

Richard Wagner's
The Master Singers of Nuremberg

English Singing Translation
by
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'Wandering Minstrel; Old Nuremberg (1843-84)'
Alexandre-Louis Leloir (French, 1843-1884)'

Artvee

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DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Master Singers:

Hans Sachs, shoemaker	baritone
Pogner, goldsmith	bass
Kuntz Vogelgesang, furrier	tenor
Konrad Nachtigall, tinsmith	bass
Sixtus Beckmesser, town clerk	bass
Fritz Kothner, baker	baritone
Balthasar Zorn, pewterer	tenor
Ulric Eisslinger, grocer	tenor
Augustus Moser, tailor	tenor
Hermann Ortel, soap boiler	bass
Hans Schwarz, stocking weaver	bass
Hans Foltz, coppersmith	bass
Walther von Stolzing, a young knight from Franconia	tenor
David, apprentice to Hans Sachs	tenor
Eva, Pogner's daughter	soprano
Magdalene, Eva's nurse	mezzo soprano
A Night Watchman	bass

Townfolk from all Guilds, Journeymen, Apprentices, Girls and People



'The Singer's Contest on the Wartburg (1846)'
Moritz von Schwind (German, 1804-1871)
Artvee

SETTING

Nuremberg, mid-16th Century

Act I - St. Katherine's Church, interior

Act II - A street with the Masters' houses

Act III - Sachs's workshop; a meadow on the Pegnitz River

Act I



'Nuremberg'
Thomas Shutter Boys (English, 1803-1874)
Artvee

Act I, Scene 1

Diagonal cross-section of the interior of St Katherine's Church. The last few rows of pews are visible Upstage Right. Downstage is an open space for the choir. This will later be closed off by a black curtain.

In the last rows of the pews sit Eva and Magdalene. Walther von Stolzing stands some distance away, off to the side, leaning on a column, gazing at Eva. As the congregation sings, the two gesture silently to each other.

CONGREGATION: 'Twas to you our Savior came

(Walther gestures that he has an urgent, burning question for Eva)

To be baptised in God's name,

(Eva tries to reply with gestures of her own but, embarrassed, casts her eyes down modestly instead)

Sanctify His saving death

(Walther gestures tenderly, then more urgently)

And give His commandment bless'd:

(Eva shyly turns away but then gives him a quick, soulful look)

That we through baptism rise

(Walther, charmed, gestures for an assurance that he may have hope)

Worthy of His sacrifice.

(Eva smiles, modestly casts her eyes down again)

Baptist wondrous!

(Walther gestures urgently, breaks off quickly, then resumes his urgent gesture, now somewhat softened, inviting Eva to talk with him)

Christ's forerunner!
Lead us graciously
Into Jordan's stream!

(The congregation rises and exits. Walther gazes in highest anticipation at Eva, who has also left her pew. With Magdalene following, she slowly approaches him. Walther and Eva walk slowly toward each other, pressing through the crowd of exiting churchgoers.)

WALTHER: Oh, stay! One word! One moment, please!

EVA: *(quickly turning to Magdalene)*
My kerchief! Oh, where could it be?

MAGDALENE: Forgetful girl! I'll look for it!

(goes back to the pews)

WALTHER: Forgive my breach of etiquette!
To get an answer, to ask my question
What rule would I not breach, I venture?
If blessing or if curse, if life it be, if death,
With one small word, let me know my fate:
Fair maiden, are--

MAGDALENE: *(comes back with the kerchief, curtsies to Walther)*
'Twas on the bench.

EVA: Oh no! My hair clasp!

MAGDALENE: Did it fall out?

(goes back Up to search)

WALTHER: Will life be mine or will death drawn out?
Will the reply to that which I dare ask
Bring what I long for or deepest pain?
Fair maiden, are--

MAGDALENE: *(comes back again, curtsies to Walther)*

I have found your hair clasp.

Come, child, there's nothing more to find.

Oh no! I have left my book behind!

(returns Up)

WALTHER: Speak just a word! Won't you pronounce

My verdict with a single sound?

Whisper to me just yea or nay:

Fair maiden, are you yet engaged?

MAGDALENE: *(comes back, curtsies to Walther)*

Well, well! I thank you, and we are grateful, sir,

That little Eva you'd squire after church!

When will our hero honoured

Come call on Eva's father?

WALTHER: *(passionately)* Would his house I'd not visited!

MAGDALENE: What could be the meaning of this?

As soon as you came to us in Nuremberg

Did he not warmly welcome you, sir?

Open his kitchen, hearth and cellar, too?

That earns no thanks from you?

EVA: Dear Lenchen, ah, that's not what he meant.

No, of me he's asking instead...

What are the words? I can't even say!

I dream, I think. Or am I awake?

He asks if I'm engaged?

MAGDALENE: *(shocked)*

Pipe down! Mind what you say!

Now let us go home before

Someone walks through that door!

WALTHER: No! Not till my fate I know!

EVA: *(to Magdalene)*

They've gone. There's no one here.

MAGDALENE: That's why we have to go!
Sir Walther, we'll meet elsewhere!

(David enters from the sacristy and gets busy closing the black curtains that separate the Downstage area from the nave.)

WALTHER: No! First be clear!

EVA: Be clear!

MAGDALENE: *(turns, sees David and stops; then, tenderly, to herself)*
David? What? David came?

(turns back to Walther)

EVA: *(to Magdalene)*
What, Lene, should I say?

MAGDALENE: *(absently, looking around for David)*
Good sir, to the question that you pose
The answer isn't yes or no.
That Evchen is engaged, it's true--

EVA: *(spiritedly interrupting)*
But no one's yet laid eyes upon the groom!

MAGDALENE: None can know who the groom will be
Until tomorrow the men compete
And the Master Singer who wins the prize--

EVA: *(enthusiastically)*
Is crowned with laurels by the bride!

WALTHER: *(astonished)*
The Master Singer?

EVA: *(anxious)*
Are you not one?

WALTHER: A wooing song?

MAGDALENE: By guildsmen judged.

WALTHER: Who wins the prize?

MAGDALENE: Whom the Masters vote on.

WALTHER: The bride will choose?

EVA: *(forgetting herself)*

You or else no one!

(Walther, very flustered, turns aside and paces up and down)

MAGDALENE: *(shocked)*

What? Evchen! Evchen! Out of the question!

EVA: Good Lene, let me return his affection!

MAGDALENE: Did you not first meet him yesterday?

EVA: Yes, but I already knew his face

For in a picture I've seen this knight.

Say, he looks a lot like David, right?

MAGDALENE: *(completely mystified)*

Are you mad? Like David?

EVA: In pictures revealed.

MAGDALENE: Ah, King David, you mean, with the harp and long beard,

Pictured on the Masters' shield?

EVA: No, him who stone struck Goliath down smartly,

With girded sword and slingshot in hand,

His head by flowing ringlets adorned:

Him, just as Master Dürer has drawn!

(David, who had exited, enters again with a ruler in his belt and a large piece of white chalk hanging from a string.)

MAGDALENE: Oh, David! David!

DAVID: I'm coming! Who calls?

MAGDALENE: Oh, David! Look what a mess you caused!

(aside)

The rascal dear, does he not know?

(aloud)

Oh look, did he lock up so we can't go?

DAVID: *(tenderly)*

You're locked in my heart!

MAGDALENE: *(aside)*

I love the boy so!

(aloud)

My, my! What have we here for bad jokes?

DAVID: I never! Bad jokes? No. Matters grave:

For the Masters I'm to set the stage.

MAGDALENE: What, is there a contest?

DAVID: A trial meet

Where prentices can win their freedom

But only if they don't break the rules of singing.

Masters they could become. We'll see.

MAGDALENE: So then our young knight's plan will turn out fine.

Now, Evchen, come! We'll say goodbye.

WALTHER: *(turning quickly to the women)*

To Master Pogner's please let me escort you.

MAGDALENE: Best wait for him here. He'll soon arrive.
You'd win Evchen's hand in marriage? This is the time and place to try.

(two Apprentices enter carrying benches)

We mustn't linger!

WALTHER: But how should I win her?

MAGDALENE: With David's help you can
Prepare an audition.
David dear, listen, my heart's own delight,
Give counsel and be tutor to the knight.
I'll bring you a dish,
A sausage delish,
And more will be yours for the asking
If now the knight's named a Master!

(Magdalene presses Eva to leave)

EVA: When will I see you?

WALTHER: *(very passionately)*
This evening for sure!
What I won't venture!
How to express it?
Newborn, my heart,
New, my soul,
New as I set out
Toward this new goal.
Still sure of something,
Still knowing one thing:
Heart and soul promise
I'll win the contest!
No swords or armour
Clanking and clinking.
I'll have to win you
By Master Singing!
For you, fairest maid,
I'm a poet, bold and brave.

EVA: *(with great warmth)*

Dear heart, now be brave

And may heaven keep you safe!

MAGDALENE: Come on! Come on! It's getting late! It's getting late!

(Magdalene hurries Eva through the curtain to the exit.)

DAVID: *(sizing up Walther in astonishment)*

A Master? At once? That's brave!

(Walther throws himself, disturbed and brooding, into the ecclesiastical armchair that two Apprentices have moved from the wall toward Center.)

Act I, Scene 2

Even more Apprentices have entered. They carry benches in and set them up, arranging everything for the meeting of the Master Singers.

SECOND APPRENTICE: David! Come on!

FIRST APPRENTICE: Get to work!

SECOND APPRENTICE: Get the platform! Set it up!

DAVID: Too late, since I've already done it!
Besides, I've got another assignment.

APPRENTICES: A big shot he!
A mover-shaker!

(the above line in falsetto)

That fits an apprentice shoemaker!

("shoemaker" in falsetto)

His shoeing he does with a feather!

("feather" in falsetto)

A poet with soles and heels,
He writes his verses on rawhide leather.

("leather" in falsetto)

Let's tan it! See how that feels!

(with corresponding gestures)

(laughing, they carry on with their work)

DAVID: *(after he has observed the pensive knight for a while)*

"Let's begin!"

WALTHER: (*bewildered*)

How's that?

DAVID: (*even louder*)

"Let's begin!" So says the scorer.

That means start singing!

Do you not know?

WALTHER: Who is the scorer?

DAVID: Do you not know?

Have you not heard how song contests go?

WALTHER: Not ones that have guildsmen as jurors!

DAVID: Are you a poet?

WALTHER: How I wish!

DAVID: Are you a singer?

WALTHER: Am I this?

DAVID: A scholar, surely, or student of art?

WALTHER: Not at this point, but I could start!

DAVID: Just like that you would become a Master?

WALTHER: Sure! Why should that be such a disaster?

DAVID: Oh, Lene! Lene!

WALTHER: What's wrong with you?

DAVID: Oh, Magdalene!

WALTHER: What should I do?

DAVID: (*sits, posing*)

Good sir, the mastery of song
In just one day cannot be won.
The greatest Master here in Nuremberg
Who teaches me, Hans Sachs,
For one whole year with him I've learned
Word and music's art and craft.
"Shoemakery" and "poetry,"
I study both with him, you see.
After I've beaten leather buttery
I study sounds and their correct utterance.
After the thread's waxed taut and stiff,
I study which words rhyme with which.
I tap the awl as
I think about
Where accents fall and
Which beats to count;
With shoe last in hand,
What consonants
Are hard or soft,
Long or else short,
What's couplets, unrhymed or elided,
What's paused and what's end-stopped,
What's iambs and what's not.
This all took great effort on my part.
And just what for it d'you think I got?

WALTHER: At least a pair of comfy shoes?

DAVID: They took me long enough to do!

A song must follow various rules.
He who takes good measure with his tools
Will stitch it right
With his thread drawn tight
And have well-fitted stanzas
To comfortably stand on.

Then he must sing an after-song
That's not too short and not too long
And that does not use a rhyme

That in the stanzas you find.

Who learns all these rules hard and fast
Still cannot be said to've mastered his craft.

WALTHER: Good God! Am I to master shoes?
It is song craft I would rather choose.

DAVID: Right! And I'm not even a "singer," not yet!
Who'd fathom how hard that is to get!

The Master tunes and song tones,
And all their many names,
The loud tunes and the soft ones,
Who can keep track of all them?
The short tones, long and very long tones,
The white paper, black inky tune,
The scarlet, blue and greenish tone,
The hawthorn, the straw and fennel tune,
The sweet and the tender, the rosy tone,
The long lost love and the forgotten tone,
The rosemary, wallflower tune,
The rainbow coloured, the nightingale tune,
The blue pewter note, the cinnamon tune,
Fresh orange tones and green linden tree tune,
The frog, the calf and the goldfinch tunes,
The long-departed gourmand tune,
The lark and the snail and the dog bark tones,
The lemon balm flower, the basil tune,
The lion pelt and pelican tune,
The waxed and shining thread tune!

WALTHER: Good heavens! Too many tones to e'er croon!

DAVID: Those are just the tone names.
Now learn to sing them
Just as the Masters have decreed.
Make sure each note is clearly ringing
However loud or soft you be.
Don't start too high, don't start too low
Or else your voice won't reach the notes.

Then control your breath. If air you lack
Your voice could tire or even crack.
Do not start any sung word with a moan.
After word endings, don't sigh or groan.
Don't alter the turns or colouratur'.
Embellish as you're taught but no more!
Don't mix up the words or skip a verse
Or you'll get lost and then, even worse,
Though well you've sung, you've run your luck out.
The scorer will say, "He struck out!"

I've worked so hard and tried my best
But never passed the singer's test.
I try and I try but all goes wrong.
Then Master sings me the leather strap song.
And when Mistress Lene does not come through,
I sing the nought but bread and water tune!
Your case in point I am
So drop this Master plan!
A singer and poet you must be
Before the Master goal you reach.

WALTHER: Who is a poet?

APPRENTICES: *(as they work)*

David! Come here!

DAVID: *(to the Apprentices)*

Just a sec! Wait!

(turning quickly back to Walther)

Who poets are?
Once you're a singer in rank and prestige
And the Master tones you sing all correctly,
You must come up with rhymes and words
That fit just right into a verse
And to your chosen Master tune.
Do that and as poet you'll be known.

APPRENTICES: Hey! David!

We'll to your Master tattle
If you don't stop your time-wasting chatter!

DAVID: Oho! 'S that so? If I helped you not
You would set this whole thing the wrong way up!

WALTHER: *(holding him back)*
One last hint: who as Master is known?

DAVID: *(quickly turning around)*
That man, my good sir, is skilled like so:

(most profoundly)

A poet who both improvises

(very tenderly)

With words and rhyme schemes all of his own,
And with the tones new melodies devises,
That man as Master Singer is known.

WALTHER: So all that's left is the Master Prize!
By this method
I'll be successful
And for each verse fitting notes devise.

DAVID: *(who has turned back to the Apprentices)*
What have you done there?
So, I turn my back
And you set everything up out of whack!

(loudly and with bluster he barks work orders at the Apprentices)

Is today song school? What a mess.
We use the small stand for trials and tests!

(The Apprentices, who had been getting ready to set up a large platform, Center, now take it down at David's direction and set it aside. They set up a smaller platform instead. On it, they place a chair with a small desk in front of it and a large blackboard next to

it, where the chalk on the string will be hung up. Black curtains are set up around the platform and can be drawn closed on all sides.)

APPRENTICES: *(as they work)*

We all know that our David is really a whiz.
He'll reach for glory that he thinks is his.
At this test meet, watch him compete.
An excellent singer he thinks he is!
The beat rhymes he knows from memory.
The hunger song he sings all day!
To the seat pants kick song he knows every word.
He learned from his Master, good and hard.

(they make kicking gestures and laugh)

DAVID: Go on and laugh! Not me today:

This man will try to make the grade.
He's not a student or a poet.
The singer's training, he'll skip over.
He is a noble
Who thinks it's no trouble
That he can come waltzing in here
And be Master this instant.
So give him a hand
And set up the stand.

(as the Apprentices finish setting up)

This here! That there! The chalkboard on the wall
So that the scorer can keep the score!

(turning back to Walther)

That's right, the scorer! Are you scared now?
How many hopefuls has he struck out!
Seven errors does he permit.
With chalk strikes the scorer keeps count.
Who more than seven errors commits
Is all washed up and has struck out!
So go to your fate:
The scorer waits!

(roughly slapping his hands together)

Good luck with Master Singing!
May you be crowned with the victory!
The flower garland of silk so fine,
Will it be awarded to this good knight?

APPRENTICES: *(having closed the curtains around the scorer's box, dance in a ring around Walther)*

The flower garland of silk so fine,
Will it be awarded to this good knight?

(The Apprentices disperse when they see the sacristy open and Pogner and Beckmesser enter. The Apprentices move respectfully Upstage.)

Act I, Scene 3

The Apprentices' final set-up is like so: Stage Left, upholstered benches in an approximate half circle framing Center. At the end of the row of benches, Center, is the chalkboard as previously described. Stage Right is the high, ecclesiastical "singer's chair" that faces the benches. Upstage along the curtain is a long row of low benches for the Apprentices. Walther, annoyed by the Apprentices' mockery, has sat down on the furthest Downstage bench. Pogner and Beckmesser enter from the sacristy in conversation. The Apprentices hurriedly rise from their back benches. Only David remains at the sacristy entrance.

POGNER: *(to Beckmesser)*

Take heart and all my planning trust in.
What I intend is good for you.
Tomorrow's singing match you must win.
Who could defeat your Master tunes?

BECKMESSER: But you've not yet the point conceded
That I regard alarmedly:
If Evchen can choose who's defeated,
What good is all my mastery?

POGNER: But say, I mean, why's that condition
The one that's foremost in your head?
If you can't sway the girl's opinion,
How could you woo her or her wed?

BECKMESSER: Quite so! Indeed! But still, I pray you,
Speak to the girl on my behalf.
Say I've made proper suit and say, too,
You think Beckmesser's just the man.

POGNER: I will oblige.

BECKMESSER: *(notices Walther, aside)*
Still here, I see.
How to avert catastrophe?

WALTHER: *(who, as Pogner approaches, rises, goes to him and bows)*

Permit me, Master!

POGNER: What, Sir Walther?
At song school you did wait for me?

(Pogner and Walther exchange greetings)

BECKMESSER: *(still aside)*
If women were wise! But big-talking braggarts
Mean more to them than all poetry.

WALTHER: Here truly to the right place I've come.
What made me leave my land and home
And toward Nuremberg start?
It was my love of art.
Though last night I forgot to mention,
I'll now declare my true intention:
A Master Singer be, I will!
Admit me, Master, to the guild!

(Kunz Vogelgesang and Konrad Nachtigall enter)

POGNER: *(turning happily to the new arrivals)*
Kunz Vogelgesang! Friend Nachtigall!
Come here this news unusual:
This noble knight, I know him well,
To the Master art has giv'n himself.

(introductions and greetings; other Masters enter)

BECKMESSER: *(to himself, coming back Downstage)*
I'll give him no quarter! But if that should fail
I could win the girl if I serenade her!
To her alone I'll sing in the dark
And see if she'll take my song to heart.

(looking at Walther)

Who can he be?

POGNER: *(very warmly chatting with Walther)*

How well I'm pleased!
It seems just like old times again!

BECKMESSER: I don't like that man!

POGNER: All that you want,
That's in my power, to you I grant.

BECKMESSER: Why is he here? And why does he grin?
Uh-oh, Sixtus, watch out for him!

POGNER: Gladly I helped you your goods to sell.
To the guild I'd welcome you, glad as well.

WALTHER: My thanks, good Pogner.
You do me an honour!
May I hope to try for,
Today may I vie for,
The right to make the claim
To Master Singer be named?

BECKMESSER: Aha! The lout! On his head is no dunce cap!

POGNER: Sir Walther, this by our rules is governed.
But at this test meet I'll put you forth.
The Masters will lend me their ears, of course.

(the Masters have all assembled, Hans Sachs having entered last)

SACHS: God bless you, Masters!

VOGELGESANG: Are we all present?

BECKMESSER: Hans Sachs has arrived!

NACHTIGALL: Let's take attendance!

(Fritz Kothner takes out a list and stands apart from the group)

KOTHNER: To today's test match and guild assemblage
We've asked the Masters, our guild members.

By name, I'll call
Them one and all.
Since I joined after all the others,
I call the roll: I'm here, Fritz Kothner.
Are you here, Veit Pogner?

POGNER: Here at hand!

(sits)

KOTHNER: Kuntz Vogelgesang?

VOGELGESANG: Yes, I am!

(sits)

KOTHNER: Herman Ortel?

ORTEL: I'm where I ought!

(sits)

KOTHNER: Balthazar Zorn?

ZORN: I'm never out.

(sits)

KOTHNER: Konrad Nachtigall?

NACHTIGALL: Answers his call!

(sits)

KOTHNER: Augustin Moser?

MOSER: Accounted for.

(sits)

KOTHNER: Niklaus Vogel? Well?

APPRENTICE (Alto): *(stands up from the bench)*
Out sick.

KOTHNER: May he full recover!

MASTERS: Amen!

(sits)

APPRENTICE (Alto): And quick!

KOTHNER: Hans Sachs?

DAVID: *(rises and points to Sachs)*
That's him, there!

SACHS: *(menacing David)*
I'll tan your hide!

Forgive, Masters!

(sits)

Sachs has arrived!

KOTHNER: Sixtus Beckmesser?

BECKMESSER: Here, next to Sachs

(as he sits)

So I'll learn what rhymes with "thrive and wax!"

(Sachs laughs)

KOTHNER: Ulrich Eisslinger?

EISSLINGER: Here!

(sits)

KOTHNER: Hans Foltz?

FOLTZ: Right here!

(sits)

KOTHNER: Hans Schwarz?

SCHWARZ: The last, God knows.

(sits)

KOTHNER: We've got a quorum plus some more.
Should we elect someone to keep score?

VOGELGESANG: Let's wait one day more?

BECKMESSER: If he insists.
He's but to ask, my job is his.

POGNER: Come, come, you Masters, dispute no more!
For urgent business I'd like the floor.

(the Masters rise, nod to Kothner, then sit back down)

KOTHNER: You have it, Master. Speak!

POGNER: Now listen, my friends, to me!
Saint John the Baptist's festival
Is, as you know, tomorrow.
On meadows green and flower filled
To play and dance, we revellers
With merry hearts will all go,
Forgetting every sorrow,
To merry make each as he will.

We train in church where no one hears.
Saint John's Day we trade that in
And march ourselves to open fields,
Amid the noise of shouts and cheers

And merry bells and whistling,
To let the people listen
And sing our songs for laymen's ears.

The victors of our song contest
With prizes are rewarded.
Their entries lauded as the best
In music and in wording.
I am, thank God, a wealthy man.
We all contribute what we can.
I really had to think on
A fitting contribution
That puts me not to shame.
The prize I give, I'll name:

I've travelled all through German lands
And it has often vexed me
That men think townsfolk to a man
Are misers and unfriendly.
In castles as in hamlets small
Their harsh complaining really galled.
They said that haggling and gold
Made up a townsmen's soul.
That we alone in German lands
To art are still devoted,
Is something that they've never noted.

Think of the honour art can command
When we with courage dare
To treasure what's good and fair.
To art's great worth, its merit rare,
I want before all my witness to bear,
So hear, Masters, what gift
As the prize I wish to give!

Who's winner of the contest named,
Who by you Masters is acclaimed,
On John the Baptist's day,
Be he who e'er he may,
To him, I, a true art lover
From Nuremberg, Veit Pagner,

Along with my worldly goods, commend
Eva, my only child, to wed!

MASTERS: *(animatedly to each other)*
Now that's a man! Now that's a vow!
That man will make all Nuremberg proud!
All men will praise you far and wide,
You worthy townsman, Pogner, Veit!
For all time!

VOGELGESANG: To be a bachelor in his prime!

SACHS: Or else to trade in his old wife!

APPRENTICES: *(merrily jumping up)*
For all time!
Far and wide!
Pogner, Veit!

KOTHNER: You bachelors,
Get down to work!

POGNER: Now listen as I stipulate:
A lifeless trophy, I won't give.
The girl in judgement, too, will sit.
The Masters recommend the prize,
But, this is marriage, let's be wise,
Over the Masters' vote,
The bride a veto's got.

BECKMESSER: *(turning to Kothner)*
But is that wise?

KOTHNER: *(aloud)*
Do I surmise
You're giving our votes to the bride?

BECKMESSER: That's dangerous!

KOTHNER: She'll disagree!

And how then would the Masters' choice be free?

BECKMESSER: Let her choose a man for her own
And leave the Master song contest alone!

POGNER: No, no! But why? Just listen close!
Whom the Masters may choose by vote,
The girl's free to reject him
But no other man may she wed then.
The Master Singer with the prize,
To him alone may she be wife.

SACHS: (*rises*)
My friend, perhaps you've taken this too far.
The flames inside a maiden's heart
Don't always glow with Master art.
Yet woman's taste, although unlearned,
Is, like the people's taste, of worth.
If you would aim to show the people
How highly art you prize,
And you want the girl to choose as she will,
But also as you decide,
You'll let the people judges be.
With the girl's choice they will surely agree.

MASTERS: Oho! What's this? The people can vote?
Then Master art becomes a joke!

KOTHNER: No, Sachs! No way! That doesn't make sense!
With Master rules you'd just dispense?

SACHS: Now listen well! How you go on!
You know I know the rules of song.
That our guild they strictly observe
Is what I have long sought to preserve.
But once every year it's up to us to
Put all our guild rules up to the test.
With use, have they gone dull and lacklustre?
And of their strength, how much still is left?
And if they still apply,
You'll know it only by

Taking the word
Of those who never heard of scoreboards.

(the Apprentices jump up and rub their hands)

BECKMESSER: Ha! That makes our students merry!

SACHS: *(continues earnestly)*
But that's why you shouldn't worry.
For each year on Saint John's festival
We step down from our pedestal,
From lofty art in ivory towers,
And sing instead for the whole town!
To reach the folks that are laymen,
I think it just makes sense,
To ask of each composition,
"Does it please the audience?"
So art and town may thrive and wax,
Do things this way! So says Hans Sachs.

VOGELGESANG: You mean that well!

KOTHNER: But it's corrupt.

NACHTIGALL: If laymen vote I'll just shut up.

KOTHNER: Our art will be debased and shamed
If it seeks popular acclaim.

BECKMESSER: No wonder he's proposing this:
He writes street songs that are pure kitsch.

POGNER: Friend Sachs, my gift is new and strange.
This one thing more is too much change!

(turns to the Masters)

So I ask if the Masters permit
My proposal for the rules and gift.

(Masters rise and assent)

SACHS: Then let's just give Eva veto power.

BECKMESSER: That shoemaker turns my mood sour!

KOTHNER: Who will our contestants be?
All bachelors fancy free?

BECKMESSER: A widower, maybe?
Just ask Hans Sachs!

SACHS: No, no, good Scorer.
A younger chap
Than I or you must the suitor be,
If Eve's to grant him victory.

BECKMESSER: Younger than I?
The man's uncouth!

KOTHNER: Who seeks a trial,
Let him step forth!
Who here will apply to sing and to wed?

POGNER: One item on our agenda's left:
As Master, I present
And highly recommend
This young noble knight for admission.
He hopes that we'll elect him
A Master Singer here today.
My noble Stolzing, step this way!

(Walther steps forward and bows)

BECKMESSER: *(aside)*
Just as I thought! Is that your plan, Veit?

(aloud)

It's far too late to grant him a trial!

MASTERS: That's something else: a nobleman?

Does this bode well? What risks do we run?
We must take strongly into account
That Master Pogner for him vouched.

KOTHNER: If we're to welcome the nobleman,
He must sing a trial and he must pass.

POGNER: I'd like to see his wish fulfilled
But I abide by all the rules of our guild.
So question him, Masters.

KOTHNER: Now would the knight kindly answer:
Was he born in wedlock and born free?

POGNER: To ask him that, there's no need.
Since I myself substantiate
He's freeborn and legitimate:
von Stolzing, Walther, Franconian.
I certify that I know the man.
The last one of his noble line,
He left his land and home behind
And moved to Nuremberg where
He'll be a townsman here.

BECKMESSER: That noble flower is a weed!

NACHTIGALL: Friend Pogner's word's enough for me.

SACHS: The long-standing Masters' guild rule is clear:
Both lord and farmer are welcome here.
We judge all by their art alone
When they take part in Master song.

KOTHNER: Instead, then, I shall ask,
Which Master taught you your craft?

WALTHER: There at the hearth in winter white,
The land snowed in on every side,
I read how spring so lovely laughed
And how she would awake at last,
In the ancestral book I grasped.

How often I did read that:
Herr Walther von der Vogelweid',
He was my Master of song craft.

SACHS: The best of Masters!

BECKMESSER: Long dead and gone!
How could he teach him all the rules of song?

KOTHNER: But your vocal preparation
Was with which academician?

WALTHER: When all the fields from frost were freed
And once again blew summer's breeze,
That which I'd studied winter-long
From my ancestral book of song,
I heard aloud on emerald lawns,
In woods around me ringing.
From forest birds on meadows green
I learned the art of singing.

BECKMESSER: Oho! From titmice a-winging
He learned his Master Singing?
Who'd listen to this blithering bird?

VOGELGESANG: Two brilliant stanzas from him we've heard.

BECKMESSER: You praise him, Master Vogelgesang,
Because from fowl the man learned his songs?

KOTHNER: I ask you, Masters, should I go on?
Or can this candidate be withdrawn?

SACHS: In course we'll find out duly.
If he's an artist truly
Who treasures craft and art,
Who cares where he got his start?

KOTHNER: *(to Walther)*
If you're prepared now to perform
A brand new work of Master song

All of your own invention,
We'll give you our attention.

WALTHER: What winter nights,
What woodland sprites,
What book and meadow taught me,
What poets in their fancies' flights
With secret wisdom brought me,
When horses' hooves
To trumpets moved,
When folks danced rings
At gatherings,
I listened meditative
And thought that life's most worthy prize
Was in song to translate them
To my own words and music mine
Which to me flow together.
A Master song, if such you find,
Ye Masters, I present you.

BECKMESSER: In all that blather, what'd he say?

VOGELGESANG: Well, well! He's bold!

NACHTIGALL: Interesting case!

KOTHNER: If, Masters, you'll allow,
We'll call the scorer now.

(to Walther)

Would you, sir, choose a sacred trope?

WALTHER: My sacred choice is:
"What is Love's Voice?"
Singing, I'll bring myself hope!

KOTHNER: That trope is worldly. Even so,
Master Beckmesser, in you go!

(Beckmesser rises and walks as if reluctantly to the scorer's box)

BECKMESSER: A bitter task, more so today!
My scoring might chalk up woe and pain.

(bows to Walther)

Learn, good sir, how
Sixtus Beckmesser scores you now:
Here in the box
He quietly carries out his job!
Seven errors you may commit.
He marks them with chalk over here.
More than seven errors he won't permit.
Then you're out on your noble ear.

(he sits in the scorer's box)

He'll listen close
But, so your courage won't be lost
Should him you see,
He'll leave you in peace
And shut himself away.

(He sticks his head out with a haughtily friendly nod and disappears behind the curtains that completely enclose the box.)

May God be with you today.

KOTHNER: *(signals the Apprentices, then, to Walther)*
To make your song correct, be schooled
And guided by the codex of rules.

(the Apprentices have taken down from the wall the "Leges Tabulaturae" which they had hung up earlier, and give it to Kothner, who reads from it)

"Each of the parts of a Master song
Must represent all the proper forms
Of all applicable conventions.
This rule has no exceptions.

Every verse of song must have two stanzas

Whose melodies must have the same patterns.
A stanza's made of a group of lines
Whose verses at their ends must rhyme.
After these comes the after-song,
Also x-many verses long,
That has a distinctive melody
Which like the stanzas' tune must not be."

A composition that's made like so,
Each section in the Master ratio
And with a structure that is built
So no more than four syllables
With extant tunes will coincide,
That song would earn a Master's prize!

(gives the "Leges Tabulaturae" back to the Apprentices, who hang it back up on the wall)

Now sit down on the singer's chair!

WALTHER: *(with a shiver)*
Here in the seat?

KOTHNER: If you'd compete!

WALTHER: *(mounts the chair reluctantly, then, aside)*
For you, beloved, I shall win!

KOTHNER: *(very loudly)*
The singer sits.

BECKMESSER: *(invisible in his box, very harshly)*
Let's begin!

WALTHER: "Let's begin!"
Cried in the forest the spring,
So loud her cry would ring.
And as the sound receded,
As with an ocean wave,
From far off was repeated
A sound that closer came.

It echoed loud
The woods around,
This lovely chorus of voices.
Now loud and clear
And drawing near,
The voices swelled
Like happy bells
That ring to signal rejoicing!

The wood
Soon could
Give answer to the cry
That brought him back to life.
So he burst
Into a song of spring.

(From the scorer's box discouraging groans are heard, along with the loud noise of chalk striking the chalkboard. Walther has heard it, too. It interrupts him briefly but he carries on.)

But in a thorn bush prickly,
Consumed with jealous hate,
Hid winter himself quickly.
Well-armed, he lay in wait
And there among the plants
A wicked ambush planned,
Where he the singing joyful
Would ruin and would foil.

(he rises from the chair)

Still: Let's begin.
I heard the call in my breast
When I knew of love nothing yet.
I felt it and I shuddered.
It woke me out of my dream.
My heart swelled up as it fluttered
And burst from my breast, it seemed.

My blood then coursed
With mighty force

And throbbed with strange, new emotion.
On that warm night
With fearsome might
Swirled all around
A sighing sound
In wild, wondrous commotion.

My breast
Soon could
Give answer to the cry
That brought it back to life.
Let us sing
The noble song of love!

BECKMESSER: *(tearing open the curtains)*
Have you quite finished?

WALTHER: What's your complaint?

BECKMESSER: On the chalkboard

(harshly)

I've run out of space!

(holds the out chalkboard, full of strike marks. The Masters burst out laughing.)

WALTHER: Not yet. I've still my lady's praise
To sing with new melodic phrase.

BECKMESSER: *(leaving the scorer's box)*
Sing where you like but you struck out here!
Look, Masters, at the chalkboard. It's clear.
In all my life I've heard no song
So brazen and so very wrong!

WALTHER: But may he, Masters, show me the door?
Will I be silenced or sing more?

POGNER: A word, Herr Scorer, you seem perturbed!

BECKMESSER: That's natural after what we heard!

But that the knight has failed utterly
I first shall prove to this assembly,
Thought that's no easy task of mine:
How to start when he had no opening line?
Of rhymes wrong and groupings all misplaced
I shall utter no word.
Too short, too long, and with no line breaks:
Who one proper line from him heard?
Just "unclear meaning" I shall address.
Could what he said be more meaningless?

MASTERS: It made no sense, I must agree.
A line break was nowhere to be seen!
Who knows what he means!

BECKMESSER: And then the tune, a jumbled lampoon:
"Adventure" themes with "blue larkspur flower" tunes!
"High fir trees" with "young man" tones!

KOTHNER: I understood not one of those.

BECKMESSER: No ornaments, no trills and no turns,
And melody nowhere to be heard!

(the Masters are in a growing state of commotion)

ORTEL AND FOLTZ: That's singing, you say?

MOSER AND NACHTIGALL: No, it's a disgrace!

VOGELGESANG: It was caterwauling!

ZORN: With lyrics appalling!

KOTHNER: He left the chair! Left his position!

BECKMESSER: What proof do you require in addition?
Or's it clear he failed his audition?

(Sachs, who had been listening with growing solemnity to Walther from the beginning, steps forward.)

SACHS: Wait, Masters! You speak too soon.
Not everyone agrees with you.
The knight's song left you baffled.
I found it new but not confused.
He left our road well-travelled
But still his tread was sure and true.
We can't by our rules measure
That which by our rules does not go.
Instead it would be better
To use it new rules to compose!

BECKMESSER: Aha! Well, well! You heard his plot:
He'd throw open our doors to clods
Who'd come and go at their leisure
And sing what e'er they please to!
Sing in the streets or alleys somewhere!
Only those who follow rules may belong here.

SACHS: Herr Scorer, why be a fanatic?
Why not remain composed?
Your judgement would be less erratic
If you had listened close.
Therefore I'd like to recommend
That we hear Sir Walther's song to the end.

BECKMESSER: The Masters' Guild, the whole wide school,
By one Hans Sachs is overruled!

SACHS: May God forbid that I should say
A thing that's not by our laws made plain!
Just look: Right here it's stated,
"The scorer shall have as his guide
That neither love nor hatred
May cloud the judgement he provides."

(Walther flares up)

Now that he means to woo a damsel,

How could the man pass up a chance to
Bring down his rival on the chair
And shame him before all those here?

NACHTIGALL: Attacking him!

KOTHNER: Ad hominem!

POGNER: You Masters, don't be quarrelsome!

BECKMESSER: Tosh! While our Master Sachs here mutters
About whose hand I will seek,
He should be minding his soles and uppers:
His new shoes pinch my feet!
E'er since my cobbler a poet became
It's ruined all of the shoes he's made.
They flop around!
The soles are unsound!
All of his rhymes and poems
I wish he'd leave at home.
Leave epics and plays and comedies, too.
Just come tomorrow with my new shoes!

SACHS: *(scratches behind his ear)*
It's fitting that you chide
But is it, Masters, right?
For men who drive the donkey carts,
I pen poems on shoe soles,
But for our learned Herr Town Clerk,
I should pen nothing at all?
A verse that of you worthy'd be,
With all my poor gift for poetry,
Has not yet come to mind
But surely it I'll find
Once I the young knight's song have heard,
So let the knight sing on undisturbed!

(Walther, in a state of increasing turmoil, stands on the singer's chair looking down from there at the Masters)

BECKMESSER: The subject is closed!

MASTERS: Enough! It's closed!

SACHS: *(to Walther)*

Sing, though the scorer has said no!

BECKMESSER: What evidence more still need you,
Unless it's to deceive you?

(takes the chalkboard out of the scorer's box and holds it during the following, showing it around from one Master to the next as proof)

Every error small and big,
You see here on the chalkboard writ':
"Wrongly grouped," "poor enunciation!"
"Elisions" and "vices," too!
"Ambiguous," "rhymes in the wrong places,"
"Mixed up," "misplaced," the whole long group!
A "patchwork song" inserted most foully!
"Unclear meaning" is everywhere!
Here "obscure words," here "unrhymed," there "shouty"
And there he breathed wrong, took too much air!
Incomprehensible melodies
That pass at random through mixed-up keys!
If you don't shy from ugly tasks,
Masters, count every chalkboard hash!
He lost his chances before the eighth
But kept singing and set the record to date:
Well over fifty! It's not close!
Say, who here would him a Master vote?

MASTERS: That's right! Just so! I quite agree!
The chevalier sang quite badly.
Though Sachs wants to give the man his vote,
Here he'll not sing another note!
Is every guild member not the author
Of whom the guild admits and when?
If we took each Tom, Dick and Walther,
What worth would the Masters have then?
Ha! See how the knight starts to fret!
Hans Sachs took him as a pet!

Annoying this is! Let's take a stand!
Come, Masters! Vote by a show of hands!

POGNER: Oh dear, this is not going right
And things look bad for my young knight!
Vote now with the majority?
I can't, for that would trouble me.
Oh, how I wish he had been admitted!
A worthy son-in-law he'd make.
If I approve whoever wins this,
Will Eve his hand in marriage take?
What worries me the most?
How Eva will cast her vote!

WALTHER: Out from the thorny scrub brush
An owl did speedily fly
And with his screeching woke up
A croaky raven choir.
The horde, nocturnal, vast,
Began to crow and rasp.
Their hollow voices cawed and cracked hoarse,
These magpies, crows and jackdaws!

Then arose a creature golden-winged,
A bird magnificent.
Its feathers fair and glossy
Bright on the breeze did glint.
Aloft in flight, he called me
To fly away with him.

My heart, aflame
With sweetest pain,
Grew wings when they were needed.
It took flight then
And boldly went
From the tomb-like town
To fly all around.
Then it its homeland it greeted.

Out there on bird song meadows bright
Where Master Walther gave me flight,

I'll sing out loud and clear
To praise my lady dear.
Up it climbs,
Though Master crows may it despise,
The proudest song of love.
Farewell, you Masters, I'm off!

SACHS: *(observes Walther, captivated)*

Ha! He is bold!
Inspired, he glows!

(imploring)

Be quiet, Masters, and hear!
Lend the young knight your ear!
Herr Scorer, please, give us some peace!
Let others listen! Grant that at least!
In vain! In their vainglory
Not a man can hear his own song.
The knight sings and they ignore him
But he is bold and he sings on!
The song in his heart is right:
The man's a poet-knight!
If I, Hans Sachs, make verse and shoes,
Then he's a knight and a poet, too.

(The Apprentices have stood up from their bench, approached the scorer's box and formed a ring around it. They begin to dance.)

DAVID AND APPRENTICES: Good luck with Master Singing!
May you win the garland of victory!

(they dance with increasing merriment in rings around the scorer's box)

The flowered garland of silk so fine,
Will it be awarded to this good knight?

BECKMESSER: Now, Masters, show your hands!

(the Masters raise their hands)

MASTERS: He struck out, lost his chance!

(Walther gets off the singer's chair with a proudly disdainful gesture and turns quickly to leave. Increasing confusion all around. Merry disorder from the Apprentices who are taking away the singer's chair and Masters' benches while the Masters are crowding around to look at the door. Sachs, alone Downstage, looks thoughtfully at the empty chair. As the Apprentices take it away, Sachs turns from it with a gesture of comic discouragement.)

Act I Curtain

Act II



'Albrecht Durer's House at Nuremberg'
William Callow (English, 1812-1908)
Artvee

Act II, Scene 1

Downstage, a section of a street running Left and Right with a small alleyway Up, leading Off. Center, at the intersection of the street and the alley, two house facades (both practical) are visible. The one Stage Left, the house of a wealthy owner, is Pogner's. The simpler house Stage Right belongs to Sachs. In front of Pogner's house is a linden tree and in front of Sachs's, a lilac. As the scene begins, it's a fair summer evening that gradually turns to night. David is closing the street-side shutters to Sachs's workshop. Other Apprentices are on the street closing the shutters to other houses (all practical).

APPRENTICES: *(as they work)*

On Saint John's Day, on Saint John's Day
Posies aplenty and ribbons gay!

DAVID: *(softly to himself)*

"The flower garland of silk so fine,
Grant that the garland may soon be mine!"

MAGDALENE: *(enters from Pogner's house with a basket; tries to approach David unnoticed)*

Psst! David!

DAVID: *(turning violently toward the alley)*

You again, idiots?
Sing yourselves all your stupid ditties!

(reluctantly turns away)

APPRENTICES: David, that hurts!

Why use such words?
Look 'round instead
And use your head!
On Saint John's Day, on Saint John's Day
The fool yells at Mistress Lene to go away!

MAGDALENE: *(pointing to her basket)*

David, listen! Come closer, dear.

DAVID: Ah! Mistress Lene! You are here?

MAGDALENE: I've brought a spread!
Just take a peek:
All this is for my love to eat.
First, tell me quick, how went it at song school?
You taught the knight well? He's a Master now?

DAVID: Ah, Mistress Lene! It was awful!
The knight has failed. The man struck out.

MAGDALENE: *(frightened)*
He failed? He's out?

DAVID: *(as David reaches out his hand to take the basket, Magdalene snatches it away)*
What's this all about?

MAGDALENE: Hands off my basket!
Snacks? Don't ask it!
Dear God! Our young knight has struck out!

(gestures inconsolably as she exits back into the house; David, nonplussed, watches her go)

APPRENTICES: *(who have crept up unnoticed on David and Magdalene to listen in, now approach David as if to congratulate him)*
Hail! Hail the groom so young and stout!
He won his lady at last!
We saw it all and heard each shout:
She whom his heart holds fast,
For whom he'd die if asked it,
Won't give him her picnic basket!

DAVID: *(erupting)*
Still standing around?
Shut up and get out!

APPRENTICES: *(form a ring and dance around David)*
On Saint John's Day, on Saint John's Day
Each man goes courting as he may.
The Master courts, the prentice courts.

There's much flirtation and snogging!
The old man courts the girl, of course.
The boy, the old maid is dogging.
Hurray! Hurray! On Saint John's Day!

(David is ready to jump in and start throwing punches as Sachs enters from the alley and comes between David and the Apprentices; the Apprentices separate)

SACHS: *(to David)*
What's this? I find you fighting again?

DAVID:
Not I. They're singing dirty tunes!

SACHS: Close your ears. It's better for you.
Go in, close up, all the lamps light!

(Apprentices disperse)

DAVID: A singing lesson?

SACHS: Not tonight.
Instead, for your impudence, as penance,
Put the new shoes on the last to stretch them!

(David and Sachs exit into the workshop through an inner door)

Act II, Scene 2

Pogner and Eva are returning home as if from a walk together. The daughter leaning lightly on her father's arm, both are taciturn as they come in from the alley.

POGNER: *(peering through a chink in Sachs's storefront shutter)*

Let's see, is Master Sachs at home?

I'll speak with him.

(David enters from an inner room, carrying a light. He brings it to his work table near the window, where he sets it down, sits and gets to work.)

Shall we go in?

EVA: *(peering)*

I think he's there. His lamps are lit.

POGNER: Should I? But what for? Better not!

(turns away)

He makes strange propositions.

What counsel would he give me?

(he considers)

Did he not declare I went too far?

I chose a road that's not travelled,

As also is his habit.

Or would he say I'm being vain?

(turns to Eva)

And you, my child, say not a word?

EVA: Obedient girls are seen, not heard.

POGNER: How wise! How good!

(tenderly)

Come sit down here
A moment with your father dear!

EVA: Won't we get chilled?
Today was cold.

POGNER: *(sits on a stone bench under the linden tree; Eva sits next to him, hesitant and apprehensive)*

No, no. It's warm and pleasing,
A pleasant summer evening.
It means we'll have a lovely day
Tomorrow for the contest.
Oh, child! Does your own heart not say
What happiness for you awaits
When all of Nuremberg arrives,
Its townsfolk high and common,
Its guildsmen and its folk arrayed
Before you in the audience,
As you give out
The vict'ry crown
And take to be his wife
The Master of your choice?

EVA: Dear Father, must it a Master be?

POGNER: Mark well: a Master of your choice.

(Magdalena appears in the door and motions to Eva)

EVA: *(absently)*
Yes, of my choice!
So come with me--

(loudly, to Magdalene)

(Soon, Lene, soon!)
--inside to eat!

(she stands)

POGNER: *(stands, annoyed)*

But we have no guest.

EVA: *(as before)*

Not the noble?

POGNER: *(astonished)*

How's that?

EVA: Was he not there?

POGNER: *(half to himself, lost in thought)*

He pleased me not.

(pulling himself together)

But no! But...what? What did I say?

EVA: Dear Papa, come on! Go and get changed.

POGNER: *(as he enters the house)*

I've lost my train of thought again.

MAGDALENE: *(confidentially, to Eva)*

What did you learn?

EVA: *(as before)*

Quite mum he stayed.

MAGDALENE: Well, David said

The knight lost his chance.

EVA: *(frightened)*

He lost it? Good God! What of my plans?

Ah, Lene, I'm scared! Who'll know what happened?

MAGDALENE: Perhaps Hans Sachs?

EVA: *(brightly)*

Yes, he loves me well.

That's it. I'll see him.

MAGDALENE: But act with discretion:
Your father'd note if you skipped the meal.
So eat first. Then I can give you the message

(as they're going up the stairs)

That someone for you in secret sent me.

EVA: *(turning)*
Someone? The noble?

MAGDALENE: No way! No! Beckmesser.

EVA: Beckmesser! That's just grand.

(Eva exits into the house. Magdalene follows her.)

Act II, Scene 3

Sachs, in light indoor clothes, enters the workshop from an interior room. He turns to David who has remained at his work table.

SACHS: Let's see! That's good. Now one thing more:
Push my bench and stool to the door.
Go off to bed, wake up on time.
Sleep off your folly. Tomorrow be wise!

DAVID: *(as he arranges the table and stool)*
You still have work left?

SACHS: What's it to you?

DAVID: *(to himself)*
What happened to Lene? What'd I do?
And why does the Master work so late?

SACHS: You're still here?

DAVID: Sleep well, Master!

(David exits into an interior room facing the alley)

SACHS: Good night!

(arranges his work, sits at the door on his stool but leaves the work where it is and leans back, with his arm on the closed lower half of the workshop door. Very tenderly)

The gentle scent of lilac,
So soft, so strong and sweet,
It calms me gently, smiling,
It inspires me to speak.

(very softly)

What good is what I say to you?
I'm just a poor and simple fool!

When all my work is a bother
You, friend, offer release
But I ought to sit and stretch leather
And let all this poetry be!

(noisily and emphatically takes up his shoemaking work then leaves it again, leans back as before and contemplates)

And yet it haunts my mind.
It moves me, I don't know why.
I cannot fathom and yet can't forget it.
When it's in my grasp I cannot measure it!
And yet how could I measure
What cannot measured have been?
To no rule it paid attention
Yet not a mistake crept in.
It's sound, so old and yet fresh and new,
Like bird song in sweet May and June!

One who dared
To sing those airs,
Smitten by sweet bird song,
He would be mocked and scorned.
Springtime's command,
Her sweet demand,
She planted deep in his breast.
He sang then as he must.
And as he must, so could he.

(animatedly)

I noticed that especially.

(very tenderly)

The bird whom I heard sing,
Whose noble beak was made for song craft,
He made the Masters cringe,
But one man he pleased well, that's Hans Sachs!

Act II, Scene 4

Eva has entered the street from the house and shyly approached the workshop. She stands at the door unnoticed by Sachs, who is working tranquilly.

EVA: Good evening, Master!
At your task still?

SACHS: *(pleasantly surprised)*
Ah, child! Dear Evchen, still awake?
But what could keep you up, I ask you?
It's your new shoes?

EVA: *(sits next to Sachs on a stone seat)*
You're way off base!
The shoes, I have not yet tried them on.
They are so fair and well adorned
That I have not dared to put my feet inside.

SACHS: They're for tomorrow when you're a bride.

EVA: But who will the bridegroom be?

SACHS: Do I know?

EVA: Do you know I'll be a bride?

SACHS: Of course! The whole town knows.

EVA: Right. The whole town knows.
Friend Sachs says it, it's surely so!
I thought he knew more.

SACHS: What more should I know?

EVA: For Pete's sake! Must I spell every word out?
Do you think I'm dumb?

SACHS: I said that not.

EVA: Then might you be wise?

SACHS: I know that not.

EVA: You know not. You say not.
Well, Friend Sachs,
Now I see what's what.
Tar is not wax!
I always had thought you were better.

SACHS: Child, both wax and tar can have their use.
With wax I coat the silken ribbons,
The ones I used to tie your slippers sweet.
But these shoes right here need thicker strings on
And coats of pine tar for rougher feet.

EVA: Who are they for? Someone grand?

SACHS: I'd say so!
A Master single-minded who
Tomorrow intends to win a maiden:
Herr Beckmesser's is this pair of shoes.

EVA: Then please use extra tar so he
Gets stuck in place and lets me be.

SACHS: He hopes to win you with his singing.

EVA: Must it be him?

SACHS: A single man,
There are so few of them at hand!

EVA: Couldn't a widower do the winning?

SACHS: My child, for you too old he'd be.

EVA: How's that? Too old? Art's all that counts.
He who grasps that, he may court me.

SACHS: Dear Evchen, do you taunt me now?

EVA: Not me! It's you! You're spouting gibberish!
Admit to your inconstancy.
God knows which fair damsel your heart now holds in it!
All these years I thought your heart held me.

SACHS: Because in my arms I once carried you?

EVA: (*very tenderly*)
Was it because you are childless?

SACHS: (*gently*)
I had a wife and children once, too.

EVA: Your wife has passed on and I've matured.

SACHS: (*brightly, then tenderly*)
Grown beautiful!

EVA: I thought you might
Desire me as both your child and wife.

SACHS: Then I'd have a child and have a wife!
A charming way to pass through life!
Oh yes, you thought through every detail.

EVA: I think he mocks me. Did my plan fail?
And would the Master laugh even harder
If under his nose I go tomorrow
With Beckmesser, who'll sing me away?

SACHS: If he should win, who'd stand in his way?
Your father might know what to do.

EVA: Where has the Master's good sense gone to?
Would I have sought you if he knew best?

SACHS: (*dryly*)
Quite right. Just so. I have no sense left.
Today was full of care and doubt,

Enough to knock all my sense out.

EVA: *(again coming closer)*

What, at the song school? Things went amiss?

SACHS: Yes, child! An audition caused me distress.

EVA: Ah, Sachs! If right away you had mentioned,
I'd not have vexed you with useless questions.
So talk! What man auditioned today?

SACHS: A nobleman who'd never trained.

EVA: *(as if exchanging confidences)*

A noble? Oh my! He's in the guild now?

SACHS: Oh no, my child! There was a row.

EVA: So tell me all! How did it go?
What concerns you concerns me, too.
So he was a failure and sent away?

SACHS: Hopeless failure suffered the chevalier.

MAGDALENE: *(enters from the house and calls softly)*

Psst! Evchen! Psst!

EVA: *(turned eagerly to Sachs)*

Hopeless failure? How?
There's nothing that can help him now?
So bad his voice, so oft erred he
That nothing can help him a Master be?

SACHS: My dear, his trial was a disaster.
No song guild will e'er accept this man
For he who's born as a Master
By Masters rejected is out of hand.

MAGDALENE: *(calling more distinctly)*

Your father insists.

EVA: *(to Sachs with increasing urgency)*

There's no hope for him?

Not one of the Masters as friend did he win?

SACHS: How could we Masters friends with him be

When he made us all second-rate seem?

Sir High and Mighty, let him be gone

The rest of the world to take on!

Then all we've learned by rote, with care,

He'll leave us all in peace to cough up

And not be here to show us all up.

May fortune favour him elsewhere!

EVA: *(rises as if in a rage)*

Yes, fortune will send him elsewhere,

Far from your envious Master stanzas,

To friends whose hearts' warm glow he'll soon share,

Despite perfidious Master Hanses!

(to Lene)

Wait, Lene, wait! I'm on my way!

From him what comfort could I take?

It reeks of tar in here, good God!

He should burn it to thaw out his heart!

(agitated, she crosses the street with Magdalene and, in a state of alarm, remains at the house door)

SACHS: *(watches her with a meaningful nod of his head)*

I thought as much! So now we plan!

(During the following Sachs is busy closing the upper half of the shop door enough so that only a little bit of light shines through. He himself can scarcely be seen.)

MAGDALENE: Good God, why are you out so late? Your father calls.

EVA: You go instead

And tell him I'm asleep in bed.

MAGDALENE: No way, Evchen! Listen to me.

Beckmesser badgered till I agreed:
You are to go tonight to your window.
A serenade there he's planning to sing you,
A song he hopes you'll be so overcome by
You'll crown him victor and be his bride.

EVA: That's all I need now! Why's it not he?

MAGDALENE: Is David around?

EVA: *(peering into the distance)*
What's that to me?

MAGDALENE: *(to herself)*
I was so mean. I think I hurt him.

EVA: Still no one there?

MAGDALENE: *(reacts as if she's seen someone)*
I think I see a person.

EVA: 'Tis he?

MAGDALENE: Come now, go off to bed.

EVA: Not yet! I await the dearest of men!

MAGDALENE: It was a mistake. I saw him not.
Now come, before your father learns what's what!

EVA: Ah, I'm afraid!

MAGDALENE: And let us consider
How Master Beckmesser to get rid of!

EVA: He'll serenade you, not me.

(she listens)

MAGDALENE: Who, me?

(to herself)

Would that not cause David jealousy?
He sleeps near the alley. Hee-hee! That's fine!

EVA: I hear some footsteps.

MAGDALENE: *(to Eva)*
Come on, go inside.

EVA: They're nearing!

MAGDALENE: You're wrong. That's not his tread.
Now come! You must, till your father's in bed.

POGNER: *(voice from inside, Off)*
Hey! Lene! Eva!

MAGDALENE: *(drags Eva, over her objections, by the arm up the steps to the door)*
Do as I say.
Eva, come! Your knight's far away!

Act II, Scene 5

Walther has come up the street and turned the corner into the alley.

EVA: *(sees Walther)*
He's coming!

(tears herself loose from Magdalene and rushes across the street to Walther)

MAGDALENE: The game has changed!
Now it's: think quick!

(exits hastily into the house)

EVA: *(beside herself)*
Yes, it's you, sir!
No, it's you, dear!
Loud I'll say it
So you must hear.
Loud proclaim it,
For I'm certain
You're my prize-won
Hero worthy
And my only friend.

WALTHER: Ah, you're wrong. I'm just your friend.
Of the prize I'm undeserving,
Of the Masters, not yet worthy.
My audition
Met derision
And I realize
I'm forbidden
From my friend's fair hand.

EVA: How you're wrong!
Your friend's fair hand
Alone the prize gives out.
Your courage bold, her heart enchants.
You only will she crown.

WALTHER: Alas! You're wrong!
My friend's fair hand
E'en should it choose no winner,
Is subject to her father's plan
And to me is forbidden!
"The Master Singer with the prize,
To him alone may she be wife!"
He made this promise to the men
And cannot take it back again!
It gave me courage bold
And, strange though it all seemed to me,
I sang to love an ode
So I a Master, too, could be.

(angrily)

Ah, but those Masters!
Ha, all those Masters
And their rigid rhymes, hob-
Goblins of small minds!
My blood, it boils,
My heart stands still.
I could not foil
The trap that they built.

Come, freedom beckons!
I'll live in freedom!
There, my own Master I'll be!
If we're to wed, then
I must beseech you,
Run away now with me!

Don't wait, there's no point.
For us there is no choice!
Here I am haunted
By Masters taunting
Like evil banshees,
Rhyme-vigilantes,
Masters with guild cards
Holding their scoreboards.

Everywhere they lurk:
Out of the woodwork,
I can see crowds of
Masters around us.
Both taunting and shameless,
They stand as claimants.
In circles around you
They surround you
Screeching like Bedlam,
Hoping you'll wed them.

The Masters have you
On the song chair captive.
They lift you reeling
Up to the ceiling!
Should I just take it?
And should I not dare
Bravely fight my way to you there?

(The Night Watchman's horn is heard. Walther, with an emphatic gesture, clasps his sword and shouts)

Ha!

EVA: *(calming him down with a touch of her hand)*
Beloved, put down your sword.
That's just the night watchman's horn.
Under the linden
Quickly be hidden.
The watchman soon will pass by.

MAGDALENE: *(calling softly under the door)*
Evchen, it's time. Come inside!

WALTHER: We'll go?

EVA: *(smiling)*
Why shouldn't we?

WALTHER: You'll flee?

EVA: *(with tender certainty)*

The Masters' decree.

(She disappears with Magdalene into the house. The Night Watchman has, meanwhile, appeared into the alley. He steps Down singing and leans on the corner of Pogner's house, then continues on, exiting Right.)

NIGHT WATCHMAN: Hear ye, hear ye, all ye townsfolk:

The clock struck ten this hour.

Guard well your fires and, too, your lights

So nothing burns down tonight.

Praise be God the Lord!

(Sachs, who has overheard Eva and Walther's conversation from behind the door of his shop, now opens the door a little more and shades his light.)

SACHS: Wicked goings-on I observe.

Is an abduction in the works?

Mark it well! This must not be.

WALTHER: *(from behind the linden tree)*

What if she stays here? Woe is me!

(Eva enters from the house in Magdalene's clothing; his mood changes)

But wait, she's coming? No, not she,

The old maid comes. But is that--? Yes!

EVA: *(sees Walther, hurries to him and throws herself light-heartedly on his breast)*

This foolish child's upon your breast.

WALTHER: Thank heaven! Now I realise

That I have won the Master prize.

EVA: Let's not dilly-dally!

Escape through the alley!

Oh, were we long away!

WALTHER: Here, through the alley!

And once we get past the gate,

Horse and servants wait.

(As the two of them turn to go into the alley, Sachs places his lamp behind a glass water bowl and lets a harsh stream of light falls over the street through the now fully opened shop door, so that Eva and Walther suddenly find themselves brightly illuminated.)

EVA: *(sound of the Night Watchman's horn in the distance; Eva pulls Walther back)*

Oh no! The cobbler! If he should see!

Duck down. Go and hide behind the tree!

WALTHER: What other exit can we find?

EVA: There on the street side, but that road winds.

I don't know it well and there we'd be seen

By the watchman.

WALTHER: The alley it is, then.

EVA: The cobbler must first his window leave.

WALTHER: To leave it I will convince him.

EVA: No! Stay away! He knows you.

WALTHER: The cobbler?

EVA: It's Sachs.

WALTHER: Hans Sachs? My friend!

EVA: Not true!

About you he spoke wickedest gossip!

Act II, Scene 6

Beckmesser creeps up the alley following behind the Night Watchman at some distance. He peers up at one of Pogner's windows and, leaning on Sachs's house, begins to tune his lute.

WALTHER: Who, Sachs? Him, too?
I'll knock off his block!

EVA: *(restraining Walther)*
Best not!
What's that?

WALTHER: That's a lute we hear.

(Sachs, upon hearing the first note of the lute, is struck by a new idea. He brings the light in again and quietly opens the lower half of the shop door)

EVA: Oh, woe is me!

WALTHER: What do you fear?
The cobbler, look, took in his light, so let us dare!

EVA: No! Do you not see?
Another man is standing there.

(Unnoticed, Sachs has placed his work table in the doorway. Now he listens to Eva.)

WALTHER: I see a man who tunes his lute.
But why's he here so late at night?

EVA: It's Beckmesser. Oh!

SACHS: Aha! I'm right.

WALTHER: The scorer? Him? Here, in my control?
To arms! I'll knock that lout out cold!

EVA: Dear God! Pipe down! Or would you wake my father?

He'll sing one song then go away.
Let's hide here in the shrubs together!
I've had such trouble with men today!

(She pulls Walther behind the shrubs that surround the bench under the linden tree. Beckmesser, peering inquisitively at the window, plucks impatiently at his lute. When he's finally prepared to sing, Sachs pounds loudly with the hammer on the shoe last and lets his light shine brightly again onto the street.)

SACHS: *(very loudly)*

Blimey! Blimey!
Hallohallohe!

(Beckmesser jumps angrily up from his stone seat and becomes aware of Sachs at work.)

Oho! Tralalei! Tralalei! Ohe!

BECKMESSER: He'll do me in! This awful din!
What's wrong with that vulgarian?

SACHS: When Eva, banished by our Lord,
From Paradise had trodden,
Her feet were cut by pebbles hard
Because they were unshodden.
The Lord took pity since
Her feet were dear to him.
He told his angel what to do:
"Go make that poor, dear sinner shoes!"

WALTHER: *(whispering to Eva)*

What is that song? Why use your name?

EVA: *(whispering to Walther)*

The Eve he means is not the same.
Yet there is mischief in his tune.

SACHS: "And Adam, too, for, as I know,
On rocks and stones he stubs his toe.
So he can slog
Through woods and bogs,
Measure him for boots and clogs!"

WALTHER: Why hesitate?
It's time to go!

BECKMESSER: (*approaches Sachs*)
You, Master, up? At this hour late?

SACHS: My good town clerk! You still wake?
Your shoes cause you such pain and sorrow?
I'm fixing them now. Come by tomorrow!

(*he works*)

BECKMESSER: (*angrily*)
To the devil with shoes!

SACHS: Blimey!

BECKMESSER: I'm not amused!

SACHS: Hallohallohe!
Oho! Tralalei! Tralalei! Ohe!
Oh, Eva, Eva, wicked girl,
Let this be on your conscience:
Now all the feet of all the world
By angels must be shodden!

WALTHER: (*as before*)
Us, or 'tis the scorer he plays for a fool?

EVA: (*as before*)
All three of us. You see? He's cruel.
Oh dear, his verse! A bad, bad omen.

WALTHER: Be brave, my angel. It's just a poem!

SACHS: If you had just stayed put,
No stone'd have hurt your foot.

EVA: That song's sorrowful.

WALTHER: What can you mean?
You're at my side! Oh lovely dream!

(pulls Eva tenderly to him)

SACHS: 'Cause of your misdeed, newly wrought,
I ply my trade with thread and awl,
'Cause Adam sinned and fell so far,
I sole the shoes with pitch black tar!
You see, I sing angelically.
If not, I'd a devil be!
Bli--

BECKMESSER: *(bears down menacingly on Sachs)*
Stop that right now! Is this a game?
Can you not tell night from day?

SACHS: I like to sing. You like the same.
The shoes must all be done by tomorrow.

BECKMESSER: So close your shop and work silently!

SACHS: To work at night is such a sorrow.
If I'm to find some inner peace
I'll need fresh air and fresh, happy songs.
Now hear how the third verse goes along!

(polishing the thread very obviously)

Blimey! Blimey!
Hallohallohe!
Oho! Tralalei! Tralalei! Ohe!

BECKMESSER: He'll drive me bonkers,
That vulgar cobbler!

(plugs his ears and paces in despair up and down the alley in front of the window)

Those screams, she'll think that they come from me!

SACHS: Oh, Eva, hear, for goodness' sakes,

My cries and lamentations!
The artwork a shoemaker makes
Gets stepped on by all nations!
Did angels not console
Those destined shoes to sole,
Or call us up to Paradise,
I'd leave shoemaking in a trice!
But when I'm safe in heaven's keep
The world will lie beneath my feet:
A blissful view
For Sachs the shoe-
Maker and the poet, too!

EVA: *(very upset)*
That song pains me! I don't know why.
Oh, come! Let us flee now!

(Beckmesser peers at the window, which now opens softly and at which Magdalene, dressed as Eva, appears)

WALTHER: *(his temper flaring)*
So then, by the sword!

EVA: No, don't! Oh stop!

WALTHER: *(takes his hand off his sword)*
He's best ignored.

EVA: Yes, patience is best! Oh, dearest man!
What a tough spot I've put you in!

WALTHER: *(softly to Eva)*
Who's at the window?

EVA: *(softly)*
It's Magdalene.

WALTHER: Now that's very funny. You've turned the tables.

EVA: Let's flee and end this longing and waiting!

WALTHER: I wish that he'd start to serenade her.

(Walther and Eva sit leaning against each other on the bench. They follow the exchange between Sachs and Beckmesser with increasing interest.)

BECKMESSER: The window is open! Dear God! She's neigh!
All's lost lest he stop his singing absurd!

(Beckmesser approaches Sachs's shop and plucks at his lute during the following, with his back to the alley, tilting the lute so he can keep an eye on Magdalene in the window)

Friend Sachs, with you I'd like a word!
You seem to have a shoe obsession!
As for my new shoes, just forget them.
As shoemaker, you're quite a prize.
As artist-friend, esteemed most high.

(plucks at the lute, tilts it again toward the window)

Your judgement, friend, is sound and strong
So would you judge my little song?
I aim to win tomorrow's contest
So I want your opinion honest.

SACHS: Aha! So you can dupe and con me
And take out more aggression on me?
When I leave shoes and take up rhymes,
How badly my shoemaking declines!
They flop around!
The soles are unsound!
So I'll leave poetry
And, very sensibly,
Leave all my brains and wits at home, too,
And for tomorrow make your new shoes!

BECKMESSER: *(grovelling)*
Oh, let that go! I meant it in jest.
Instead, hear what troubles my breast.
In town you're honoured high
And by Pogner's girl much admired.

I want most in the world
To win tomorrows contest
But I've no chance, be honest,
If my song can't please the girl!
So listen quietly.
When I'm done, tell me please
What you liked and what's wrong
So I might fix my song!

SACHS: Oh, go and leave me be!
Do I deserve this flattery?
Just street songs are all my compositions:
In streets I shall sing them
And pound out the rhythm!
Blimey! Blimey!
Hallohallohe!
Oho! Tralalei! Tralalei! Ohe!

BECKMESSER: That blasted man! He will drive me barmy,
Belting out songs of shoes and tarring!
Shut up! You'll wake the neighbours there!

SACHS: They're used to it. No one will care.
Oh, Eva, Eva!

BECKMESSER: *(erupting in a rage)*
You're a craven man and wicked!
You've gotten on my one last nerve!
If you don't shut up this minute,
I swear you'll get what you deserve!

(angrily plucks the lute)

Envious, that's all you are,
Although you think that you're so smart.
When someone else succeeds you must attack him.
See how I know you forward and backward?
That you've not been voted scorer to date,
That's what makes the bile-filled cobbler rage.
Well then! As long as Beckmesser lives
And as long as rhymes still cling to his lips,

As long as I still a Master remain,
Though Nuremberg thrive and wax,
I swear this to Hans Sachs:
Never will he the scorer be named.

(plucks the lute in a rage)

SACHS: *(who had listened calmly and attentively to him)*
Was that your song?

BECKMESSER: I've had it, Sachs!

SACHS: It broke some rules but it had pizzaz.

BECKMESSER: Will you not listen?

SACHS: By God above us, sing on: I'll fasten the soles and uppers.

BECKMESSER: But silently?

SACHS: Well, you sing on;
My work will help you with your song.

BECKMESSER: All that blasted banging, surely you'll end it?

SACHS: Then how could I sole your shoe and mend it?

BECKMESSER: What? You'll still hammer when I start wooing?

SACHS: You'll sing your song, I shall do my shoeing.

BECKMESSER: But I don't want shoes!

SACHS: You'll say that now
Then in song school hold it against me somehow.
But wait! There's one solution left.
In concert do men get on best.
I still must fix these shoes--how boring--
But I would learn the art of song scoring.
No equal have you in the school.
How could I learn if not from you?

So sing your song; I'll hear and score
And carry on, too, with my chore.

BECKMESSER: Then score away and when in my song
There's a mistake, just chalk-mark me wrong.

SACHS: With chalk, the shoes I could work no more.
With my hammer on the shoe last I will keep score.

BECKMESSER: Malicious plotting! God, it's so late!
She'll close up her window and go away!

(plucks the lute eagerly)

SACHS: Let's begin, and quick or I'll start to sing!

BECKMESSER: Don't you dare! It's maddening!
(Blast it! How frustrating!)
If you are so of scoring enamored,
Alright then, score with your last and with your hammer!
But you must abide strictly by the rules.
Don't mark off things I'm permitted to do.

SACHS: By the rules, then, as they are known to me,
A shoemaker who does his work with glee.

BECKMESSER: You give your word?

SACHS: I'd never cheat!

BECKMESSER: Not one demerit: smooth and sweet!

(he withdraws around the corner of the house)

SACHS: Tomorrow, then, you'll have bare feet!

WALTHER: What drama here! It's like a dream:
The song chair I'm still on, it seems.

EVA: *(leaning softly against Walther's breast)*
My brow is troubled. Who can tell

If this is good or it bodes ill?

SACHS: *(indicates the stone seat in front of the shop door; Night Watchman's horn is heard in the very far distance)*

Take this seat here!

BECKMESSER: *(moves to the corner of the house, remains standing)*

I'll take that corner.

SACHS: Why go so far?

BECKMESSER: *(goes back around corner of the house)*

Because the scorer

Must not be seen. School rules apply.

SACHS: I won't hear a word.

BECKMESSER: Though quite refined,

My voice can really raise a din!

(positions himself in the corner across from the window)

SACHS: (How nice!) Alright then! Let's begin!

(Sachs picks up his hammer. His hammer strikes are in response to misplaced syllables and other errors, and are indicated by the accent marks below.)

BECKMESSER: *(tunes his lute in a rage, unaware that he has unscrewed the D-string back down)*

"As dawn of day brought sunshine

To its pleásúres impart,

(Beckmesser shivers at the sound of Sachs's hammer)

'Twas then awakened á fine

(startles violently but continues)

Couráge new in my--"

(looks angrily out from around the corner)

Is this a joke?

Where was I mistaken?

SACHS: Better to make it

"'Twas then awakened

A fine, new courage in my--?"

BECKMESSER: But then how would that rhyme with

"Of day brought sunshine?"

SACHS: To you does the melody not matter?

I think the words should fit the tune.

BECKMESSER: I will not argue. Silence your hammer or I'll get you back!

SACHS: Sing your song through!

BECKMESSER: I'm so confused!

SACHS: Begin then once more.

The first three strikes I shall ignore.

BECKMESSER: *(aside)*

It's better just to ignore his critiques

And hope the maiden they don't mislead!

(playing the lute)

"As dawn of day brought sunshine

To its pleasures impart,

'Twas then awakened a fine

Courage new in my heart.

I do not think of dying,

Rathér, of vying

For a maidén to wed.

Tell me, why should this day most

Beautíful of all be?

(aggravated)

I'll éndeavor now to show
It's bécause of a lady',
Whose béloved Herr father
Has éngaged got her,
I bélieve, in marriáge.

(very aggravated)

Hear ye, all men,
Come ye and ken:
There stands the fair, darlíng maidén
To whom I dare my song to pen.
Therefóre does thé mórning resplend,
As I prévióusly said."

(comes raging around the corner toward Sachs)

Sachs! Look, you'll be my ruin!
Won't you be quiet?

SACHS: Now I'm struck mute!
I marked the errors;
Later we'll chat.
Meanwhile, I've still got soles to attach.

BECKMESSER: *(becomes aware that Magdalene wants to leave the window)*
Has she left? Psst! Psst! Dear God, my plan!
Sachs, I'll remember this, spiteful man.

(turns the corner shaking his fist at Sachs; prepares himself for the second verse)

SACHS: *(holding the hammer above the shoe last)*
Scorer's here still:
Sing at will!

BECKMESSER: *(ever louder and more breathless)*
"This day would my' heart savour,
Courtíng the maiden young,
But see, the maiden's father

Addéd one cónditióñ
On who gets his inheritance
And on who merits
His daughtér's pledge to troth.
An honoured Master worthy,
On his daughtér he dotes.
Simúltanéously', though,
His love of art he'd show:
Alone may the prize winner
In Master Singing
Be hís son-ín-the-law.

(stamps his feet angrily)

Now I use art
So for my part,
Without shamefúl or petty fraud,
Good fortune máy let thé victór,

(Sachs, shaking his head, gives up marking each individual mistake and instead hammers repeatedly to get the key out of the last.)

He whó sings wíth burníng ardóur,
To thé maidén be wed."

SACHS: *(leaning far out of the shop)*
Are you quite finished?

BECKMESSER: *(in terror)*
Why ask me that?

SACHS: *(triumphantly holds out the finished shoes)*
Since the shoes are fixed. I've done my task.
I call this a pair of scorer shoes.
Now hear my little scorer's tune!
With hammer strikes I hit them
Till on the sole was written,
Here plain as day,
All that I say:
Your score inscribed for aye.

Good songs need beats.
 Who rhythm cheats,
 Even a clerk with feather,
 He should be tanned like shoe leather.
 Peace be with you.
 Go in good shoe!
 Your feet will keep the beat
 As you make your retreat!

BECKMESSER: *(has withdrawn to the alley and, leaning against the wall, sings with great effort, breathlessly and hastily, to drown Sachs out, while swinging the lute angrily at him, as Sachs swings the shoes around in the air by their laces. Accent marks here denote poorly placed syllables but there are no accompanying hammer strikes in this verse.)*

"That you may Master call me,
 I will prove it today.
 I am for thé prize longing,
 Am thirsty and hungry'.

(David has opened the shop window behind Beckmesser and peeks out from it)

I call on the nine muses
 To give infusions
 To my poetic call.

The rules I'd never mix up.
 I cán keep time and tune
 But oversights and slip-ups
 Happén to everyone
 When hís mind is distracted
 By wooing protracted
 A young maidén to wed.

A bachelór,
 I steeled my nerve,
 My honour, name and all I'm worth
 To come serénade you in verse
 And hope the prize she wíll confer
 If she my song likéd."

NEIGHBOURS: *(first a few, then more and more, open their windows and look out onto the alley)*

What's screeching there with all its might?

Is this allowed so late at night?

Pipe down out there! It's slumber time.

My! Just hear how that poor donkey cries!

You there! Be quiet! Go away!

Go yowl in some other place!

DAVID: *(becomes aware of Magdalene)*

Gadzooks! Who's he? And who's that maid?

It's Lene there, I see her plain!

Good grief! That man she asked to come by?

One song from him and she casts me aside?

Just wait and you'll see how I'll tan your hide!

(withdraws inside; returns with a cudgel, climbs out of the window and goes after Beck-messer)

The devil take him, that blasted guy!

Act II, Scene 7

MAGDALENE: Good heavens! David! God, what a night!
Oh, stop them! Oh, stop them! To death will they fight!

(During the following, Sachs immediately puts his light out and closes the shop door so that he leaves only a little opening from behind which he can watch the goings-on in the plaza under the linden tree.

Eva and Walther watch the commotion with increasing alarm. Walther wraps Eva in his cloak and pulls her close to him. They hide themselves in the shrubs around the linden so they can hardly be seen.

The Neighbours leave their windows as more and more of them come to the street in their night shirts.

A few Apprentices, then more, enter from all sides. Later, Journeymen enter from all sides wielding cudgels. Finally, Masters and elder Townsfolk enter from all sides.

Beckmesser and David scuffle, disappear into the crowd and quickly reappear Downstage, Beckmesser running away and David holding him back, beating him.)

BECKMESSER: You blasted kid! Will you let go?

DAVID: OK! I'll break your arm with one blow.

NEIGHBOURS: Look there! Let's go! That's quite a brawl!
Come one! Come all! There's an assault!
You there, stand down and clear the way!
If you don't stop, we'll join the fray!

NEIGHBOUR ONE: Oh, look! What is this? You are here, too?

NEIGHBOUR TWO: *(shoving Neighbour One)*
Mind your business! What is it to you?

NEIGHBOUR ONE: *(squaring off with him)*
I know your kind.

NEIGHBOUR TWO: (*shoves him*)

I know yours better!

NEIGHBOUR ONE: How is that?

NEIGHBOUR TWO: (*they come to blows*)

Like this!

SOME NEIGHBOURS: It's the cobblers!

OTHER NEIGHBOURS: No, it's the tailors.

SOME NEIGHBOURS: No, it's the drunkards!

OTHER NEIGHBOURS: No, it's the vagrants!

NEIGHBOURS: (*punching each other*)

Asses! Imbeciles!

I've waited ages!

What'r you afraid of?

That's for the law suit!

Wait till I give you the boot!

Did your wife send you here?

Watch while I kick your rear!

Have you cried uncle yet?

So fight back! That's it!

Take that, you scoundrels!

Just wait, you rascals!

You swindling bastards!

Idiot!

Run on home!

Go away!

You, shut up!

APPRENTICES: Those are the locksmiths, right?

It was those guys started the fight!

No, the blacksmiths started it!

No, those are locksmiths there, I'd bet!

The joiners I see there!

This is the butchers' fight.

Hey look! The coopers have lent a hand!

I see barber-surgeons have joined in the dance!
On it goes! There's quite a shindig here.
Grocers, too, have joined the fray
With barley malt and candy canes,
With pepper, nutmeg and cinnamon,
They smell nice but
They're an embarrassment.
They smell nice but
In fistfights they're all wimps.
Just look! That jerk,
He wears an ugly smirk.
Do you refer to me?
To you refer? Let's see!
More and more join in!
The real fighting begins!
Hey! There she blows!
Right on the nose!
Hey! Take that! Pow!
Laid him flat with that!
No grass will grow under that spot now!

JOURNEYMEN: Hey there! The journeymen come!
The fight is on! Let's get us some!
A free-for-all is underway.
Come, journeymen, join in the fray.
A fight, you say? We're on our way!
It's the tanners! It's the weavers,
Those double-dealers!
I think so, too:
They all swindle you!
Kick their behinds!
Knock them all out!
Look at how the fight is heating up!
There's the butcher Klaus--
I'll point him out.
Tomorrow's Saint John's Day!
Stay out of the house!
Come on!
Hey! Fists are flying!
Tailors with their irons!
Guildsmen, come play!

It's Saint John's Day!
Float like a butterfly,
Sting like a bee!
You there, move on or get hurt!
This plaza is our turf!
Might you be trying to block the path before us?
Make way! We're joining in!
You make way instead!
Girdlers!
Tin smiths!
Glove makers!
Pewter makers!
Candlers!
Move on or you'll get hurt!
This street is our turf!
Never back down!
Knock them all down!
Don't go soft now!
Cloth cutters!
Flax weavers!
Knock them all down!

MASTERS: What's going on? A mass fistfight?
It's spreading far and wide!
Calm down! Go home! Don't hang around
Or thunderbolts on you will hail down!
Run off home! Don't hang around!
Right! Terrific thunderbolts on you'll rain down
If you don't head on home right now!

WOMEN NEIGHBOURS: What's going on? Those boys will play rough!
It seems they're having fisticuffs!
If only Father hadn't joined!
Ah, what a night! My! Just look here!
A noisy fight! It makes a girl take fright!
Hello, you men down there!
Just use your common sense!
Did all of you at once
Decide to throw a punch?
Oh! My man's in the brawl!
Well, I can't see at all!

Have they all lost their minds?
Or have they all drunk too much wine?
Help me! My father! My father,
Oh! They'll strike him dead!
Peter! Just listen up!
God, what a hellish mess!
They can't hear themselves speak!
Their heads and hands are
Bobbing all around!
Franz, get back in the house!
What a rumpus!
What a ruckus!
Hey, listen,
Pour water on those men!
Pour water down on their heads!
Scream! Cry for rescue!
Bloody murder!
Scream! Cry louder!
Help us! Bloody murder!

MAGDALENE: *(screaming)*

Listen now, David,
Won't you let go of him, poor man?
He harmed me not at all
So stop this stupid brawl!
How very sad!
Good God, he's got him still!
My David has gone mad!
Oh, David, look, it's Herr Beckmesser!

POGNER: Good God! Eva! Close up!
I'll go downstairs and see what's what!

WALTHER: *(who had been hiding in the shrubs with Eva, now takes ahold of Eva tightly with his left arm, and with his right hand, draws his sword)*

Now we two can dare
Fight our way through there!

(Pogner, in his nightgown, appears at the upstairs window. Summons Magdalena, who had been wringing her hands in despair, inside and closes the window.)

Walther presses his way Center, swinging his sword, in order to escape with Eva into the alley. Sachs springs with alacrity out of his shop, bounds over to Walther and grabs him by the arm.

At the same time as the Night Watchman's horn sounds, the Women have dumped water from the windows onto the brawling men below. The Men react in panic and alarm to the sound of the horn. Neighbours, Apprentices, Journeymen and Masters flee in all directions and the stage is suddenly empty. House doors are quickly closed and the Women disappear from the windows, which they slam shut.)

POGNER: *(from the steps)*

Hey! Lene! Where are you?

SACHS: *(pushing the half-unconscious Eva up the steps)*

Go in, Mistress Lene!

(Pogner enfolds Eva in his arms and takes her inside. Sachs directs David into the shop with a kick, pulls Walther into the shop behind him and immediately shuts the window. Beckmesser, now freed from David's beating and in a pitiable state, escapes into the crowd and flees.

As soon as the street empties completely and all the houses are shut up, the Night Watchman steps Downstage Left, rubs his eyes, looks around in astonishment. Shakes his head and calls with a soft, trembling voice)

NIGHT WATCHMAN: Hear ye, hear ye, all ye townsfolk:

The clock struck eleven this hour.

Well guard yourselves from ghosts and from ghouls

So no evil comes to steal your souls.

Praise be God the Lord!

(He sounds his horn. The full moon comes out and shines brightly into the alley, through which the Night Watchman exits. As the Night Watchman turns the corner, the Curtain closes quickly, exactly on the last bar of music.)

Act II Curtain

Act III



'Old Nuremberg, a View of the Synagogue from the Pegnitz River'
August Fischer (Danish, 1854–1921)
Artvee

Act III, Scene 1

Sachs's workshop foreground. In the background, a half-open shop door that leads to the street. Stage Left, a door to an interior room. Right, the window with flower pots in front of it that overlooks the alley. Next to that, the work table. Sachs sits in a large armchair at this window, through which bright morning light is shining. He is completely absorbed in reading the large folio on his lap.

David peeks in the door from the street and draws back when he sees Sachs. Then, reassured that Sachs hasn't seen him, he creeps into the workshop, places the basket he brought with him on the work table and examines its contents. He takes flowers and ribbons out of it, roots around and finally finds at the bottom a sausage and a cake. He's about to devour these when he hears Sachs, who still has not noticed him, loudly turn a page.

DAVID: *(startled, hides the food, turns back)*

Here, Master! Yes!

The shoes have been delivered

To Herr Beckmesser's address.

(aside)

I thought that he called me hither?

Now he pretends I'm not here?

That means he's mad at me, I fear!

(very humbly, slowly approaches Sachs)

Ah, Master, won't you forgive?

What apprentice is without sin?

If you knew my Lene, I'm sure

That you would forgive me, and more!

She is so good, so kind to me,

She gazes at me so tenderly.

You box my ears, she strokes my head

And smiles at me sweetly instead.

When I go hungry she brings me meals.

With them she shows me the love she feels.

Last evening when the knight lost his chances,

Lene refused to give me her basket.

That hurt me so! And then I found,
 There under her window hanging 'round,
 A swain who sang and screamed like mad!
 I beat the man! I thrashed him bad!
 Does this deserve a punishment harsh
 When it brought me closer to Lene's heart?
 For Lene just explained the whole thing to me
 And brought ribbons and brought flowers for the feast.

(seized by fear)

Ah, Master! Say one little word!

(aside)

(If only I'd finished the sausages first!)

(Sachs has gone on reading undisturbed. Now he slams the folio closed. David is so shaken by the noise that he unintentionally falls to his knees in front of Sachs. Sachs gazes past David, who looks up at him in terror, into the distance and slowly turns his gaze to the work table.)

SACHS: *(very quietly)*

Flowers and ribbons I observe,
 So fair and youthful they seem.
 But why are they here with me?

DAVID: *(astonished at Sachs's friendliness)*

Well, Master, it's a festival day.
 We deck ourselves out in ribbons gay.

SACHS: It's a wedding feast?

DAVID: Sure, if it is time
 For me to make Lene mine!

SACHS: The bachelor party was last night?

DAVID: *(to himself)*

Bachelor party? He must mean the fight!

(to Sachs)

Forgive me, Master! Forget it, please!
Today, after all, is Saint John's feast!

SACHS: It's Saint John's feast?

DAVID: *(aside)*
Is he deaf now?

(David has gradually risen from kneeling)

SACHS: Know you your verses? Say them aloud!

DAVID: My verses? Yes, through and through.

(aside)

What's this? The master in spirits good?

(loudly and roughly, to the tune of Beckmesser's serenade)

"On Jordan's bank Saint John did stand--"

SACHS: Wha-- What?

DAVID: *(laughing)*
Excuse the mistake.
From last night's adventure my head aches.

(collects himself and begins properly)

"On Jordan's bank Saint John did stand
To baptise all and sundry.
He spied a girl from far-off lands:
From Nuremberg she had come in.
To Jordan's bank she brought her babe
To christen and be baptised.
But once she got back home again
To Nuremberg, she realised:
In German lands, she soon caught on,

The child baptised in the Jordan
Who there was christened John
Here in Nuremberg is called Hans."

(realising, then ardently)

Hans? Hans! Herr Master! Today's your saint name day!
No! How'd I forget? What can I say?
Here! Here, the flowers are for you.
The ribbons and goodies, please take them, too.
Right here, look, Master, cake sweetly frosted!
Would Master not like to try the sausage?

SACHS: *(calm throughout, his posture unchanging)*

No thanks, my boy. They're all for you.
Instead, to the meadow come with me at noon.
With flowers and ribbons dress up fine
As the stately young herald mine!

DAVID: Could I not instead escort the bride?
Master, ah, Master, go wooing! It's time.

SACHS: So you wish for a mistress to serve?

DAVID: I think the house would seem far statelier.

SACHS: Who knows. But time will tell.

DAVID: It's time.

SACHS: Then time must have advised you well?

DAVID: Just so! Rumours of it have been flying.
Herr Beckmesser you'd outsing without trying.
I think that he won't put on airs today.

SACHS: That's likely. Yes, I had thought the same.
Go now and try not to wake the knight.
Come back here when you're dressed up right!

DAVID: *(touched, kisses Sachs's hand)*

He's never like this, thought he is kind!
(I can hardly remember now his strap on my hide!)

(Gathers his things and exits into the chamber. Sachs, folio still on his lap, leans back deep in thought, resting his head on his hand. It seems the conversation with David has not stirred him from his reverie.)

SACHS: Mad, mad, everyone's mad!
Where e'er I curiously
Research in history
I can no cause discover
Why people to the death
Fight with and torment each other.

What crazy uselessness!
It profits none.
It helps no one.
They madly run to
Hunt and be hunted,
Each deaf to his own cries of pain,
Wounding himself time and again,
Believing he feels pleasure!

Who knows the name for this?
It's madness, nothing less.
Without it, nothing happens,
Moves forwards or slips backwards!
If it should rest,
In sleep it finds its strength refreshed.
It wakes again
And then
What man can master it?

How peaceful and old-fashioned,
Content in chore and work,
The heart of old Germania,
Is dear old Nuremberg!

(he looks around himself with happy enthusiasm)

But then one evening late,

To stop a tragic blunder
By young and passionate lovers,
What move could one man make?

While working, a simple cobbler
The thread of madness toggled
And soon the streets were all clogged up
With people getting clobbered!
Man, woman, even child
Fought one and all with fury wild.
When madness wins a vict'ry
Then blows must rain down thickly
With beatings, cuts and thrashes
Till rage has burned to ashes.

God knows how this occurred.
Did goblins do the work?
A lightening bug had lost his wife--
That must be what set off the fight.
The lilac 'twas on Saint John's eve!
But now we've come to Saint John's feast!
So let's see what Hans Sachs will do
To make the madness dance his tune
And do a nobler deed,
So it will let us be.

Right here in Nuremberg
Let madness do the work
That's only be done by means uncommon
And must be by means mad accomplished.

Act III, Scene 2

Walther enters through the chamber door. He remains there for a moment and looks at Sachs, who has let the folio slip to the floor.

SACHS: Good sir, good morning!
How was your rest?
Up late last night? Enough you've slept?

WALTHER: *(very calm)*
Too little, but my rest was deep.

SACHS: So is your mood bright as can be?

WALTHER: *(still very calm)*
I had an exquisite dream last night.

SACHS: An omen good. Say how it went!

WALTHER: What if it fades out when I try?
I hardly dare to conjure it.

SACHS: My friend! But it's a poet's work
To note his dreams and them observe.
You see, men's truths most mad, most clear,
Their dreams alone to them reveal.
All verses and all poetry
Are nought but dream interpreting.
I bet your dream explained the way
To win your Mastership today.

WALTHER: *(very calm)*
No. 'Twas not guilds nor Masters either
That last night's dream in me inspired.

SACHS: It gave you magic words to say
To win the girl in contest?

WALTHER: *(more actively)*

How could you think, after I failed,
There's hope of that? Be honest!

SACHS: I will not stop myself from hoping.
My hope was never at issue.
Had it been, I'd not have stopped your elopement
But instead would have run off with you!
I beg you, let your grievance go!
You deal with men of honour, you know.
Mistakes they make, and ask but for
All men to take them just as they are.
Who donates and who awards a prize
Expects to give it to someone he likes.
Your song made them all uncomfortable,
And rightly were these men appalled:
A song of such poetic ardour
Portends the seduction of those men's daughters.
Now, for wedded bliss and love that's true
Much different words and notes are used.

WALTHER: (*smiling*)
I learned those words, too, just last night.
Out in the alley they caused quite a fight.

SACHS: (*laughing*)
Ha ha! Well said! Their funny beat
You heard as well! But that can wait.
Instead take my counsel, and that goes:
Take heart and a Master song compose!

WALTHER: A lovely song, a Master tune,
What difference is there twixt the two?

SACHS: (*tender*)
My friend, in happy, youthful hours
When driven by our passions,
When love is all that matters,
And young men's breasts swell high and proud,
Young men will be successful
At singing lovely songs well,
For spring has sung for them.

Come summer, fall and wintertime
With worry, care and sadness,
Along with wedded gladness,
Children and business, bitter fights,
He who can then be successful
At singing lovely songs well,
A Master is that man!

WALTHER: *(tenderly and eagerly rising)*

I love a girl and I desire
To take her ever as my wife.

SACHS: The Master song rules are designed to
Ever so faithfully help guide you.
They'll help you guard and shelter
All that your youthful breast held.
What passion-driven
Love and springtime
Silently in your heart have placed,
Will be yours to keep for aye!

WALTHER: Why have the rules such high prestige?
Who was it who invented these?

SACHS: It was some poor, tormented Masters
Who were oppressed by life's disasters.
They found in suffering, wisdom
And they called forth a vision
From what was left of
Their joyful, young love.
Through memory so clear and strong,
They kept the springtime in their song.

WALTHER: But he whom spring long since abandoned,
How does he this vision imagine?

SACHS: By brushing up as best he can,
As, too, must I, a poor old man.
You wish to learn what the rules are?
Make up your own in a new song!

Look, here's the ink pot, paper and quill.
I shall record. Dictate at will!

WALTHER: I would not know where to begin.

SACHS: Just tell me of your morning dream.

WALTHER: Amid your master class I fear
My dream has all but disappeared.

SACHS: So take your poet's art in hand.
Through it may lost things be found again.

WALTHER: 'Twas not a dream, 'twas poetry?

SACHS: They're friends, those two, inseparably.

WALTHER: How should I by the rules begin?

SACHS: Invent your own and follow them.
Just be your lovely dream aware of
And all else will Hans Sachs take care of.

(Walther positions himself near Sachs's work table, where Sachs writes down what he sings)

WALTHER: "Morning light glowed with a rosy pink gleam
And blossoms fair
Perfumed the air.
There, full of wonders
Undiscovered,
A garden beckoned me
Its guest to be."

SACHS: That was a "stanza." Now do your best
To make one just like it follow next.

WALTHER: Why just alike?

SACHS: To dramatize two peas in a pod, like man and wife.

WALTHER: "Gracefully towering over the green,
Its golden fruit
With healing juice,
On branches blazed with
Bright temptation,
A gently perfumed tree
Offered to me."

SACHS: You ended on a different pitch.
That would the Masters vex.
E'en so, Hans Sachs will learn from this.
In spring, that ending is best.
Now sing for me an "after song!"

WALTHER: And what is that?

SACHS: If you're not wrong
And you have married wisely,
That shows up in your child.
Resembling verses, yet its own,
With its own rhymes and its own tones,
A well-formed, self-sufficient thing,
Of parents proud it's their offspring.
It closes your two verses out
So no loose ends will hang about.

WALTHER: "So I'll confide the miracle that came to me:
Beside me stood a lovely girl
Whose beauty ne'er the like I'd seen.
Just like a bride
She rested her soft hand on mine.
Her bright eyes flashing,
Her hand then grasped it,
The thing I'd wanted so long,
The golden fruit that's from
The Tree of Life."

SACHS: Now that's what I call an after-song!
That is the way to finish strong,
Though with the melody
You were a little free.

But I won't say that should an error be.
It's only hard to remember.
That will rile our guild members.

And now for me create a second part
So as to set your first one apart.
I still can't tell from your expert rhyme scheme
Which parts you made up and which you dreamed.

WALTHER: "Evening light glowed with a heavenly shine.
Day drifted out
As I lay down.
Then a desire
To drink nectar delightful
From her eyes
Made me arise.

Nighttime's dark blanket diminished my sight.
So far yet near
I saw them clear:
Two stars were shimmering
In the distance.
Thought branches slim, their light
Fell on my eyes.

Gently, a stream on distant heights whispered to me.
And as it rose,
So sweet a note
As I'd ne'er heard came through the trees.
Vivid stars gleamed.
How brightly the starlight there shone!
In stellar dances
They flocked to branches,
The golden, shimmering throng.
Not fruit, but stars shone on
The laurel tree."

SACHS: *(very touched)*
Friend, last night's dream has spoken true.
Your second part has succeeded, too.
Should you venture a third part to proffer,

Your dream's true meaning that part would offer.

WALTHER: *(stands quickly)*

I'd find that where?

Enough of words!

SACHS: *(also stands quickly and walks to Walther with friendly determination)*

Then, deed and rhyme at the right time!

I beg you, memorize the music.

It's well matched to the poetry.

When you sing it before the public

Hold tightly on to your vision, please.

WALTHER: What do you plan?

SACHS: Your servant true

Has brought your trunks and bags to you.

The clothes that for your wedding feast

Back home you'd have impressed in,

He brought me here for you to dress in.

A little bird showed him the nest

Wherein his master dreamed.

So join me in my chamber there.

Put on your splendid things.

Now we both our very best must wear

If we're to venture and to gain.

Come with me if you want the same.

(Walther shakes Sachs's hand and Sachs leads him with firm, calm steps to the chamber. He opens the door for Walther and follows him into the room.)

Beckmesser appears outside the shop and in a state of great agitation peeks inside. Finding the workshop empty, he enters it quickly.)

Act III, Scene 3

Beckmesser is all dressed up but in pitiable condition. He looks through the doors again and around the workshop. Then he limps downstage, cringes and rubs his back. He takes a few more steps, bends his knees and rubs them. He sits on the shoemaking stool but jumps up again in pain. He looks at the shoe last, a still painful memory. He suffers morosely through his memories and imaginings. His anxiety increasing, he wipes sweat from his brow. He limps around ever more actively until he stops, startled. As if he were being chased from all sides, he stumbles all around. As if to keep himself from sinking, he holds onto the worktable and stares. Faint and in despair he looks around. His eye finally falls on Pogner's house, visible through the window. As if being attacked by Sir Walther, Beckmesser tries to stab his imaginary foe in the chest. Angry thoughts arise throughout, which he attempts to fight off with self-pity. He's overcome by jealousy. He hits himself on the head. He believes he hears women and children mocking him from the alley, turns angrily and slams the window shut. Very discombobulated, he turns mechanically to the work table, while he broodingly seems to be looking for a new melody. His eye falls on the paper with Sachs's writing. He takes it up curiously, looks it over with growing turmoil and then erupts in fury.

BECKMESSER: A wooing song by Sachs I see?
Ha! Now it is clear to me!

(He hears the chamber door open and hurriedly stuffs the paper into his pocket. Sachs enters in festive garb and observes Beckmesser.)

SACHS: Town Clerk!
Good morning! Back so early?
But surely your shoes are not still hurting!

BECKMESSER: Damnation! With such thin soles I've ne'er been shod.
Each pebble I feel through these shoes!

SACHS: I stretched them to my scoring tune.
My scoring hammer made them so soft.

BECKMESSER: Enough of jokes! You can drop this ruse!
I see, Friend Sachs, your subterfuge!
Last night's amusing game
Could blacken your good name.

Just so I out of your way would be
You caused a riot and mutiny!

SACHS: A bachelor party, and without equal!
Your proposal frightened a lot of people.
The rowdier the party is,
The greater your wedded bliss.

BECKMESSER: (*angry*)
Shoemaker full of mischief,
You low-down dirty trickster!
My foe you've always been!
How clearly this I've seen.

The one whom I selected
Was born for me to wed her.
To every widower's shame,
You tried the maid to claim.

So Herr Hans Sachs could romance
The goldsmith's rich inheritance
He in the Masters' hall
Insisted on a clause,
A young girl just to mix-up
With woes just he could fix up:
She'd scorn all other men
And turn only to him.
That's why! That's why!
So dumb was I?

With hammering and loud shouts
He schemed to drown my song out
So that the girl won't know
That she has another beau.
Just so! Ho ho!
Was that your goal?

And from his little shoe shop
He sent his little brute squad
Well armed with clubs and fists
So of me he'd be rid!

Ooh, ooh! Ooh, ooh!
So black and blue,
And shamed before the maiden, too!
So clobbered and so pummelled
That back home I barely stumbled!

Scarcely still breathing
I had to flee them!
Yes, I made a getaway
But you I shall repay.
Today when I get rolling,
Ask for whom bells are tolling!
I'm badly bruised
And not amused.
You I will make sing another tune.

SACHS: Good friend, you are in quite a state!
Of me believe just what you may.
All of your jealousy aside,
To woo I have no plan in mind.

BECKMESSER: Brazen lie!
But I know better!

SACHS: What do you assume, Master Beckmesser?
What I have in mind's not your concern
But know, about wooing you've got it wrong.

BECKMESSER: This morning's meet?

SACHS: I won't enter.

BECKMESSER: No wooing song?

SACHS: No, not today!

BECKMESSER: But what if I've proof that you intend to?

SACHS: *(looks at the work table)*
Where's the poem? Could you have tucked it away?

BECKMESSER: *(producing the page)*

Would this be your hand?

SACHS: Yes. Is that it?

BECKMESSER: The writing still fresh?

SACHS: And still wet is the ink?

BECKMESSER: Is this, then, a biblical song?

SACHS: Who thought it was would be quite wrong.

BECKMESSER: So then?

SACHS: So what?

BECKMESSER: You ask?

SACHS: I must.

BECKMESSER: So you're, if I may frankly speak,
A miscreant, a scoundrel, a cheat.

SACHS: Maybe, but I've never pocketed
Things found on other people's desks.
And just so no one will think of you worse,
You may keep the page. I gift you the verse.

BECKMESSER: *(jumping up in joyful shock)*
Good God! Keep the verse? Keep a verse by Sachs?
But wait. There could be some more sneak attacks!
You've memorized very well the verse?

SACHS: On that account please be undeterred!

BECKMESSER: You'll give me the page?

SACHS: So you're not a thief.

BECKMESSER: And it I may use?

SACHS: Just as you please.

BECKMESSER: May I sing the song?

SACHS: Yes, if you can.

BECKMESSER: If I please the crowd?

SACHS: Astonished I'd be then.

BECKMESSER: *(very friendly)*
Again you are being far too modest.

(almost whistling)

A song by Sachs will be nearly flawless!
Just look at the state I'm in:
A poor and wretched thing
With memories so painful
Of last night's serenade,
Thanks to your merry caper
That sent Pogner's daughter away.

And how am I now to dream up
A new song on a dime?
How could I, all bruised and all beat up,
The wherewithal for that find?
Wooing and also wedlock,
That holy gift from God,
I will be forced to give up
Without a brand new song.

A song by you, with it I've no doubt
I'd crush all obstacles in a rout.
If I may really have it,
Let's bury the hatchet,
Forget discord and strife
And all that us divides!

(gives the page a sidelong glance then suddenly furrows his brow)

And yet! This could be a trap he's set!
Last evening you were my foe.
Why would, after you caused such offense,
You friendship now to me show?

SACHS: I stayed up late to mend your shoes.
Is that something that a foe would do?

BECKMESSER: Quite right! Just so! But one thing swear:
If by chance you the song should hear,
This one thing you never will do:
That's say that the song was composed by you.

SACHS: I swear it and I ne'er will boast
Or speak of this as a song that I wrote.

BECKMESSER: (*jovially rubbing his hands together*)
I'd ask no more! I've found salvation!
Thusly end Beckmesser's woe and vexation.

SACHS: But, friend, you should proceed with caution.
Take my advice and practice often.
Please study well the song;
It's not an easy one.
Make sure the tone is not wrong,
The melody's well done.

BECKMESSER: Friend Sachs, I find your poems good enough
But where notes and tones are concerned, 'fess up,
I'm second to no one.
You'll hear them, when I'm done,
Cry, "Beckmesser!
No one better!"
Of that, friend, rest assured,
If you let me sing undisturbed.

To memorize quick,
I'll hurry home.
Though time runs out swift,
I'll get the job done.

Hans Sachs, my dear friend,
Misjudge you I did.
By that rogue patrician
I was misled:

(speaking very confidentially)

His kind's the last thing we need!
Well of him we Masters are free!

All common sense has
Run off and left me!
Am I so dazed?
I feel half crazed.
The meter, the rhyme schemes,
The words and the stanzas!
I'm frozen here, it seems,
Though run off I'd planned to.

Ta-ta and ciao ciao!
I'll tell you how
I'll thank you gratefully
For all you did for me:
My vote you shall receive.
I shall buy goods from you
And make you scorer, too!
Score soft with chalk, though, do,
Instead of banging through!
Scorer! Scorer! Scorer Hans Sachs!
May Nuremberg's footwear e'er thrive and wax!

(Dancing, he takes his leave of Sachs, blusters and stumbles to the shop door. Suddenly thinks he forgot to put the poem in his pocket and runs anxiously back to the work table, where he finds the poem already in his hand. Jovially pleased, he embraces Sachs with fervent gratitude and tumbles, limping and floundering, out the shop door. Sachs watches Beckmesser thoughtfully, smiling to himself.)

SACHS: One so wicked I never have met.
Forever he cannot hold out.
So many squander their brains and wits,
Keep just enough to keep house.

The hour of reckoning comes to each one.
He'll look so dumb he'll have to see reason.
That our Herr Beckmesser is a thief
Only will help my plan succeed.

(Eva approaches the shop door from the street; Sachs turns to Eva.)

It's Evchen! Where, I thought, could she be!

Act III, Scene 4

Eva, richly dressed in a stunning white gown and looking somewhat distressed and pale, enters the shop and walks slowly inside.

SACHS: Hello, dear Evchen! My, how noble
And fine you look today!
At you the old and young will marvel.
You'll take their breath away.

EVA: Master, I doubt that's a danger.
But since the tailor is smart
None can see that it's so painful
Here, where my shoe still hurts.

SACHS: The wicked shoe! But I must say,
You did choose not to try it on.

EVA: Just so. You see, I placed my faith
In Masters, and in that I was wrong.

SACHS: Apologies! Let's see, my dear,
If I can make a quick repair.

EVA: I try to walk, it slips right off.
I stand my ground, it slides around.

SACHS: Here on my stool set your foot.
The trouble in its place I'll put.

(she sets her foot on the stool at the work table)

Tell me what's wrong.

EVA: You see? Too wide!

SACHS: Child, that's but vanity and pride.
The shoe is tight.

EVA: I told you so!
It pinches me on my little toe.

SACHS: Here, left?

EVA: No, right.

SACHS: More at the arch?

EVA: The heel piece, more like.

SACHS: That also smarts?

EVA: Ah, Master, you should know better than I
Where my shoes still pinch.

SACHS: Well, I'm surprised
That they're too wide
And yet pinch everywhere!

(Walther in splendid knightly garb enters from the chamber door)

EVA: *(lets out a cry and fixes her eyes on Walther without moving from her spot, foot still on the stool)*
Ah!

SACHS: Aha! I see. All the trouble was there.
Child, you were right. I'll fix the stitch.

(Sachs, who's bent over in front of her, remains with his back to the door without having seen Walther's entrance. Walther, spellbound by Eva's gaze, stays similarly fixed in place at the door.)

Just wait here. The trouble I'll soon fix.
You can stay put. I'll take off your shoe
To stretch on the shoe last. I'll bring it back soon.

(Sachs has gently taken the shoe off Eva's foot. She remains in the same spot as he goes to the work table and busies himself with the shoe, seemingly oblivious to everything else.)

Shoes and shoeing, that's my lot in life.
It's all I do all day and all night.
Child, I say, I've given it some thought.
I'll bring my shoeing days to a halt.
The best thing would be to woo you and wed.
As a poet, then, how my renown would spread!

Not listening, eh? What have I said?
'Twas you who put the plan in my head.
Alright. I see. "Just make your shoes!"
Sing me at least a nice song as I do!
Today I heard a lovely song.
But who will it a third verse now add on?

WALTHER: "Did the stars linger and dance with delight?
So clean they shone!
Upon the crown
Of waving hair of
The woman fairest,
They laid of soft starlight
A garland bright."

SACHS: *(still working)*
Hear, child. That is a Master song.

WALTHER: "Wonder of wonders, appeared then a sight
Like day two-fold
I did behold,
Like two suns smiling,
Most beguiling,
The loveliest pair of eyes
I ever spied.

SACHS: *(aside to Eva)*
Like these are the songs I'll be singing.

WALTHER: Image of grace,
To dare approach it I presumed.
Th' garland that o'er the two suns shone,

(Sachs has brought the shoe back, ready to slip it onto Eva's foot again)

At once both pallid and in bloom,
Gently she placed
And wound it 'round the head of the groom!
Of grace created,
For fame now fated,
She paradisiacal bliss
Poured in the poet's breast,
In love's true dream."

SACHS: Let's see if I got your shoes all fixed.
At last, I think, I've really succeeded.
Let's try a step! Say, do they still pinch?

(Eva who has been watching and listening motionless, as if enchanted, suddenly bursts into tears, sinks onto Sachs's breast and, sobbing, embraces him. Walther walks over to them and enthusiastically shakes Sachs's hand. A long silence, full of passionate emotion. Sachs finally forces himself to move, peeling himself away so that Eva ends up leaning on Walther's shoulder.)

What shoemaker woe and strife does not court?
If I were not a poet, too,
I would no longer cobble shoes!
It is such a trial and such a chore!
Too wide for this one, for that one, too tight.
The clients rush and crowd from all sides:
These flop,
These slip,
These pinch,
These press.
A cobbler also must be prudent,
Fixing what gets broken or ruined.
And if he is a poet, too,
He will be harassed both at pen and at shoe.
What's worse, if he's a widower
A target he is for the girls.
The youngest maidens, when men run short,
Will beg him to woo them and pay court.
They might get on or else they might not.
It ends the same no matter what:
Of pine tar they'll say he smells

And that he's dumb. Fickle, as well.

My poor apprentice. It's so very sad.
He'll lose everybody's esteem.
That Lene, he's eating out of her hand.
He's all turned around and at sea.
Now where in the hell could that boy be?

EVA: *(holding Sachs back and embracing him again)*

Oh, Sachs! My friend! So dear and sweet!
How to reward your noble deed?
What, without your devotion
And your love, would I be?
In childhood I'd be frozen
Had you not woken me.
Through you have I won
What I prize.
Through you have I learned
Courage wise.
Through you, awake,
My thoughts became
So free and bold and true.
You brought me into bloom.

Chide me, dear Master, well you should.
Wed you I would have if I could.
If I had had a choice
Then you I would have chos'n.
I would have, as your wife,
The prize on you bestowed.
But fate does treat me ill,
My torment she ordained.
I wed against my will
If I should wed today.
Should she compel me, force my hand,
E'en you, dear Master, would be sad.

SACHS: My child, of Tristan and Isolde
The sorry tale I know.
Hans Sachs won't take the role of
The good King Mark, poor soul.

Good thing that I the right man found
In time, or else I'd be King Mark now.
Aha! Here comes our Lene down the path.
Do come in! Hey! David! Come greet your lass!

(Magdalene in festive garb enters through the shop door. David, also in festive dress, enters from the interior room at the same time.)

With witnesses and godfather at hand,
Let's quickly baptise! Everyone stand!

(all look at him in bewilderment)

A child this day was born here.
Let's decide what we will call her.
As our Master custom goes,
When any Master melody's new composed
It's baptised and christened with a name
And e'er remembered by the same.
So now, honoured gents, honoured ladies,
This, your task today is.

The new Master song, a thing of beauty,
Is by Sir Walther, who wrote the words and music.
The newborn melody's living father
Asked Eva and me if we'd be the sponsors.
We heard the song when first invented.
Straight to its baptism we two went then.

So for the event we'll have witnesses,
I call Mistress Lene and my apprentice.
But since apprentices can't witness be,
And he sang his verses so expertly,
I make this apprentice a journeyman.
Come kneel down, David, take this from my hand.

(David kneels; Sachs gives him a slap across the face)

Rise, journeyman, and think of that blow.
Remember the christening by it, too.
Perfect it's not, this rite of ours,

But that's how emergency baptisms are.
So the song will have the strength to keep living,
Immediately her name will be given:
"The Song of the Blissful Morn Dream's Meaning"
May she be named, and be prized most keenly.
So she may grow strong in heart and limb
The youngest of godparents sings a hymn.

*(Sachs leaves the middle of the half-circle that had formed around him and stands aside
so Eva can take his place there.)*

EVA: Joyfully and sun-filled
Laughs my happy heart.
Morning full of wonder
Joyfully wakes up!
Dream of such elation,
Heavenly morning bliss,
An interpretation
You I joyfully give!
Any song so nobly wrought
Eases my sweet duty
And the meaning of the song
Yields itself up to me.
Was it just a morning dream?
Joyfully, much more it seems.
What the music
Whispers to me,
May it cry
Loud and bright
To the Masters' circle wide,
For it must mean the highest prize!

MAGDALENE: Wake I or do I dream I do?
It's too much trouble to think through.
Was it just a morning dream?
Yet my eyes I can't believe!
Just like that, a
Journeyman and
I'm his bride?
In chapel we'll be man and wife?
Yes! It's really true! I'll be,

Yes, a Master's wife! Me!

WALTHER: Your true love made lighter my heart's duty,
Brought my heart such sweet success.
You gave meaning to me.
Was it just a morning dream?
Joyfully, much more it seems!
What the music
Whispers to you
Deep inside,
From true love's heights,
Loud and bright
In the Masters' circle wide,
May it vie for the highest prize.

DAVID: Wake I or do I dream I do?
It's too much trouble to think through.
It was just a morning dream,
For my eyes I can't believe.
Just like that, a journeyman and
Lene, bride?
In chapel we'll be man and wife?
In my head plays constantly,
"Soon a Master I'll be!"

SACHS: To the child lovingly
Would I sing sweet music.
But my heart's dear duty sweet
Counsels silence to me.
'Twas a lovely morning dream
But it's destined not to be.
What the music
Whispered to me
So deep inside
Now loudly cries:
Best do young love's blissful sighs
Blossom when by poets prized.

(turning to the others)

Come on, let's go!

(to Eva)

Your father greet!

Out to the field run on fleet feet!

(Eva and Magdalene exit)

(to Walther)

Sir Walther, come! Take heart, be bright!

David, young man, close the shop up tight!

(As Sachs and Walther exit onto the street and David sets about closing up the shop, a curtain is drawn across the proscenium from either side so that the scene is closed off completely. Horns sound from the theatre, loudly and from far off. Trumpets answer, also from the theatre.)

Act III, Scene 5

Curtain opens. The stage is transformed. The setting is now an open meadow. In the far background is the town of Nuremberg. The Pegnitz River winds across the plain. The narrow river becomes practical on stage. Colourfully flagged boats continually arrive, discharging festively dressed members from all the guilds with their wives and children, on the bank.

A raised stage with benches and chairs has been erected Stage Left. It is hung with the banners of the various guilds whose members have already arrived. As the scene opens, more standard bearers from other guilds arrive and place their banners on the Master Singers' stage so that flags surround the stage on three sides.

Tents with all kinds of refreshment border the main playing space. In front of the tents is a great deal of merrymaking. Townsfolk with their wives and children sit in groups. The Master Singers' Apprentices, festively attired and bedecked with flowers and ribbons, bear slender staves, also bedecked with flowers and ribbons, which represent their offices as marshals and heralds, which the Apprentices merrily fulfil. They receive those arriving on the bank, order the procession of guilds and accompany the standard bearers to the Master Singers' stage. After each standard bearer has placed his flag, the guild members and journeymen disperse to the tents.

Among the guilds arriving on the bank, the following are led Downstage:

SHOEMAKERS: *(marching under their banner; tenor drums from the audience)*

Saint Crispin,
We praise him,
A holy man who proved
What shoemakers can do.
The poor folk with him had it good.
He made for them warm shoes.
When no one leather lend him would
He stole some skins to use.
Shoemakers have a sturdy conscience,
Make shoes in spite of foolish nonsense.
When from the tanner we leather fetch
It's stretch, stretch, stretch
Leather skins out from edge to edge.

(Town Pipers, Lute Makers and Toy Instrument Makers follow, playing their instruments. They are succeeded by the Tailors.)

TAILORS: When Nuremberg was laid to siege
And hunger prowld the land,
Destroyed the whole town would have been
Were not a tailor at hand,
A wise and most valiant man.
He sewed for himself a goat skin dress.
On the city wall he'd walk in it.
He'd jump around and caper
In goat disguise, this tailor.
The foes thought it was devil's tricks
And out of there they got the heck
To get far away from the meck-meck-meck!
Me-e-e-e-e-eck! Me-e-e-e-e-eck! Me-e-e-e-e-eck!
That goat was a tailor! Who would suspect?

BAKERS: *(unfurling their banner)*
Hunger pains! Hunger pains!
An awful thing to suffer!
If daily bread we no more did bake
The whole world would keel over.
Bake! Bake! Bake!
Every single day!
Keep hunger pains away!

(The Shoemakers, having planted their banner, greet the approaching Bakers on their way off of the Master Singers' stage. The Tailors plant their banner and retire. A colourful boat carrying Girls in peasant costumes arrives. The Apprentices run to the bank.)

APPRENTICES: Hooray! Hooray! Maidens from Firth!
Town pipers, play so we can flirt!

(Apprentices help the Girls disembark. The dance that follows takes the form of a game in which it appears that the Apprentices want to lead the Girls Downstage while the Journeymen want to carry them away. The Apprentices always pull the Girls back and the dance continues in a merry circle. David comes to the landing and watches with disapproval.)

DAVID: You dance? But say, would the Masters let you?

(Apprentices thumb their noses at him)

No way? Then I'll enjoy myself, too!

(David takes a beautiful young Girl and dances passionately with her. Onlookers laugh with delight.)

APPRENTICES: *(signalling to David)*

David! David! Your Lene looks on!

(David, alarmed, lets the Girl go as the Apprentices form a ring around her. When he doesn't see Lene anywhere David realises he's being teased. He breaks through the circle, grabs the Girl and dances with her even more passionately.)

DAVID: Oh, stop your stupid jokes. Leave me alone!

(The Apprentices try to tear the Girl away from him but he dances away with her so that the game of the Apprentices and the Journeymen is repeated as before.)

JOURNEYMEN AND APPRENTICES: The Master Singers!

(The Apprentices break off their dance and hurry to the bank.)

DAVID: Good God! Goodbye, you charming swingers!

(David gives the Girl a passionate kiss and tears himself away.)

The Apprentices line up to receive the Master Singers. The People gladly make way for them. The Masters form a festive procession on the landing and march Down to take their places on the Master Singers' stage.

Kothner bears their banner, which displays King David with his harp, and is greeted with loud cheers and the waving of hats.

The Masters' procession arrives at the Master Singers' stage where Kothner plants the banner. Pogner leads Eva by the hand. She is accompanied by richly dressed and adorned Girls, among whom is Magdalene.

As the Girls seat Eva in her flower-bedecked place of honour, and the others, Masters on benches, Journeymen standing behind them, have also taken their places, the Apprentices solemnly line up before the Master Singers' stage and face the people.)

APPRENTICES: Be silent now! Be silent now!
Pray keep quiet and make no sound!

(Sachs rises and steps forward. Upon seeing him, the crowd bursts into cheers, waving hats and handkerchiefs.)

PEOPLE: Ha! Sachs! It's Sachs!
Look! Master Sachs!
Let's sing! Let's sing! Let's sing!

ALL: *(Everyone except Sachs sings the following verse. All who have been seated now rise. The men remain bareheaded. Beckmesser has hidden himself behind the other Masters, still trying to memorise the poem, and is not visible to the audience.)*

"Arise! The happy day has come.

I hear singing in yonder grove.

A blissful, happy nightingale,

Her voice resounds through hill and vale.

The night is falling in the west.

The day is dawning in the east.

The red, passionate morning glow

Breaks through the sad and gloomy clouds."

PEOPLE: *(again cheering)*
Hail Sachs! Hail to Hans Sachs!
Hail Nuremberg's treasure Sachs!

SACHS: *(still and gazing into the distance, at last gives the crowd a friendly glance and speaks, his voice trembling with emotion at first, then growing steadier)*

How you go on! I'm overcome.

I don't deserve the honour done.

If I should honour receive,

Let it be through your love for me.

Such honour came to me today

When as the day's spokesman I was named.

And what my speech today will tell

Is full of honour high as well.

He who holds art in high regard
Must prove by all devices
That simply honouring his art
Means more to him than prizes.
A Master rich and principled
Will teach today this lesson:
His dearest thing, his little girl,
And all his worldly treasure
To him who wins the match in song
Before today's assembled throng
He'll offer as the prize.
The winner wins the bride.

So hear me well and all agree:
For poets will this contest be.
You Masters who to try are bold,
I call on you before the folk:
Consider well this rarest prize
And may whoever wins it
Know himself pure and most upright
In courting as in singing
Because the laurel he'll win
Has not, for ancients or for moderns,
E'er been so splendid or so honoured
As is this lovely maiden,
Who never will bewail it
That Nuremberg its highest gift
To art and to its Masters gives!

(Great stirring among the people. Sachs approaches Pogner, who presses his hand, moved.)

POGNER: Oh, Sachs, my friend, a worthy speech!
How well you know why my heart aches!

SACHS: *(to Pogner)*
You've risked a lot but do not fear.

(Beckmesser, to whom Sachs has just turned, has from the beginning of the scene been studying the page with the poem on it, in an attempt to memorise it and read it exactly. He keeps moping sweat from his brow in despair.)

Herr Scorer, you're all set there?

BECKMESSER: Oh! Of the song I can't make sense
Though I'm a vocal eminence.

SACHS: My friend, you are not forced to use it.

BECKMESSER: I must, since my own song has become useless.
It was your fault! So now be so kind,
Don't, shameless, leave me in a bind!

SACHS: I'd think you'd give up.

BECKMESSER: Why is that then?
I'll out-sing all of the other men
If you do not sing.

SACHS: Could be. Let's see.

BECKMESSER: That song, there's no one heads or tales could make.
But I shall trust in your popular acclaim.

SACHS: Well then, if Masters and folks agree,
The song contest will get underway.

KOTHNER: *(stepping forward)*
Ye bachelor Masters, ready your rhymes!
The oldest will be first to sing.
Herr Beckmesser, you begin. It's time!

(The Apprentices escort Beckmesser to a small grassy mound richly decorated with flowers, in front of the Master Singers' stage. Beckmesser stumbles up to it, steps hesitatingly on and totters.)

BECKMESSER: The devil! How wobbly! Come fix this thing!

(The Apprentices laugh among themselves and merrily shore up the mound.)

PEOPLE: *(bursting into laughter)*
What? Him? He'll sing?

I don't think he oughta.
I would not want to be the poor daughter!
Oh, hush! He is a learned Master!
Shush and don't make jokes!
He's on the council and he votes!
Look! The man can't stand up straight!
Ha! So how will he compete?
The town clerk, he's Beckmesser by name.
God, what a clown!
He might fall down!

APPRENTICES: Be silent now! Be silent now!
Pray keep quiet and make no sound!

KOTHNER: Let's begin!

(Beckmesser, who after a great deal of difficulty has steadied himself on the mound, bows first to the Masters, then to the people and then to Eva, who turns away from him. Embarrassed, he turns back and squints at her. Great anxiety seizes him and during the introduction he uses the lute to try and steady his nerves.)

BECKMESSER: "Mornings I glow with a rosy pink gleam
And blood so fair
Perfumes the air.
There Philip wanders
Undercover.
A garden bed, could be,
Ingested me.

(Beckmesser steadies himself on his feet)

PEOPLE: *(to themselves)*
Do you hear? Who is Philip?
Did we hear right? Who wrote this stuff?

MASTERS: *(quietly to themselves)*
My, what is this? Is the man potty?
From where could he all these ideas have gotten?

BECKMESSER: *(secretively takes the page out, peers at it for a second, anxiously tucks it away again)*

"Greatly I tolerate my living room,
Fetch gold and fruit,
Wear heels with boots

(he peeks at the page)

On band shells blazed with
Battle stations,
A gaunt leper or three
All murder me."

(begins to totter badly once again. Tries to read the page but gets dizzy and breaks out in flop sweat.)

MASTERS: What is he saying? Has he gone mad?
His song not one cent of sense has!

PEOPLE: Murderous lepers? That's just what he deserves.
He sure murdered something, the murderer!

BECKMESSER: *(grim and despairing, takes the plunge)*

"So I'm afraid
This here's not good, a shame for me.
By dried peas stood another girl.
She booed me and was likely mean.
Rusty as iron
She grabbed and handcuffed me in twine.
Her white eyes flashing,
Her hound came crashing
As I had warped for so long:
The mouldy fruit that's from
The tree of blight!"

(All roar with laughter. Beckmesser leaves the mound in a rage and storms over to Sachs.)

You damned shoemaker! It's all your fault!
The song, it is not I who wrote.
It's Sachs, whom you all honour high,
Who gave the song to me to try.
He bullied me until he'd hung

Around my neck his awful song.

(stumbles away in a rage; disappears into the crowd)

PEOPLE: My! What did he try? He's left us confounded!
Sachs wrote the song? We'd all be astounded!

KOTHNER: *(to Sachs)*
Explain it, Sachs!

NACHTIGALL: *(to Sachs)*
What a disgrace!

VOGELGESANG: *(to Sachs)*
You wrote the song?

(Sachs has calmly picked up the page Beckmesser threw at him)

ORTEL AND FOLTZ: A curious case!

SACHS: The song, by me? That's not correct.
Herr Beckmesser's wrong in all respects.
Someday he may tell you how he got it
But I'd never dare to boast I wrote it.
That song so lovely and abstract
Is not by Hans Sachs, in fact.

MASTERS: What? That song? All that gibberish?

PEOPLE: Ha! Sachs just mocks.
He's making light of this.

SACHS: I tell you all, the song is good
And it is clear from a glance to conclude
That Friend Beckmesser mixed it up!
I swear it, that the song you'll love
If it's right words and music
Someone would now to you sing.
Who takes up this task, by it will prove
He wrote the song and poem
And that he is a Master, too,

If you're to justly judge him.

I stand accused and must reply
So therefore let my witness testify.
Can anybody for me speak?
Let him bear witness here for me!

(Walther steps out from among the People and greets Sachs, the People and the Masters with pleasant, knightly courtesy. All grow quiet as they take in the sight.)

Bear witness the song is not by me;
Bear witness, too, so all will see
The praise that I gave
Does not exaggerate.

MASTERS: Ha! Sachs, you so-and-so!
But for today we'll let it go.

SACHS: The rulebook's worthiness we demonstrate
When now and then exceptions we make.

PEOPLE: A worthy witness.
I think some good can come of this.

SACHS: Masters and people agree
To consider this man's testimony.
Sir Walther von Stolzing, sing the song!

(gives the page to Kothner to read)

See, Masters, if he gets it wrong.

APPRENTICES: We hold our breath! None make a sound.
We won't bother calling "be silent now!"

(Walther steps firmly onto the little flower-bedecked hill)

WALTHER: "Morning light glowed with a rosy pink gleam
And blossoms fair
Perfumed the air.
There, full of wonders

Undiscovered,
A garden beckoned me.

(At this point Kothner, in a state of great emotion, unwittingly drops page from which he and the other Masters had been reading the poem. He and the others now actively listen to Walther.)

And from a sweet, enchanted grove
With fragrant fruit adorning,
I watched a blissful dream of love
Reveal my highest longing:
A maid it showed me
Both fair and wise:
Eva in Paradise!"

MASTERS: *(quietly whispering)*
Indeed, this is quite a different song
If badly or if well it's done.

PEOPLE: *(quietly whispering)*
That's something else! Now who would have thought
How different is a well sung song!

SACHS: Witness, go on
With the song.

WALTHER: "Evening light blanketed me with the dusk.
The path I trod
Led to a font
So soft and holy,
Purely flowing,
It beckoned laughingly:

There underneath a laurel tree
Beneath the glow of starlight
I watched in waking poet's dream
As, lovely, fair and upright,
She sprinkled precious water drops
On me, the maid,
The muse of Mount Parnass'!

MASTERS: It's strange and daring, that is true,
But nicely rhymed and singable.

PEOPLE: So fair the dream, so fair the tune,
We feel as if we're in it, too!

SACHS: Witness so well spoke',
Carry on and close!

WALTHER: (*very ardently*)
"Glorious day:
I from the poet's dream awake!
That which I dreamed, the Paradise,
In new and heavenly array
Before me lay.

The font showed to me the path, now bathed with light.
She who was born there,
My heart's adored fair,
The garden's loveliest sight,
My muse destined to be,
So holy and so kind,
So boldly wooed by me,
In daylight's brightest sunshine,
Through vict'ry in song became mine
Parnass' and Paradise!"

PEOPLE: We're mesmerised as if we dream.
I hear it but I can't believe!
Crown him, we cry!
Give him the prize!
Who like this man can woo and love songs write!

MASTERS: Yes, gracious singer, you we praise.
Your song wins you the Masters' prize!
Yours the wreath, yours the prize!

POGNER: (*turning to Sachs with great emotion*)
Oh, Sachs! Thank you with all my heart.
Now all my cares are truly gone!

(Walther is led to the Master Singers' stage where he kneels before Eva. Eva bends down and crowns him with a wreath of laurel and myrtle.)

EVA: None like you, dear, can woo and love songs write!

SACHS: My witness, yes, I chose him well.
But toward Hans Sachs bear you ill will?

PEOPLE: *(quickly and jubilantly)*
Hans Sachs, no! That was well arranged,
For you set everything to rights again!

MASTERS: *(turning solemnly to Pogner)*
Stand, Master Pogner! Grant to this
Worthy young noble his Mastership!

POGNER: *(produces a gold chain with three large medallions, then, to Walther)*
King David's pictured here in gold.
I welcome you to the Masters' Guild!

WALTHER: *(refusing with violent intensity)*
Not Master! No!

(looks tenderly at Eva)

The Mastership I will forego!

(All turn to Sachs in stunned silence. Sachs walks to Walther and grips his hand meaningfully.)

SACHS: For me, reject the Masters not.
Instead, revere their art!
For all that which their work has wrought
Has brought joy to your heart.
No, it is not your nobleness,
It's not your horses or your arms
But your poetic gift,
By Masters now confirmed,
'Tis thanks to that, your happiness.
Therefore with thanks remember this
And ask how art could have no worth

When such great prizes it brings forth.

Because our Masters did commit
To cultivate their art
And, through their studies, cherish it,
It they could truly guard.
No longer noble as it was
When courts and princes sang its praise,
In troubled times, it's proved
To German be and true.
E'en if it flourished in no place
But those most troubled and most pained,
You'd see how honoured art still is.
What more could you of Masters wish?

Beware lest evil forces strike
And conquer our Germanic Reich
And under foreign, false command
No prince our people understands.
Then what a mess, what frippery
Would strangers bring to Germany.
What's true and German, none will learn
Lest German Masters it preserve.
Therefore I cry:

Honour your German Masters;
Good sprites will bless you after!
If their endeavours you'll support,
Then, though may fall
The Holy Roman Reich,
For us will thrive
Our holy German art!

(During the closing song that follows, Eva takes the wreath from Walther's head and places it on Sachs's. Sachs takes the gold chain from Pogner's hand and puts it around Walther's neck. After Sachs has embraced the couple, Walther and Eva lean against Sachs, one on either side. Pogner, as if paying homage, kneels before Sachs. The Masters point to Sachs with upraised hands, as if acknowledging him as their leader. All join in the People's song.)

PEOPLE: Honour your German Masters;

Good sprites will bless you after!
If their endeavours you'll support,
Then, though may fall
The Holy Roman Reich,
For us will thrive
Our holy German art!

(As the final phrases are sung the People wave their hats and kerchiefs. The Apprentices dance and clap their hands with joy.)

Hail Sachs!
Nuremberg's dearest Sachs!

Final Curtain