is my speech about Love. [...] Please] don't make a comedy of it.”⁴¹ But do let me know what you thought.

ERYXIMACHUS: “I found your speech delightful[!] Really, we've had such a rich feast of speeches on Love, that if I couldn't vouch for the fact that Socrates and Agathon are masters of the art of love, I'd be afraid that they'd have nothing left to say.”⁴²

AGATHON: Oh, do you hear that, Socrates? Eryximachus considers us the masters of love.

SOCRATES: Though I claim to understand the art of love, I am hardly a master of it, Eryximachus. But Agathon is, I'm sure.

AGATHON: “You're trying to bewitch me, Socrates [...] making me think the audience expects great things of my speech[...].”⁴³ Now, I'll be too nervous to do well!

SOCRATES: Oh, Agathon, you can't be serious! When I saw you earlier in the festival, you walked on stage and looked to the audience of 30,000 Athenians—brave and confident, ready to display your play, your own writing! Surely, giving a speech to this measly little crowd *(He gestures to the party as well as the audience.)* couldn't make you nervous at all!

AGATHON: *(Starstruck.)* You think I'm confident?

SOCRATES: Of course.

AGATHON: *(Regaining said confidence.)* “Oh, why, Socrates, [...] You must think I have nothing but theater audiences on my mind! [You don't

⁴¹ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 476, 193d.

⁴² Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 476, 193e.

⁴³ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 477, 194-b.

think I] realize that [...] a few sensible men are much more frightening than a senseless crowd?"⁴⁴

SOCRATES: Of course you realize that, Agathon. "I'm sure that if you ever run into people you consider wise, you'll pay more attention to them than to ordinary people."⁴⁵

AGATHON: I certainly will. In fact, Socrates, I consider you quite wise, and find all of my attention paid to you.

SOCRATES: What? Me? Wise? Why, Agathon, you really think so?

(Aristophanes starts laughing.)

AGATHON: Don't be shy, Socrates! A little cicada named Phaedrus claimed that I am as beautiful as you are wise.

SOCRATES: Oh, Phaedrus, you really said that about me?

PHAEDRUS: I-I did.

SOCRATES: Did you mean his Beauty, or his beauty?

PHAEDRUS: I don't know if I understand what you're asking, Socrates.

AGATHON: It's like the two Aphrodites, Phaedrus. Beauty! And beauty.

SOCRATES: Exactly right, Agathon. Which beauty do you think Phaedrus meant?

AGATHON: Well, I'm sure he meant Beauty! Though, it could be argued that I have both—

PHAEDRUS: *(Very politely.)* Um, "Agathon, my friend, if you answer Socrates, he'll no longer care whether we get anywhere with what we're doing here, so long as he has a partner for discussion. Especially if he's handsome. Now, like you, I enjoy listening to Socrates in discussion, but it is my duty to see to the praising of Love and to exact a speech from every one of this group."⁴⁶ Once you two have shared your speeches, then, by all means, have a wonderful discussion.

⁴⁴ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 477, 194b.

⁴⁵ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 477, 194c.

⁴⁶ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 477, 194d.

AGATHON: “You’re doing a beautiful job, Phaedrus. There’s nothing to keep me from giving my speech. Socrates will have many opportunities for discussion later.”⁴⁷ For now, it is my turn to display my wisdom on love. You see, I’ve had many suitors before I found myself under Pausanias’ wing. And I’m afraid we’ve not really discussed who Love is.

PAUSANIAS: Oh, no, you can’t mean this.

AGATHON: Unfortunately, I do.

PAUSANIAS: Would you care to elaborate?

LOVE’S LIKE ME

AGATHON

Love gives gifts—like bravery;
Like morals, or something behavior-y;
Like balance between the gross and savory;
Or, in extreme cases, human misery.

But boys, we’ve spoken not of the god,
But the toys! The gifts that he gave.
Let me tell you about the god tonight we praise.

Love is sexy!
Love is young!
Love is daring!
Love is fun!
Love is beauty
That everyone
Can clearly see!
You’ll see, amidst the evidence,
Love’s like me!

“Love was born
to hate old age.”⁴⁸
He pities those
Who grow old and change!
He cannot be ancient.
His beauty is why.
Love is young,
With beauty like mine.

⁴⁷ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 477, 194e.

⁴⁸ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 478, 195b.

Love tiptoes
on good men's souls.
If a soul is gross,
His shoulder is cold.
When souls are beautiful,
He'll make them his friends.
And I prefer good men,
Just like him!

Love is sexy!
Love is young!
Love is daring!
Love is fun!
Love is beauty
That everyone
Can surely see!
If you need some frame of reference,
Love's like me!

Love teaches
Poetry through his touch.
Even the uncultured man
Can make any boy blush.
He fathers art!
All sorts and kinds.
I should know!
He's a muse of mine!

"Love fills us
With togetherness,"⁴⁹
By nature, he is
Ceremonious.
When the gods pour wine,
He holds a toast.
Because, like me,
Love's a great host!

Love is sexy!
Love is young!
Love is daring!
Love is fun!
Love is beauty
That everyone

⁴⁹ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 480, 197d.

Can plainly see!
If you're wondering about resemblance,
Love's like me!

AGATHON: I've been told quite often that I bear resemblance to many Eros statues, actually.

ARISTOPHANES: You don't say?

**PLATO &
SOCRATES:** Resembling a god is good as long as one's likeness is more than just likeness.

AGATHON
We are more than just alike!
Look at me! You'll see that I'm right!
The way he speaks is the way I write!
Examine me under the light!

(Spotlight on Agathon and a woman of the chorus, entering the spotlight, as Eros. This look-alike also looks suspiciously similar to Agathon. Agathon and the Eros look-alike pose with each word Agathon utters.)

AGATHON
Luxury,
elegance,
desire and grace,
temp'rance,
graciousness,
Brav'ry and taste!
Pleasurable!
Poetical,
all in good faith!
Beautiful!
With muscle
And a pretty boy face!
Love and I
Are everything
A man should embrace!
Haven't I made a good case?

(Agathon and the Eros look-alike dance identically, or at least try to.)

AGATHON
Love is sexy!

Love is young!
 Love is daring!
 Love is fun!
 Love is beauty
 That everyone
 Can clearly see!
 By now, you should make the inference!
 You should see there's no real difference!
 If you want to get a feel for his essence,
 Love's like me!

(Lights go black. The Eros look-alike hurries off stage before the lights come back up. Everyone claps up a storm.)

AGATHON: And *that*, my friends, is a speech on Love by a *master* of love.

SOCRATES: “Now do you think I was foolish to feel the fear I felt before[, Eryximachus]? “Didn’t I speak like a prophet a while ago when I said that Agathon would give an amazing speech?”⁵⁰ How am I going to contend? I’m tongue-tied!

ERYXIMACHUS: You’re right that “Agathon would speak well. But you, tongue-tied? [...] I don’t believe that.”⁵¹

PAUSANIAS: No one believes that.

ARISTOPHANES: You always have something to say, Socrates, regardless of necessity.

SOCRATES: “How am I not going to be tongue-tied, I or anyone else, after a speech delivered with such beauty and variety?”⁵¹

PLATO (O.S.) &

SOCRATES: “The other parts may not have been so wonderful, but”⁵¹ ...

SOCRATES: “That [part] at the end! Who would not be struck dumb on hearing the beauty of the words and phrases?”⁵¹

(Aristophanes opens his mouth, but refrains from interjecting.)

SOCRATES: “How ridiculous I’d been to agree to join with you in praising Love and to say that I was a master of the art of love, when I knew

⁵⁰ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 481, 198.

⁵¹ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 481, 198b.

nothing what[so]ever of this [praising] business, of how anything [...] ought to be praised!”⁵²

PHAEDRUS: What do you mean, Socrates?

SOCRATES: Agathon’s speech has made me realize that I did not know what it meant to praise something or someone.

ARISTOPHANES: Are you joking?

AGATHON: At least you know now, right?

SOCRATES: I might. What your speech has taught me that “in my foolishness, I thought you should tell the truth about whatever you praise, [...] and from this a speaker should select the most beautiful truths and range them most suitably. I was quite vain, thinking that I would talk well and that I knew the truth about praising anything what[soever]. But now it appears that[...] to praise] is to apply to the object the grandest and the most beautiful qualities, whether he actually has them or not.”⁵³ All of your speeches have done this so far.

ARISTOPHANES: Not true, but continue.

PLATO (O.S.) &

SOCRATES: So, rather than praise Love, I would like to speak the truth about him.

ERYXIMACHUS: The truth!

PAUSANIAS: Let us hear *the truth*.

ARISTOPHANES: The plain truth.

AGATHON: The beautiful truth!

SOCRATES: “Phaedrus, would a speech like this satisfy your requirement?”⁵⁴

PHAEDRUS: Of course it does, Socrates.

PLATO (O.S.) &

⁵² Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 481, 198d.

⁵³ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 481, 198d-e.

⁵⁴ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 481, 199b.

SOCRATES: “Well, then, Phaedrus, [...] allow me to ask Agathon a few little questions”⁵⁵ so we are all on the same page.

PHAEDRUS: “You have my permission[. ...] Ask away.”⁵⁶

(Agathon and Socrates turn to face each other, and the rest of the party watches like spectators at a tennis match. The chorus girls peak their heads out from the wings to watch, curiously. The following spittfire of questions can have a rhythmic nature to it. If desired, the instruments can play in the background of the conversation, mimicking the rhythm of speaking. When Plato, who is still off-stage, speaks, Socrates mouths what he says.)

SOCRATES: Is love a love of something, or a love of nothing?

AGATHON: A love of something.

PLATO: *(Offstage.)* Does someone in love desire the love of something, or does he not?

AGATHON: Someone desires the love of something.

SOCRATES: When someone desires something, does he have what he desires, or does he not?

AGATHON: He does not already have what he desires, or else he wouldn't desire it. “At least, that wouldn't be likely.”⁵⁷

SOCRATES: Very good. “Instead of what's *likely*, [...] ask yourself whether it's *necessary*.”⁵⁷

PLATO: *(Offstage.)* Is this necessary to desire something?

AGATHON: Yes.

SOCRATES: If someone desires the love of something, is someone in need of love, or does he already have love?

AGATHON: He is in need of love.

PLATO: *(Offstage.)* Is this necessary to desire love?

AGATHON: Yes.

⁵⁵ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 482, 199b-c.

⁵⁶ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 482, 199c.

⁵⁷ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 482, 200.

- ERYXIMACHUS:** Excuse me, Socrates, but doesn't a healthy man desire health, even when he is healthy?
- SOCRATES:** Excellent question! "Whenever you say, *I desire what I already have*, ask yourself [if you mean]: *I want the things I have now to be mine in the future as well.*"⁵⁸ Do you agree that's what this means?
- AGATHON & ERYXIMACHUS:** Yes.
- PLATO:** (*Offstage.*) So, someone who desires something now and also desires something in the future is someone who will be in need, or not be in need?
- AGATHON:** Someone who will be in need.
- PLATO:** (*Offstage.*) Is this someone who desires to preserve what they have? Because, without it, he will be in need?
- AGATHON:** Yes.
- PLATO:** (*Offstage.*) Then, someone who desires love now and in the future, is someone who is either in need, or will be in need?
- AGATHON:** Yes.
- SOCRATES:** Now tell me, Agathon, is a lover in need of love, or is a beloved?
- AGATHON:** A lover is in need because he seeks love from his beloved. A beloved accepts love.
- SOCRATES:** What does a lover seek in a beloved? You said that love is beautiful in your speech, did you not?
- AGATHON:** I did.
- SOCRATES:** So, if a lover is in need of love, is he also in need of beauty?
- AGATHON:** I suppose.

⁵⁸ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 483, 200d.

PLATO: *(Offstage.)* So, if it is necessary to be in need to desire, and necessary to desire in order to love or acquire beauty, one must be in need of love and beauty.

SOCRATES: And “if something needs beauty and has got no beauty at all, would you still say that it is beautiful?”⁵⁹

AGATHON: Of course not.

**PLATO (O.S.) &
SOCRATES:** Excellent!

(The rhythm or instruments accompanying the dialogue halts. Plato enters, decked out in full drag, as Diotima. He might be putting on earrings, or completing his look as he returns.)

**PLATO &
SOCRATES:** Any questions?

AGATHON: Yeah! Can you repeat everything you just said?

**PLATO &
SOCRATES:** Did any else understand me?

ERYXIMACHUS: Possibly.

PHAEDRUS: I think so?

PAUSANIAS: Unsure.

ARISTOPHANES: I stopped paying attention.

(Music softly starts.)

**PLATO &
SOCRATES:** Not to worry. Let me give you a speech given by an old friend.

BETWEEN YOU AND ME

SOCRATES
“A woman of Mantinea”⁶⁰ —
Beautiful, clever, and wise.
Her name was Diotima.

⁵⁹ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 484, 201b.

⁶⁰ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 484, 201d.

She gave me lovely advice.

I used to think just like you,
That love was a beautiful thing;
Until she said it's not true.
She really got me thinking.

I said,
“What do you mean [...]? Is Love ugly, then”⁶¹?
She said,

PLATO

Socrates! “Watch your tongue!”⁶²
“Don't force [what] is not beautiful
To be ugly,”⁶³; that's really dumb.
If he isn't very pretty, or ugly, too,
“He could be something in between.”⁶³
But don't assume the other if one is true,
Regardless of how true it seems.

Would you really call a god ugly?

SOCRATES

Zeus, no! I wouldn't say tell such lies!

PLATO

The gods are beautiful and good, then?

SOCRATES

As they should be in everyone's eyes!

PLATO

But Love wants beauty and goodness.
Does that mean he doesn't have those things?

SOCRATES

I suppose that means he doesn't.
She really got me thinking!

I said,
“What could [he] be? [Is Love] mortal,”⁶⁴ then?

⁶¹ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 484, 201e.

⁶² Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 484, 202.

⁶³ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 485, 202b.

⁶⁴ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 485, 202d.

PLATO

Like I said, something in between.
All spirits are neither mortals or gods,
But work for both behind the scenes.
As “messengers who shuttle back and forth,”⁶⁵
They deliver gifts and commands.
Love is a spirit, like a demi-god,
Aphrodite’s work is in his hands.

SOCRATES

“Who are his father and mother,”⁶⁶
If Ares and Aphrodite are not?
She said,

PLATO

“That’s a rather long story,”⁶⁶
But I can tell you if you want.
“The gods held a celebration,”⁶⁶
The night Aphrodite was born.
His parents met in Zeus’ garden
and slept there ‘til the early morn.

That night, a mortal woman and a god conceived
A son who was in between.
He is poor like his mother, always in need,
But like his father, hatches many schemes!
Servant to the goddess of beauty and love,
He follows Aphrodite close behind.
He dreams of the day he’ll catch up with her,
But, honestly, that’s a waste of time.

SOCRATES

So Love never obtains beauty?
Or at least, he does not for long.
He’s clever like his godly father,
But needy like his mortal mom.
I’m still confused about the nature
Of love as a spiritual thing.
But the moment Diotima continued
She really got me thinking!

⁶⁵ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 486, 202e.

⁶⁶ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 486, 203b.

(Spotlight on Plato, and Socrates sits in the shadow produced by Plato when he takes centerstage.)

PLATO

Love is always. Always, always!
Love is in between.
Love is moving, always, always.
Moving in between.
Always searching, always finding,
Always grasping, always near.
Between you and me,
Love is always here.

(The spotlight fades to include Socrates again, yet the focus is still on Plato. Plato makes a gesture between himself and Socrates as the music shifts back to the previous sound.)

PLATO

Socrates, everyone's pregnant,
"Both in body and soul, [...] When a man and woman come together [...] To give birth,"⁶⁷ it's beautiful.
This is how humans try to
Achieve immortality.
Why else is Love desired?
So, one can have a legacy.

SOCRATES

She said,

PLATO

Lovers don't want to feel complete,
Lovers want to own what's good.
People will sever their hands or feet
If a doctor says they should.
Whoever said that should rewrite it soon.
It sounds so ridiculous!
People want good forever more,
Good they can possess!

ARISTOPHANES: That's not—

PLATO

⁶⁷ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 489, 206c.

Love never exists physically
As work or offspring of two.
Love never, ever comes to be.
Love is not something that we do.
Love is always in the air,
Not because Love has wings.

SOCRATES

But because Love is always there!
I know now what she was thinking!

(The spotlight expands to Socrates, and the two sing to each other.)

SOCRATES & PLATO

Love is always. Always, always!
Love is in between.
Love is moving, always, always.
Moving in between.
Always searching, always finding,
Always grasping, always near.
Always birthing, always dying,
Always lapsing, always clear.
Between you and me,
Love is always here.
Between you and me,
Love is always here.

(Before the spotlight cuts, Plato gives Socrates a kiss on either the forehead or hand. Then the lights come up, and Plato removes himself from the center as everyone erupts into applause—except Aristophanes.)

SOCRATES: Once Diotima persuaded me, I knew I needed to persuade all of you. That is the speech.

ARISTOPHANES: Socrates, you misrepresented my—

ERYXIMACHUS: What a brilliant and thoughtful speech, Socrates!

PHAEDRUS: I have to agree! You never fail at impressing me!

ARISTOPHANES: But he mischaracterized what I sa—

PAUSANIAS: Especially the part on immortality. A very good catch!

ARISTOPHANES: But—!

AGATHON: I cannot believe I was considered a master of love in comparison to Socrates! He truly knows what he is talking about!

PHAEDRUS: I think he deserves to be the winner of the speeches tonight!

(Everyone but Aristophanes agrees and starts clapping again.)

SOCRATES IS RIGHT

AGATHON, PAUSANIAS,

ERYXIMACHUS, PHAEDRUS

Socrates is right.

Socrates is right

Socrates is right.

Yeah-Yeah!

Socrates is right.

Socrates is right

Socrates is right.

Yeah! Yeah!

ARISTOPHANES

(To Socrates:)

How original.

How divine.

Who wrote that story you just told?

AGATHON, PAUSANIAS,

ERYXIMACHUS, PHAEDRUS

Socrates is right!

Yeah-yeah!

ARISTOPHANES

(To Socrates:)

Couldn't be you.

Heavens, no, right?

Can't even give your own account?

AGATHON, PAUSANIAS,

ERYXIMACHUS, PHAEDRUS

Socrates is right!

Yeah-yeah!

ARISTOPHANES

(To Plato:)

Feeling threatened
By that speech of mine?
Take a seat on the shelf.

Bridge: What will be remembered
Is not what is “profound.”
What will be remembered
Is the beauty of the sound!

Verse: How incredible!
How benign.
Trying to bury me in good health!

AGATHON, PAUSANIAS,

ERYXIMACHUS, PHAEDRUS

Socrates is right!
Yeah-yeah!

ARISTOPHANES

(To Plato:)

How enlightening!
How refined.
You should really get over yourself!

Bridge: What will be remembered
Is not your “pursuit of truth.”
What will be remembered
Is the split between him and you!

Chorus: Just because you coined him.
Doesn't mean you'll join him.
Baby, don't you know he's gone?
The reason why you do this,
deny what the truth is,
'Cause you really can't move on.

But fine, hide behind him. ~~~~
You know that's wrong.

AGATHON, PAUSANIAS,

ERYXIMACHUS, PHAEDRUS

Verse: Socrates is right.
Socrates is right.

Socrates is right.
Yeah-Yeah!

Socrates is right.
Socrates is right.

Socrates is right.
Yeah-Yeah!

ARISTOPHANES

Use his words
To twist mine...
Get over yourself.

AGATHON, PAUSANIAS,
ERYXIMACHUS, PHAEDRUS

Socrates is right.
Socrates is right.

ARISTOPHANES

Get over yourself.

Socrates is right.
Socrates is right.

ARISTOPHANES

Get over yourself.

AGATHON, PAUSANIAS,
ERYXIMACHUS, PHAEDRUS

Socrates is right.
Yeah-Yeah!

(As the music cuts, from offstage:)

ALCIBIADES: *(Poorly and drunkenly singing, in high spirits:)* Dionysus may have blessed the wine! There is fine excuse for drunkenness! But as long as Agathon's my friend, I have but only one request: Agathon! Agathon! Agathon!

(The chorus of women start chanting Agathon's name along with Alcibiades.)

AGATHON: Good slave, be a darling, and figure out what in Tartarus is going on outside. Oh! And "If it's people we know, invite them in. If not, tell

them the party's over, and we're about to turn in."⁶⁸ Just don't make me sound like a jerk.

(Hedoneides exits, and not a beat later, Alcibiades is brought in by Zoe. He stumbles, followed by the chorus of women.)

ALCIBIADES: "Good evening, gentlemen. I'm plastered[. ...] May I join your party? Or should I crown Agathon with this wreath—which is all I came to do, anyway—make myself scarce? I really couldn't make it yesterday, [...] but nothing could stop me tonight! See, I'm wearing the garland myself. I want this crown to come directly from my head to the head that belongs, I don't mind saying, to the cleverest and best looking man in town."⁶⁹

(Everyone laughs at him.)

ALCIBIADES: What? Did I say something funny? Has Aristophanes not kept you entertained like he should?

ARISTOPHANES: Apparently, not, Alcibiades.

ALCIBIADES: Then you must invite me to drink with you! Of course, I could leave, if I'm truly interrupting...

PAUSANIAS: Stay! Stay!

PHAEDRUS: Yes, stay, Alcibiades.

AGATHON: Come on over here! You can sit with me!

(Zoe helps Alcibiades over to Agathon's couch, then joins Aristophanes' afterwards. Agathon and Socrates make room for Alcibiades, and Alcibiades sits between, not noticing Socrates and focusing on Agathon. Alcibiades tries to untangle the crown from his head. The others laugh as he fumbles. Once he frees the crown, Alcibiades places it on Agathon's head, kisses him, and hugs him.)

AGATHON: *(Laughing.)* Slave, please help him with his sandals.

(Hedoneides takes off Alcibiades' sandals.)

⁶⁸ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 494, 212d.

⁶⁹ Plato, *Symposium*, pgs. 494-495, 212e-213.

ALCIBIADES: Congratulations, my dearest friend, Agathon. The honor I feel being your friend is taller than a titan. Who thought you could be as clever as you are gorgeous! I envy you!

AGATHON: Alcibiades, you are much too drunk!

ALCIBIADES: Agathon, you are not drunk enough.

AGATHON: Perhaps that's true. But rest here with us. I'm surprised that "we can all three fit on my couch."⁷⁰ I don't remember it being this big.

ALCIBIADES: "Great idea! [...] But wait a moment! Who's the third?"⁷⁰

SOCRATES: Hello, Alcibiades.

(Alcibiades sees Socrates. His mood shifts dramatically.)

TOO WISE TO LOVE (REPRISE)

ALCIBIADES

Socrates? Agathon?

Pausanias, what's going on?

PAUSANIAS

Socrates has been flirting all night!
Like how Narcissus looks into a pond!
And Agathon's so impressionable!
He's fallen right into his trap!
If you could control your man at all,
I'd very much appreciate that!

ALCIBIADES

Socrates, you taunt me!

Should I kill him now?

Why not!

AGATHON

Alcibiades, I had no idea!

Socrates invited someone else.

SOCRATES

I was invited by Aristodemus!

So, it's true I didn't come by myself.

⁷⁰ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 495, 213b.

ALCIBIADES

Yet, here you are, seducing my friend!

SOCRATES

Does jealousy ever tire you out?

ALCIBIADES

I wouldn't feel so betrayed by you
If you had chosen Aristophanes' couch!

But you chose him!

I know now

Why not.

You are too wise to love!

I am too stupid to see

That being in love doesn't fit
into your philosophy!

Your head is stuck in the clouds!

Reason won't let you free.

You are too wise to love
me.

(Alcibiades starts taking some of the flowers from Agathon's garland.)

ALCIBIADES: You don't mind if I take some of these, do you, Agathon?
Unfortunately, if Socrates isn't awarded anything, he'll make a
scene. "He'll be grumbling that, though I crowned you for your first
victory, I didn't honor him even though he has never lost an
argument in his life!"⁷¹

*(The music official ends now, in a bittersweet decrescendo. Alcibiades places the
flowers in Socrates' hair. He claps for him.)*

ALCIBIADES: "Friends, you look sober to me; we can't have that! Let's have a
drink! [...] Agathon, I want the largest cup around"⁷¹! You there!
Diligent slave! Bring me the most wine you can find!

(Hedoneides exits.)

PHAEDRUS: Alcibiades, don't you think there's a reason we're all sober?

ALCIBIADES: No *good* reason! That's for certain!

⁷¹ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 495, 213e.

ARISTOPHANES: I never agree with you Alcibiades, but this time, I think you're right.

ALCIBIADES: Thank you, Aristophanes!

(Hedoneides returns with a giant cup and bottles of wine. Alcibiades takes the bottles from Hedoneides and hands them out. He gives Socrates his very own.)

ALCIBIADES: Everyone pace yourselves, except for Socrates. Zeus knows “no one yet has seen him drunk”⁷²! Tonight may be our lucky night!

(Everyone drinks, modestly. Alcibiades, however, chugs his entire bottle in the stunned silence of his peers.)

ERYXIMACHUS: “This is certainly improper. We cannot simply pour the wine down our throats in silence: we must have some conversation, or at least a song. What we are doing now is hardly civilized.”⁷³

ALCIBIADES: “O Eryximachus, best possible son to the best possible, the most temperate father. Hi!”⁷¹

ERYXIMACHUS: “Greetings to you, too,”⁷¹ Alcibiades.

ALCIBIADES: Tell me: when did you get here?

ERYXIMACHUS: I have been here, along with everyone else you have yet to recognize. Not to scold you—I would intend no such thing—but we were just about to finish dedicating speeches to Eros when you interrupted with your graceful entrance. And we did it soberly instead of drinking.

ALCIBIADES: Who's stupid idea was that?

PHAEDRUS: Mine.

ALCIBIADES: No! Phaedrus, you're too brilliant to dedicate time to praising Love! Love is a vengeful bastard, and his arrow, though filling you with honey-dipped feelings, only inflicts the worst kind of pain.

ARISTOPHANES: Again, shockingly, I agree.

ALCIBIADES: Please, Phaedrus, do not waste your time on something so painful and stupid!

⁷² Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 496, 214.

⁷³ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 496, 214b.

- ERYXIMACHUS:** It is hardly stupid, Alcibiades! We've actually had the most insightful night due to our sobriety! And unfortunately, it has come to an end. Now, if you think praising love is such a waste of time, you can pick the next topic for discussion, for if we are to drink like this, we shall at least speak in a civilized manner like we had before.
- ALCIBIADES:** An absolutely fair ruling, Eryximachus!
- ERYXIMACHUS:** But we'll only move on after you give us a speech on love.
- ALCIBIADES:** An absolutely unfair ruling, Eryximachus! "Do you really think it's fair to put my drunken ramblings next to your sober orations?"⁷⁴
- ARISTOPHANES:** If you had heard some of these speeches, Alcibiades, you would consider it very fair.
- ALCIBIADES:** How reassuring. Do you expect me to really believe that?
- ARISTOPHANES:** No.
- ERYXIMACHUS:** You joke too much, Aristophanes. Alcibiades, don't be shy. You clearly have some insight into love that has yet to be shared.
- ALCIBIADES:** Though you are probably right, Eryximachus, Socrates will not have it "if I dare praise anyone else in his presence—even a god!"⁷⁵
- SOCRATES:** "Hold your tongue!"⁷⁵
- ALCIBIADES:** "By god, don't you dare deny it! [...] I would never—*never*—praise anyone else with you around!"⁷⁵
- ERYXIMACHUS:** "Well, why not just do that, if you want?"⁷⁶
- AGATHON:** Ooh, what a wonderful idea!
- SOCRATES:** "Now, wait a minute"⁷⁶—
- ARISTOPHANES:** Oh, everyone else can praise you, but not Alcibiades?
- SOCRATES:** No. What I want to know is if he's "going to praise me only in order to mock me[.] Is that it?"⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 496, 214c.

⁷⁵ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 496, 214d.

⁷⁶ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 496, 214e.

ALCIBIADES: “I’ll only tell the truth—please, let me!”⁷⁶

SOCRATES: “I would certainly like to hear the truth from you. By all means, go ahead.”⁷⁶

(Alcibiades stares at Socrates. All of the party goes look between the two of them.)

ERYXIMACHUS: Well, start when you’re ready, I guess.

ALCIBIADES: Oh, where to begin?

(The Chorus gravitates towards him, starting the music with some oohs. Alcibiades almost falls into a trance-like state. A heavenly spot light slowly illuminates Socrates, and Alcibiades looks at him, as if they’re the only two on stage. Agathon, in the darkness, moves from the couch, somewhere else on stage.)

GOLD FOR BRONZE

ALCIBIADES

“The moment he [...] speaks,
I am beside myself: [...]
Heart[, ...] leaping in my chest, [...]
Tears[, ...] streaming down my face.”⁷⁷

“Nothing like this
Ever happened to me,”⁷⁷
Where speech upset me so
Deeply in my soul.

“Satyr’s music”⁷⁸
God’s song, right inside!
I danced to it!
At least, I tried.

(The spotlight remains, but other lights come up, reintegrating the rest of the party.)

ALCIBIADES

Being beautiful or rich,
To Socrates, is contemptuous.
To this rule, all of us
are no exception.

⁷⁷ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 498, 215e.

⁷⁸ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 498, 216c.

None “of you have seen
 [...] when he’s really serious.
 But I once caught [...] a glimpse”⁷⁹
 Of when he opened up.

Godlike!
 More than just his voice!
 I had to be with him!
 “I no longer had a choice”⁸⁰!

Gold for gold.
 Sight for sight.
 Body for soul.
 Day for night.
 Gold for gold.
 A fair exchange.
 Whatever you want,
 I can arrange.
 Gold for gold.

“Philosophy, whose grip
 On young and eager souls
 Is much more vicious than
 a viper’s”⁸¹ hold.

Poisoned by venom,
 I brought this snake-bite to my home.
 I wined-and-dined him before
 I got him alone.

Whispers...
 Inner singing in his sleep.
 I want to sing, too.
 Time for me to leap.

(Alcibiades returns to the couch, a spotlight—like moonlight—lands on him and Socrates, snuggled up together. Socrates is asleep.)

ALCIBIADES: “Socrates, are you asleep?”⁸²

⁷⁹ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 499, 216e.

⁸⁰ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 499, 217.

⁸¹ Plato, *Symposium*, pgs. 499-500, 218.

⁸² Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 500, 218c.

SOCRATES: “No, no, not at all[.]”⁸²

ALCIBIADES: I can’t sleep.

SOCRATES: Is that so?

ALCIBIADES: I’ve been thinking...

SOCRATES: That’s good.

ALCIBIADES: Socrates, “you’re the only worthy lover I have ever had—and yet, look how shy you are with me!”⁸² I’ve learned something new every day I’ve spent talking to you, Socrates, and yet, you never mention anything you would like from me in return. Now, I think “It would be really stupid not to give you anything you want: you can have me, my belongings, anything my friends might have[; All because] Nothing is more important to me than becoming the best man I can be, and no one can help me more than you to reach that aim. With a man like you, in fact, I’d be much more ashamed of what wise people would say if I did *not* take you as my lover,”⁸³ than if foolish people laughed at me for doing so. What I mean is, you don’t have to be shy with me, Socrates. You can do with me whatever you’d like.

(A pause. Maybe just percussion here?)

SOCRATES: Alcibiades... “if you are right in what you say about me [...], if I really have in me the power to make you a better man, then you can see in me a beauty that is really beyond description”⁸⁴—

ALCIBIADES: I do!

SOCRATES: —“and makes your own remarkable good looks pale in comparison,”⁸⁴ no?

ALCIBIADES: Well, yes...

SOCRATES: “Then, is this a fair exchange that you propose? [...] You [would] offer me the merest appearance of beauty [...] in return [for] the thing itself?”⁸⁴ Why, that would like exchanging gold for bronze. Would that be a fair exchange?

(Three beats of percussion, the information sinking in. Music returns, gently.)

⁸³ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 500, 218c-d.

⁸⁴ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 500, 218e.

ALCIBIADES

Gold for bronze?
Is that all this is?
Or what it would be?
Gold for bronze?
Gold for bronze...
If you gave in
To loving me?
Gold for bronze?
Gold for...

SOCRATES: “Still, my dear boy, you should think twice, because you could be wrong [about me], and I may be of no use to you. The mind’s sight becomes sharp only when the body’s eyes go past their prime—and you are still a good long time away from that.”⁸⁵

ALCIBIADES: Is that all you have to say? Is there truly nothing you want from me?

SOCRATES: Alcibiades, does this line of inquiry not exhaust you? It is late. “In the future, let us consider things together. We’ll always do what seems the best to the two of us.”⁸⁶ For now, sleep.

ALCIBIADES: Oh, Socrates, you must not understand!

(Alcibiades strips, showing Socrates his body.)

ALCIBIADES: All of this could be yours!

SOCRATES: Come here, my dear Alcibiades.

(Alcibiades hops back onto the couch, spooning with Socrates.)

ALCIBIADES: Whenever you’re ready! Have your way with me!

(Socrates starts snoring.)

ALCIBIADES: S-Socrates?

(Alcibiades springs from the couch, reclothing himself, while the music builds up, emotionally unstable.)

ALCIBIADES

⁸⁵ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 500, 219.

⁸⁶ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 500, 219b.

(Volatilely:)

Gold for bronze!
What a steal!
I have *nothing*?
Is that how you feel?
My mute soul
For your satyr's song?
Bronze for gold!
Gold for bronze!

CHORUS

You had to be brave.
You thought harmony strong.
You thought love's like you.
And you were wrong.
You felt rightly 'til
you chose the ill prong
Of two Aphrodites.
Now, you're left to long.
Gold for bronze.

(The spotlight follows Alcibiades, the rest of the stage falls dark. In that time, the party, while unseen, all put on Greek helmets. The music calms.)

ALCIBIADES

(In love.)

Though humiliating,
"I [can't] help admiring [...]
His moderation, [and]
His fortitude—

Here was a man
Whose strength and wisdom went
Beyond my wildest dreams!"⁸⁷
I couldn't hate him.

My siren,
Melody beyond reach.
How could I learn it
If he refused to teach?

(All instruments halt except for the lyre.)

⁸⁷ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 501, 219d.

ALCIBIADES

And even so, afterwards,
When Athens went to war,
When we fought side-by-side,
You saved my life.

When “I was wounded,
[...] he rescued not only me
But my armor,”⁸⁸ and dignity
Without recognition!

Incomparable...
“So bizarre,”⁸⁹
You can only liken him
To a satyr.

(Lights return to normal.)

ALCIBIADES: “This is my praise of Socrates, though I haven’t spared him my reproach, either; I told you how horribly he treated me—not only me but also Charmides, Euthydemus, and many others. He has deceived us all!”⁹⁰ (*Pointing at Agathon.*) “he presents himself as your lover, and before you know it, you’re in love with him yourself! I warn you, Agathon, don’t let him fool you! Remember our torments; be on your guard”⁹¹!

(The party-goers laugh at Alcibiades.)

SOCRATES: “You’re perfectly sober after all, Alcibiades. Otherwise you could never have concealed your motive so gracefully: how casually you let it drop, almost like an afterthought, at the very end of your speech! As if the real point of all this has not been simply to make trouble between Agathon and me!”⁹²

PAUSANIAS: And good for that! Break them up!

SOCRATES: Oh, but Pausanias, he is trying to steal Agathon for himself! Don’t you see? Why else would he target him in his final words?

PAUSANIAS: This is absolute madness...

⁸⁸ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 502, 220e.

⁸⁹ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 503, 221d.

⁹⁰ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 503, 222b.

⁹¹ Plato, *Symposium*, pgs. 503-504, 222b.

⁹² Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 504, 222c-d.

- ALCIBIADES:** What? Pausanias, you cannot believe a word he says!
- PAUSANIAS:** I cannot believe anyone's words anymore...
- AGATHON:** Socrates, "I'm beginning to think you're right; isn't it proof of that that he literally came between us here on the couch? Why would he do this if he weren't set on separating us?"⁹³
- ALCIBIADES:** Agathon, no!
- SOCRATES:** Come back to this couch, will you? Lie with me!
- AGATHON:** Right away! Nothing can keep me from you now.
- ALCIBIADES:** "My god! [...] How I suffer in his hands! He kicks me when I'm down; he never lets me go!"⁹³ Come on, Socrates, "at least let's compromise: let Agathon lie down between us."⁹³
- ERYXIMACHUS:** His true motive, revealed!
- AGATHON:** There's no way I'm sitting between the two of you, Alcibiades! Not after this stunt of a speech you just told!
- ALCIBIADES:** Pausanias, I tried to coax him away.
- PAUSANIAS:** Save it, Alcibiades! I cannot bear to watch Agathon be pulled between you and Socrates like this. It is time for me to depart!
- ERYXIMACHUS:** Oh, Pausanias, no need for dramatics. It's perfectly reasonable to retire now, especially since this venue will only get drunker and drunk. I'll walk with you home, if that's alright.
- PAUSANIAS:** Of course it is, Eryximachus! Reassure me that my company is worthwhile again!
- ERYXIMACHUS:** Oh, Zeus, good night everyone. Drink responsibly, please!
- REMAINING PARTY-GOERS:** We will!

(The lights dim gradually as Eryximachus and Pausanias exit. The party continues in slow motion as a light illuminates Plato, still in his Diotima drag.)

⁹³ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 504, 222e.

Plato takes off the veil; it should end up offstage somehow. As he speaks, the first to fall asleep is Phaedrus, and then gradually, Alcibiades, Zoe, Hedoneides, and the chorus go to sleep on the surrounding couches.)

PLATO: And those remaining at the party proceeded to get exceedingly drunk, with the exception of Socrates, who could drink wine like water, and remain unfazed. For hours, the party continued, until one-by-one, each attending man, woman, and slave fell asleep. All, except for Aristophanes, Agathon, and Socrates.

(Aristophanes, Agathon, and Socrates sit at a table together, passing around a bottle of wine.)

PLATO: What did they speak about? I believe “Socrates was trying to prove to them that authors should be able to write both comedy and tragedy”⁹⁴... *(Plato yawns.)* “the skiffull tragic dramatist should also be a comic poet”⁹⁴... they spoke about that... in... great detail...

(Plato falls asleep.)

AGATHON: Socrates, though I respect your judgment, that’s a ludicrous idea!

ARISTOPHANES: I quite like it, actually.

AGATHON: Of course you would like it! It’s ridiculous!

ARISTOPHANES: Maybe you’re right. Even though comedy is superior to tragedy.

AGATHON: That’s even more ridiculous.

ARISTOPHANES: No, it’s not! Would you rather see a play about a man who kidnaps an infant in exchange for medical attention, or a play about a city of women refusing to sleep with their husbands to end a war? Socrates?

SOCRATES: Which one is the comedy, and which one is the tragedy?

AGATHON: You are too funny, Socrates! I know you have enough class to choose tragedy.

ARISTOPHANES: No, he doesn’t.

AGATHON: Yes, he does!

⁹⁴ Plato, *Symposium*, pg. 505, 223d.

ARISTOPHANES: I assure you, he doesn't.

AGATHON: Oh, won't you just choose, Socrates?

SOCRATES: Altheope, the high priestess of Thebes, once told me that Thalia and Melpomene are twins. I always assumed, from this discovery, that they were hard to tell apart. She—the priestess—then shared a hymn with me to tell the two apart, if either of you are interested.

AGATHON: Of course!

ARISTOPHANES: Why not?

(Aristophanes drinks from the wine bottle, then passes it to Agathon.)

UNDERNEATH AND WAITING IN HER WINGS

SOCRATES

Tragedy
and comedy
are sisters.
They stab each other
In the back
And laugh.
Thalia takes Melpomene everywhere.
Underneath and waiting in her wings.

Tragedy
And comedy
Are best friends.
They laugh so hard
They laugh themselves
to death.
Thalia takes Melpomene everywhere.
Underneath and waiting in her wings.

(Aristophanes falls asleep. Agathon drinks from the bottle.)

SOCRATES

Tragedy
And comedy,
In Hades,
Sneak
Living sheep

Past the gate.
Thalia takes Melpomene everywhere.
Underneath and waiting in her wings.

Tragedy
And comedy
Are trouble.
Hades laughed
And promptly kicked
Them out.
Thalia takes Melpomene everywhere.
Underneath and waiting in her wings.

(Agathon falls asleep. Phaedrus slowly wakes up, unbeknownst to Socrates.)

SOCRATES

Tragedy
And comedy
Are cathartic⁹⁵.
Telling jokes
And laughing through
the tears.
Thalia takes Melpomene everywhere.
Underneath and waiting in her wings.
Underneath and waiting in her wings.
Underneath
And waiting in
Her wings.

(Socrates looks at both sleeping men, drinks the rest of the wine, and stands up to leave the party.)

PHAEDRUS: Socrates?

SOCRATES: Oh, Phaedrus? Are you awake?

PHAEDRUS: I am... where are you going?

SOCRATES: For a walk. It's early morning.

PHAEDRUS: Do you mind if I come with you?

SOCRATES: Not at all. Let us walk around the city.

⁹⁵ A reference to Aristotle's *Poetics*.

PHAEDRUS: Would you mind, if after, we walk beyond the city walls?

SOCRATES: In the countryside?

PHAEDRUS: It's very pretty this time of year. Besides, I want to tell you all about the speech that provoked last night's conversation... that is, if you're interested?

SOCRATES: I am always interested in spending time with you, Phaedrus.

(Phaedrus and Socrates exit. The lights rise like the sun, and Plato, Agathon, and Alcibiades awake. Zoe wakes, too, but has no intention to move; she and Aristophanes are cuddled up.)

ALCIBIADES: Dear Zeus, my head!

AGATHON: Alcibiades, friend, please be quiet... you are not the only one hungover...

ALCIBIADES: It's safe to assume I am the *most* hungover.

AGATHON: Fair.

PLATO: Where is Socrates?

ALCIBIADES: Please, no more talk of Socrates...! He's probably off bothering some random, handsome, young, dumb Athenian boy...

PLATO: Better yet, where is Phaedrus?

AGATHON: *(Impressed.)* That sneaky, little thief!

ALCIBIADES: He's in for a world of pain.

AGATHON: He's in for *my* world of pain, Alcibiades! We cannot let him get away with this!

PLATO: We don't know where they went, though.

ZOE: The old man should be outside the walls of Athens by now.

AGATHON: Thank you, flute girl! Quickly, let's go, Alcibiades and... oh. I don't believe we've formally met? Who are you?

PLATO: Uhh... well... who I am is not very important... I came for the party last night.

(Aristophanes stirs in his sleep.)

AGATHON: You came with Alcibiades?

ALCIBIADES: He did not.

AGATHON: And he's so young!

ALCIBIADES: It's a wonder Socrates didn't take you with him...

ARISTOPHANES: If it shuts you two up, he is a friend of Socrates, and a pain in my side.

AGATHON: And his name is?

ARISTOPHANES: Chaerephon. Now, please, go talk somewhere else.

AGATHON: Let us go, Alcibiades, Chaerephon. After Socrates!

(Agathon and Alcibiades exit, Plato lingers.)

ARISTOPHANES: What are you waiting for, *Chaerephon*? Get going.

(Plato exits. Aristophanes cuddles with Zoe as their couch moves and the set changes. A pastoral landscape, almost dreamlike. The low humming of cicadas fills the theatre. The lights beat down like a hot, sunny day. Enter Phaedrus and Socrates, strolling.)

PHAEDRUS: So, that's what I did up until last night's party; and, right after he recited his speech, Lysias made time for me! We had a brilliant conversation. His points were so eloquent. If only you were there, Socrates. "In fact, [...] you're just the right person to hear the speech."⁹⁶

SOCRATES: Oh, am I?

PHAEDRUS: Yes! The speech "aimed at seducing a beautiful boy, but the speaker is not in love with him—this is actually what is so clever and elegant about it: Lysias argues that it is better to give your

⁹⁶ Plato, *Phaedrus*, pg. 508, 227c.

favors to someone who does not love you than to someone who does.”⁹⁶

SOCRATES: (*Amused.*) You must tell me this speech.

PHAEDRUS: Socrates! “Do you think that a mere dilettante like me could recite from memory [... an entire] speech that Lysias, the best of our writers, took such time and trouble to compose?”⁹⁷

SOCRATES: “Oh Phaedrus, if I don’t know my Phaedrus[! ...] I know very well that he did not hear Lysias’ speech only once: [you] asked him to repeat it over and over again, and Lysias was eager to oblige. But not even that was enough for [you].”⁹⁸ You were just so entranced by his speech, you had to tell Eryximachus, who told everyone at Agathon’s party, and thus, our symposium began. It wouldn’t surprise me if you happened to have a copy of his speech with you at the current moment, ready to share with “a man who is sick with passion for hearing speeches.”⁹⁹ But, if for some reason you don’t, you must recite it from memory. Please!

PHAEDRUS: “Well, I’d better try to recite it as best I can: you’ll obviously not leave me in peace until I do so.”¹⁰⁰ But I am telling the truth that I didn’t memorize the speech. There is no way I will be able to relay the marvelous details!

SOCRATES: If that’s really true, won’t you “show me what you’re holding in your left hand under your cloak”¹⁰¹? It looks suspiciously like a speech?

PHAEDRUS: Alright, you’ve found me out. (*Revealing the speech.*) I will read it to you if we find a place to sit.

(*Enter Agathon, Alcibiades, and Plato, sneaking behind Socrates and Phaedrus.*)

SOCRATES: That tree in the distance seems like a lovely place to sit.

PHAEDRUS: Maybe even nap under after I read to you.

⁹⁷ Plato, *Phaedrus*, pg. 508, 227d-228.

⁹⁸ Plato, *Phaedrus*, pg. 508, 228-b.

⁹⁹ Plato, *Phaedrus*, pg. 508, 228b.

¹⁰⁰ Plato, *Phaedrus*, pg. 508, 228c.

¹⁰¹ Plato, *Phaedrus*, pg. 509, 228d.

SOCRATES: Oh, no, Phaedrus, there are many reasons “why we should talk and not waste our afternoon in sleep.”¹⁰² Listen closely to the humming all around us. The cicadas are all around us!

(Socrates turns around to face Phaedrus, causing Alcibiades, Plato, and Agathon to hide hastily. At some point of his monologue, Socrates returns to walking, and the three stop hiding and start sneaking again; and the three sneak offstage towards the end of the monologue, and sneak back on, bringing a tree with them.)

SOCRATES: “The story goes that the cicadas used to be human beings who lived before the birth of the Muses. When the Muses were born and song was created for the first time, some of the people of that time were so overwhelmed with the pleasure of singing that they forgot to eat or drink; so they died without even realizing it. It is from them that [...] cicadas came into being; and, as a gift from the Muses, they have no need for nourishment once they are born. Instead, they immediately burst into song, without food or drink, until it is time for them to die. After they die, they go to the Muses and tell each one of them which mortals have honored her.”¹⁰³ So, we mustn’t be caught doing something other than honoring the Muses while the cicadas sing. We shall honor Urania with philosophical discussion.

PHAEDRUS: Whatever you say, Socrates. We’ve reached the tree.

SOCRATES: “By Hera, [what] a beautiful resting place.”¹⁰⁴ And the heavenly cicada sound, travelling on the breeze. And the breeze! I feel so... out of place!

PHAEDRUS: You look out of place.

SOCRATES: *(Sitting down.)* How you’ve charmed me outside the walls of Athens, “simply by waving in front of me the leaves of a book containing a speech.”¹⁰⁵ Don’t think I forgot! Get comfortable, and start when you’re ready.

(Phaedrus sits. Alcibiades, Agathon, and Plato peer out from behind the tree, to spy better.)

LYSIAS SAYS (IF HE DOESN'T LOVE YOU)

¹⁰² Plato, Phaedrus, pg. 536, 259d.

¹⁰³ Plato, Symposium, pg. 535, 259b-c.

¹⁰⁴ Plato, Symposium, pg. 510, 230b.

¹⁰⁵ Plato, Symposium, pg. 510, 230e.

PHAEDRUS

Lysias says
 The consequences
 Of taking a lover
 Impacts what we learn.
 So, with great concern,
 Lysias wondered,
 “Do I have to be in love to learn?”

(Music break.)

PHAEDRUS

Lysias says
 “Once desire dies,”¹⁰⁶
 A lover “will wish
 He [hadn’t] done [...] any favors.”¹⁰⁶
 Once feelings waver—
 Nothing left to savor—
 Won’t he move on?

Lysias says
 A lover will hold
 Things over your head
 When he’s gone to some trouble!
 And once you have stubble,
 He’ll already’ve coupled
 With a new be-loved.

But if he doesn’t love you,
 He can’t fall out of love.
 If he doesn’t love you,
 He will think nothing of
 The lessons he’ll teach,
 For the favors you’ll do.
 Hold up his end,
 Then you’re through!
 Why should he love you
 If he doesn’t have to?

Lysias says,
 “A lover[...]’s more sick
 Than sound in the head.”¹⁰⁷
 Should “he stand by decisions”¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ Plato, *Phaedrus*, pg. 511, 231.

¹⁰⁷ Plato, *Phaedrus*, pg. 511, 231d.

Made under conditions
Where love deemed him
Irresponsible?

Lysias says,
Dishonesty stems
From when lovers tend
To be people-pleasing,
And frankly speaking,
Men get jealous seeing
You with your friends.

But if he doesn't love you,
He would not lose his mind.
If he doesn't love you,
He'd be honest and kind.
He'll have a life
Outside of you,
Hold up his end,
Then you're through!
Why should he love you
If he doesn't have to?

AGATHON

Why be chased when I can do the chasing?
Or be replaced when I can do the replacing?
Why should I wait for him to get bored?

ALCIBIADES

Or at the end of the day, you're in love,
And eventually, you're no longer enough!
What's the worth in being rudely ignored?

PHAEDRUS

The hard truth is that men move on.
After a while, the thrill is gone.
How is someone like me to move forward?

PHAEDRUS, AGATHON
& ALCIBIADES

If there's no love in the place,
I can't be left, hurt or disgraced!
For once in my life, I can rest assured!

If he didn't love me,

I would not love him back.
 If he didn't love me,
 My heart would be intact.
 The heartache saved
 Is time saved, too.
 He holds up his end.
 Then we're through!
 If he didn't love me,
 Yes, if he didn't love me,
 Then I wouldn't love him,
 too.

PHAEDRUS: (*Proudly.*) Isn't this such a clever and thoughtful argument?

SOCRATES: The cleverest and most thoughtful argument! Especially the advice about a beloved giving favors to the entire city, just to learn from every expert available! The citizens would line up to teach him, especially for all the right reasons!

PHAEDRUS: Oh, be serious, Socrates! Yesterday, I realized there is barely any praise of Love, and Lysias made, what I think is, a good case for why not.

SOCRATES: You look absolutely delighted, and perhaps it's because of the content of his speech, but if I am honest, Phaedrus, I must ask: are we supposed to praise his speech for its contents without regard for how it is argued?

PHAEDRUS: I don't see what you mean, Socrates.

SOCRATES: Are we supposed to say "that every shortcoming for which we blamed the lover has its contrary advantage, and the non-lover possesses it"¹⁰⁸? For example, if the lover is bad, by Lysias' logic, then that means the non-lover is good, right?

PHAEDRUS: I suppose.

SOCRATES: And doesn't Lysias say that a lover is ill-tempered, controlling, jealous, irresponsible, sick in the head, entitled, licesceous, and downright predatory?

PHAEDRUS: Yes!

¹⁰⁸ Plato, *Phaedrus*, pg. 520, 241e.

- SOCRATES:** If I were to make an argument for why the non-lover are those things instead, in the same exact way as Lysias has, would you call that a good argument?
- PHAEDRUS:** I don't see why not.
- SOCRATES:** There would be no real basis in either argument, my boy! He hasn't established anything in his speech that would tie these traits to the lover necessarily! For example, is a lover someone in need of love, or someone who already has love?
- PHAEDRUS:** Someone in need of love.
- SOCRATES:** So, if he does not have love, how can love be responsible for how he acts? Isn't it his need that makes him act this way?
- PHAEDRUS:** I suppose so.
- SOCRATES:** So, it seems to me that Lysias, unknowingly, has slandered poor Eros, first by saying untrue things about Love, and second, by arguing it poorly. He might as well have said, "Do wolves love lambs? That's how lovers befriend a boy!"¹⁰⁹
- PHAEDRUS:** Are you saying that you could argue it better, Socrates?
- SOCRATES:** I think I already have through my illustration of wolves and lambs. Even uttering a summary of his speech makes me fear what the cicadas will tell the Muses!
- PHAEDRUS:** Perhaps we should go before the Muses strike you down!
- SOCRATES:** Phaedrus, do no kid about these things! Even though leaving sounds very nice...
- PHAEDRUS:** I wasn't serious, Socrates. It's too hot to leave yet. In the meantime, continue with how Lysias' writing skills are the worst in Greece.
- SOCRATES:** Oh, yes, "that speech you carried with you here—it was horrible,"¹¹⁰ and foolish. No god is bad, and "if Love is a god or something divine—which he is—he can't be bad in any way."¹¹¹ He is the son of Aphrodite after all, is he not?

¹⁰⁹ Plato, *Phaedrus*, pg. 520, 241d.

¹¹⁰ Plato, *Phaedrus*, pg. 521, 242d.

¹¹¹ Plato, *Phaedrus*, pg. 521, 242e.

- PHAEDRUS:** That's what people say.
- SOCRATES:** Has last night not convinced you that this is true?
- PHAEDRUS:** Do you think it should have?
- SOCRATES:** I would've hoped so!
- PHAEDRUS:** Maybe I think all of the arguments were poorly made...
- SOCRATES:** "Oh, Phaedrus, I was only criticizing [Lysias] in order to tease you—did you take me seriously?"¹¹² Do you think I could really give a better speech?
- PHAEDRUS:** This predicament is your fault, Socrates. "Don't make me say what you said: 'Socrates, if I don't know my Socrates, I must be forgetting who I am myself,' [! ... As far as I'm concerned,] we shall not leave here until you,"¹¹³ show me what a good argument is really like.
- SOCRATES:** This is a mistake, Phaedrus, I'm an amateur!
- PHAEDRUS:** "Stop playing hard to get! I know what I can say to make you give your speech."¹¹⁴
- SOCRATES:** "Then please don't say it!"¹¹⁴
- PHAEDRUS:** Socrates, "I swear in all truth that, if you don't make your speech right next to this tree here, I shall never, never again recite another speech for you—I shall never utter another word about speeches to you!"¹¹⁵ The gods are witness to this oath, and now, you must give this speech!
- SOCRATES:** "My oh my, what a horrible man you are! You've really found the way to force a lover of speeches to do just as you say!"¹¹⁶
- PHAEDRUS:** Stop stalling, Socrates. Speak! Show me how a good argument is made!
- SOCRATES:** Okay, okay. I'll try.

¹¹² Plato, *Phaedrus*, pg. 515, 236b.

¹¹³ Plato, *Phaedrus*, pg. 515, 236c.

¹¹⁴ Plato, *Phaedrus*, pg. 515, 236d.

¹¹⁵ Plato, *Phaedrus*, pg. 515, 236d-e.

¹¹⁶ Plato, *Phaedrus*, pg. 516, 236e.

ASK YOUR OWN QUESTIONS

SOCRATES

The little girl, playing by the cliffside
Flies right over the side.
The little girl dies on the rock below.
That's one way the story goes.
But what if might Boreas,
The north wind, swept the little girl up
And carried her far away?
Now, tell me, who's to say?

The man who writes the stories
Is a "man I cannot envy at all."¹¹⁷
The man who believes no story
Is a "man I cannot envy at all."¹¹³

I believe what I'm told.
"I look not into them."¹¹⁸
I look into my own soul.
I ask my questions.

If a lover has no such self-control,
No responsibility,
Makes a fool of himself, is depraved.
One could say a lover's unbehaved.
But if Love is a certain kind of madness,
Like prophecy or relief,
A lover sees beauty he must possess.
Isn't his madness blessed?

The man with "god-sent madness"¹¹⁹
Is a man who isn't too insightful.
The man who believes no madness
Is a man who isn't too insightful.

I believe what I'm told.
"I look not into them."¹¹⁴
I look into my own soul.
I ask my questions.

¹¹⁷ Plato, *Phaedrus*, pg. 509, 229d.

¹¹⁸ Plato, *Phaedrus*, pg. 510, 230.

¹¹⁹ Plato, *Phaedrus*, pg. 523, 245b.

What is likely
 is not the truth, but
 The art of persuasion.
 You don't need to
 persuade to prove
 What is real.
 What is true can
 be felt in the gut
 As divine sensation,
 As a higher voice,
 As reason
 we can feel!

Let's say the soul does not exist,
 But then, what drives us inside?
 Why do we stay alive and fall in love
 If nothing guides us from above?

And if "Whatever is always in motion"¹²⁰
 Is proof of immortality,
 The body can't withstand the test of time.
 Must there be, at work, something divine?

The soul must be divine, then,
 If the body only stays on Earth.
 You end up pulled between them,
 Between Gods and mortal-living on Earth.

I believe what I'm told
 By looking "not into them"¹¹⁴;
 By looking into my soul,
 By asking my questions.

The soul has thousands of lifetimes
 In different bodies with the same pursuit.
 The soul is like a charioteer
 With "a team of winged horses"¹²¹ to steer.

One horse, devoted to goodness,
 To chasing and grasping the gods.
 The other horse craves the vices of Earth,
 Driving you towards things of little worth.

¹²⁰ Plato, *Phaedrus*, pg. 523, 245c.

¹²¹ Plato, *Phaedrus*, pg. 524, 246.

We pilot our winged horses
To follow after gods in the sky.
We want to reach the goodness
To which the gods are trying to guide.

I believe that our goal
Is memory of knowledge.
Beauty glimpsed by the soul
Is never forgotten.

What is loving
is not the chase, but
A pure recognition
Of the Beauty
Once beheld by
The soul.
True love is when
A lover begins
His pursuit and devotion—

Of a godlike man
instead of god Himself.
He sees god in him,
His mind starts to melt.
He loses full control!
He can't help himself!
He needs to join the soul
To share in his wealth.
So, his Earthly horse
Crashes the chariot
With deadly force,
And beloved's hit!
Lying on the ground,
Reeling from the crash,
Not knowing that they found
Love at last!
The lover kisses him
As chariots pass.
The two make love
In the soft, soft grass.
Far behind, now,
The other chariots,
But lying in his arms
Makes it all worth it!

You see, Love is a type of memory
Of a Beauty you once knew.
You can never come across it again,
But you can see it in a friend.

“This is the experience we humans
Call love, you beautiful boy.”¹²²
Love is beauty, desire, and pain.
The experience is everlasting.

Believe what you’re told.
Look “not into them,”¹¹⁴
Look into your own soul.
Ask your own questions.

*(Alcibiades and Plato are in tears, Alcibiades making more of a show of it.
Phaedrus and Agathon are in awe of Socrates’ speech. Socrates, himself, is
unfazed.)*

SOCRATES: And that, my friend, is how you make an argument.

END

¹²² Plato, *Phaedrus*, pg. 529, 252b

WORKS CITED

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