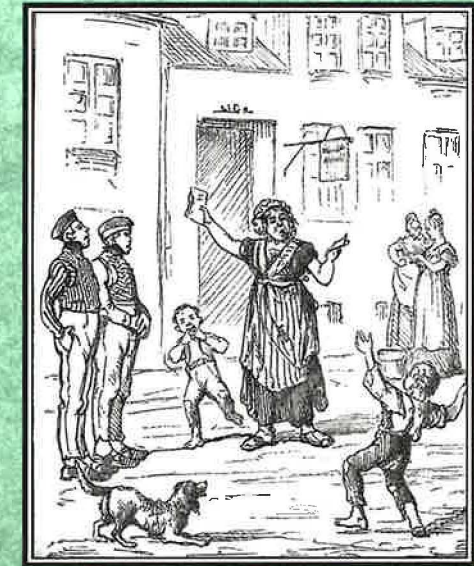


**THE APRIL FOOLS
OR
AN INTRIGUE AT SCHOOL**



**A VAUDEVILLE BY
JOHAN LUDVIG HEIBERG**

**FIRST PERFORMED 22 APRIL 1826
AT THE ROYAL THEATER,
COPENHAGEN, DENMARK.**

**TRANSLATION AND AFTERWORD BY
PETER VINTEN-JOHANSEN
LYRICS ADAPTED TO ORIGINAL MELODIES BY
ANNA VINTEN-BURDAK**

**WITS II, NUMBER 9i
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We thank Peter Levine, Department of History, Michigan State University, for offering constructive suggestions on drafts of the translation and afterword.

THE CHARACTERS

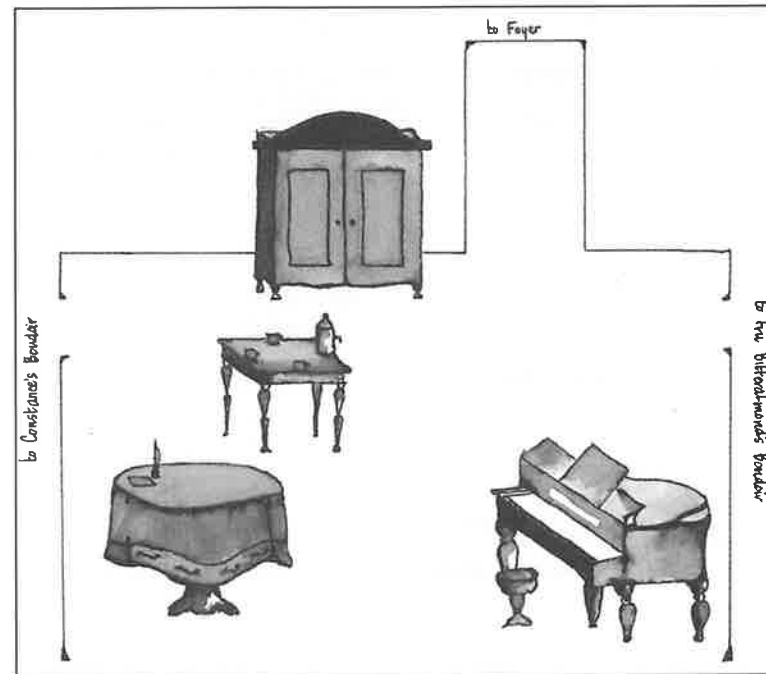
Fru Philipine Bitteralmond	Headmistress in a girls’ institute; a widow
Constance	Fru Bitteralmond’s niece
Hr. Fop	Full-time instructor in the institute
Miss Trumpmeier	Part-time instructor in the institute
Madam Pleasant	Dealer in fruit and wild game
Trine	Pupil and Madam Pleasant’s daughter
Sigfrid Miller	Master cabinetmaker
Sparklemann	Swedish dancing-master and part-time instructor in the institute
Simon	German adventurer (soldier of fortune)
Wavy	Hair stylist
Moisty	Journeyman barber-surgeon
Hans Mortensen	Pupil in a burgher school

- A Madam
- Shopkeeper’s Assistant
- Journeyman Wine Merchant
- Housemaid
- Chorus of servants, girls from the institute, and their families

(The setting is Copenhagen in the mid–1820s.)

STAGING

All scenes occur with one stage setting: the parlor in a finishing school for girls. Stage right, a door leads to Fru Bitteralmond's boudoir; stage left, a door leads to Constance's boudoir. In the foreground, a piano stands to the right, a table with tablecloth and writing materials to the left. Stage rear, a door leads to the foyer; to the left of this door stands a large, free-standing wardrobe. Stage center, a table with a coffeemaker and cups.



THE APRIL FOOLS, OR AN INTRIGUE AT SCHOOL

A VAUDEVILLE BY
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FIRST SCENE

(Fru Bitteralmond, Constance, and Trine are standing in the parlor, which generally doubles as a schoolroom, as servants carry benches through the door at the back of the stage.)

FRU BITTERALMOND (To the servants): That's right! Get 'em all out of here.

CONSTANCE: But Aunt Bitteralmond, why carry the benches out of the parlor?

FRU BITTERALMOND: Because I need a convenient place for the guests to mingle when they arrive, and this room is closest to the foyer. The benches will be in the assembly hall, arranged in rows, so the guests will have something to sit on during the concert. After the concert, the guests will come here again, where they can chat while the servants in the assembly hall bring in tables, re-arrange the benches, and set up a late supper. Then the guests will file back for the meal.

TRINE (Laughing): Will the guests be sitting on school benches during supper?¹

FRU BITTERALMOND: Keep quiet, you impudent girl! More than sixty people are coming tonight. They'll have to sit on the benches. Where would I find chairs for that many people?

CONSTANCE: You've got a point there.

FRU BITTERALMOND: Now where was I? Oh yes! When we've finished eating, the guests will return to the parlor while the servants clear the tables and stack the benches here in the parlor so we have room to dance in the assembly hall.

TRINE: Wonderful! Just Wonderful! How I'm looking forward to the party tonight! I wish every day was Fru Bitteralmond's birthday.

FRU BITTERALMOND: I'll bet you do! Then little Miss Smart Aleck would never have to do any reading or sewing.

TRINE (*With a sigh*): We'd spend all our time dancing.
FRU BITTERALMOND: Just as I thought—and dancing with that despicable, repulsive boy, Hans Mortensen, no less! I wouldn't count on anything of the kind—he's not coming *here* this evening.
TRINE: I really don't like him that much anyway. There'll be other boys coming who are much more interesting than Hans Mortensen.

FRU BITTERALMOND: Keep quiet, Miss Smart Aleck! (*Turning to Constance, and speaking with pompous airs*) I don't wish to listen to her contorted reasoning any longer. She's the most insolent hussy in the school. A single day doesn't pass when I don't regret having accepted her.

TRINE: If Fru Bitteralmond would only say that to my mother, I'm sure she'd be happy to yank me out of your school.

FRU BITTERALMOND: Will you shut up and leave me alone! Out of this room, do you hear me? You're constantly in the way when there are important matters to attend to.

CONSTANCE: Go into my room, Trine; I'll be there in a minute. (*Trine goes into the room to the left. In the meantime, the servants have removed the last of the benches.*)

FRU BITTERALMOND: Well, they appear to have finished moving the benches. But I'd better go to the assembly hall and supervise their placement. Ja! (*with a sigh*) There's so much to be done today. Stay here, Constance, and keep an eye on the door while I'm gone. (*Fru Bitteralmond exits, but in her confused state, walks into her own bedroom instead of the door at the back.*)

SECOND SCENE

CONSTANCE: This school is in total chaos! I just can't fathom why my aunt wants to celebrate her birthday in this manner. She claims that big celebrations are the rule in other institutes and that she must keep up with the times. But every day is like this. Something is always going wrong, and the place is always so noisy and unsettled. Oh, if only I was back in Sorø, that peaceful, little town. There I had my routines, there I was so satisfied with myself and the world. I know if I pester my aunt she'll permit me to return— but then I'd be leaving him, too.

(*For a few moments, Constance is lost in a dreamy reverie. Then she catches herself abruptly.*) Forget such dreams! Why did I, a poor orphan, ever come to Copenhagen? I thought it would be fun to live with my aunt and get to know the big city? What an illusion. All I ever see are lit-

tle girls and constant upheaval; all I ever hear are whining arguments. I much prefer my earlier life with my cousin in quiet, peaceful, little Sorø. I'd leave Copenhagen this minute, except for You idiot, you promised yourself not to think about him any more. Sigfrid is probably not thinking about me, so why should I give him another thought?

THIRD SCENE

(*Constance remains standing, pensively, in the middle of the stage. Hr. Fop enters unnoticed, stage rear, through the door from the parlor. He holds a large bouquet of flowers in one hand, a much smaller bouquet in the other.*)

CONSTANCE: (*Song I*)

1.
Oh flee from Cupid's arrows,
Heed not his glimmering glance!
Each ray is tailing danger,
Betrays my common sense.
Beware! Beware! young maiden,
Turn back his rays of love,
For through the eyes they'll enter
Then steal into your heart.

2.
Oh flee from Cupid's arrows,
Heed not each beg and beseech!
Each word is potent with danger,
Be wary of his speech.
Beware! Beware! young maiden,
Plug up your ears, and now,
For through your ears come stealing,
False pledges, pleas, and vows.

HR. FOP (*Coming closer*): But my beautiful maiden, you would have us all become deaf and dumb.

CONSTANCE: My God! You heard everything!
HR. FOP (*Very affected, searching for the perfect complement that would show off his chivalry and wit*): However, having seen you and

heard you sing (*Kissing three fingers for emphasis*), how could I wish to be either. So, it's my good luck to be neither! Ha! Ha! Ha!

CONSTANCE (*With a sarcastic tone to her voice*): Always the gallant, aren't you!

HR. FOP: Seriously now, please tell me where you learned that song. Hardly in Sorø, I'd venture to say.

CONSTANCE: And why not?

HR. FOP: Well, I would agree that the little town wasn't dropped there from the back of a wagon—they do have people living there who scribble verses for a living.³

CONSTANCE (*Again with sarcasm*): Then you agree, the town has some redeeming features.

HR. FOP: Well, . . . (*Is about to continue the bantering, but catches himself*). But my dearest Constance, all this teasing has made me forget what I came to tell you. (*Composes himself again, then begins to speak in a pompous, pseudo-cultured manner*.) The sun had barely risen above the eastern horizon this morning, when I stood prepared, with my new hat on my head, boots on my feet, and then proceeded to cross the city's moats, in spite of the inclement weather, searching high and low for flora's gifts to bring an offering to the queen of this day's festivities—Ahem, Fru Bitteralmond. I hold it in this hand, patiently waiting for the opportune opportunity to make her a present. This one here, although smaller in size—but equal in beauty—I ask you, dearest Constance, to accept from my hand. For you are constantly in my thoughts, too.

CONSTANCE: But Hr. Fop, it isn't my birthday today.

HR. FOP: Every day that I behold you becomes the birthday of my heart's true feelings and a celebration of the spirit of poetry. For both heart and spirit are, by the sight of you, reborn to a new, a higher life.

CONSTANCE (*Taking the bouquet*): Well I guess it's okay since today is the first of April. I accept these flowers as a friendly spring greeting and attribute your gracious compliments to an April Fools' Day joke.

HR. FOP: For heaven's sake, don't do that! I know I'm full of mischief and a master wit to boot—Ha! Ha! Ha! But all my tomfoolery on the First of April have nothing in common with the beautiful thoughts my Muse gives me whenever I lay eyes on you.

CONSTANCE (*Who's been looking at the bouquet, suddenly exclaims in astonishment*): What's this? A mimosa!

HR. FOP: What's the matter, my dear maiden?

CONSTANCE: It's from him!

HR. FOP: From whom?

CONSTANCE (*Regaining her composure*): I mean, these flowers probably came from Giddygaard's Florist Shop.

HR. FOP (*Amazed*): How did you know that?

CONSTANCE: Because he regularly sells such beautiful mimosa.

HR. FOP: Mosa?

CONSTANCE: Mimosa. That's the name of this plant.

HR. FOP: That one? I thought it was some grass they added to fill out the bouquet.

CONSTANCE: Hardly! Notice what happens when I touch it with my finger—the leaves withdraw. This is a flower with sensation.

HR. FOP: Really? Was that why you were frightened?

CONSTANCE: Oh, no! That was happiness, not fright. This is my favorite flower, I'll have you know.

HR. FOP (*Perceiving another opportunity to be witty*): I get it! You prefer sensational flowers. Ha! Ha! Ha!

CONSTANCE (*Lost in her own thoughts, she doesn't hear Hr. Fop's remark*): Excuse me for a moment while I go to my room and put these beautiful flowers in a vase. (*Constance exits through the door to the left.*)

FOURTH SCENE

HR. FOP: Drat it all! The day's barely begun, but I'm afraid someone has already made an April fool of me. It was stupid to buy the flowers at Giddygaard's shop. He's a good friend of that damnable cabinet maker (*Fop spits on the floor in disgust*), Sigfrid Miller, whom Constance has been eyeing all winter long. What a misfortune! Has Miller already made me an April fool, too? Did he hide a letter in the bouquet? Oh, Damn! Damn! Damn! (*He quickly regains his composure.*) Take it easy, little Fop. Keep a clear head, for the joust is on! I'll give Fru Bitteralmond a full account of my suspicions about the two of them. (*Exits through the door on the right.*)

FIFTH SCENE

(*Trine dashes into the school-room from Constance's room, closely followed by Constance, who has a letter in her hand.*)

CONSTANCE: For heaven's sake, Trine, you can't be serious!

TRINE: Why not? Why shouldn't I tell Fru Bitteralmond what I just saw with my very own eyes?—That in your bouquet of flowers was a letter, and a letter from Sigfrid Møller at that!

CONSTANCE: You're a despicable girl, Trine! (*She pauses.*) If you tell her anything, Trine, you'll make me very unhappy.

TRINE: Now you're humming a different tune. Why didn't you say so at once instead of yelling at me? Why can't you trust me and confide in me more often? You treat me like a child and think you can put me off with stupid explanations—but I'm a lot smarter than you think.

CONSTANCE (*Hugging her*): Dearest Trine, I have treated you unfairly.

TRINE: You're finally making some sense, for a change. From now on, we'll be comrades, and I'd sooner have a finger cut off than betray you. Now please, tell me what's in the letter.

CONSTANCE: Of course We have no secrets from each other now.

TRINE (*Excitedly*): A love letter! A real love letter (*Constance is about to open it.*) Are you crazy? Reading a love letter right in the middle of the school room? You know that Fru Bitteralmond is in a tizzy, constantly running in and out of here. We hardly have a moment to ourselves.

CONSTANCE: You're absolutely correct! (*She puts the letter inside her dress, by her bosom.*) I can't get over how a young girl like you knows more about these things than I do.

TRINE (*Indignant*): Young girl? I'm almost thirteen, and one can have intuitions about love, I'll have you know!

CONSTANCE: Intuitions? Yes, you're quite right, again. Intuitions are also a form of experience.

TRINE: (*Song II*)

1.

There is in heaven a boy so cute,

Trust in me!

He follows all the girls' sighs and swoons,

Trust in me! Trust in me!

And guides them straight

Through heaven's gate.

2.

When midnight falls over meadow and field,

Trust in me!

Dimly seen standing beside her bed,

Trust in me! Trust in me!

And to his arms

He pulls her tight.

3.

Then carries her off to heav'n above,

Trust in me!

The constellations are 'round below.

Trust in me! Trust in me!

Into a hall

So wondrous tall.

4.

Oh think not only we've come to play,

Trust in me!

His sensibility's there to stay.

Trust in me! Trust in me!

The unknown here,

Learned quickly there.

5.

I've been in school, oh so many years,

Trust in me!

Ne'r even learned how to dry my tears,

Trust in me! Trust in me!

What li'l I know,

He taught me so.

CONSTANCE:

6.

Another matter, Oh Trine, quite right.

Trust in me!

Since you're in school by day and by night,

Trust in me! Trust in me!

I fear you'll quick

Have too much wit.

SIXTH SCENE

(*Fru Bitteralmond and Hr. Fop, still carrying the bouquet, enter the parlor.*)

HR. FOP (*Whispering to Fru Bitteralmond*): As I said, my lady, the whole thing is very suspicious, though I can't prove it.

FRU BITTERALMOND: Keep your wits about you. If she did receive a letter, she'll never read it. I'm not letting her out of my sight for a moment, until I learn the truth.

HR. FOP (*To Constance*): Has my young maiden already placed the flowers in water?

CONSTANCE: Certainly. It only took a moment.

TRINE: Thank you very much, Hr. Fop, for the beautiful flowers.

HR. FOP: What flowers?

TRINE: The flowers you gave Constance.

HR. FOP: And why are you thanking me for them?

TRINE: Of course I am! Although I realize they aren't for me, I can still walk over and sniff them occasionally. After all, I often use Constance's room. I have an intuition that I'll get just as much enjoyment from them as she will.

HR. FOP: Who do you think you are, spouting "intuitions."

TRINE (*Winking at Constance*): I can't help it! It's a childhood disease. Perhaps I'll outgrow it.

HR. FOP (*Whispering to Fru Bitteralmond*): I'm beginning to think this little witch is part of the intrigue.

FRU BITTERALMOND (*To Trine*): I've already told you, in no uncertain terms, to mind your own business. Only speak if you're spoken to, is that clear? You are, I must remind you again, the most impertinent kid in my institute. If only I could be rid of you! (*Several loud knocks on the door leading to the parlor.*)

Come in!

SEVENTH SCENE

(*A young man enters the room.*)

SHOPKEEPER'S ASSISTANT: Excuse me.

TRINE: Oh, it's my mother's delivery man! (*She runs over to greet him.*)

SHOPKEEPER'S ASSISTANT: (*To Fru Bitteralmond*): Madam Pleasant sent me to convey her congratulations on your birthday and hopes you'll accept a few gifts, which are in a basket I left in the foyer.

FRU BITTERALMOND: How wonderful! Many, many thanks! But, what's in the basket?

SHOPKEEPER'S ASSISTANT: Venison, four hares, thirty dozen oysters, a bushel of apples, and five pounds of grapes.

FRU BITTERALMOND: Oh, how thoughtful!

SHOPKEEPER'S ASSISTANT: And I was also asked to tell you that the Madam herself will soon be here to offer congratulations in person.

FRU BITTERALMOND: Oh Trine, my good girl! Come here and let me give you a kiss. God only knows that I love you as if you were my own child. I wouldn't let you leave me for anything in the world.

SHOPKEEPER'S ASSISTANT: Where shall I empty the basket?

FRU BITTERALMOND: My dear fellow, could you leave it in the foyer for now? I'll have it returned to you as soon as I find a spare moment to unpack it.

SHOPKEEPER'S ASSISTANT: That's fine. So long.

FRU BITTERALMOND: But wait a second, please—let me give you a tip. (*Fumbles in her purse.*) Darn it, I don't have any money with me. Dear Hr. Fop, could you lend me one Rigsdaler?⁴

HR. FOP: Of course, with pleasure! (*Searches in each of his pockets.*) But it appears that I don't have any money on me either. I must have spent all I had on flowers this morning.

FRU BITTERALMOND: Constance, do you have a Rigsdaler?

CONSTANCE (*In disbelief*): Me, aunt? Not a shilling.

FRU BITTERALMOND: But, of course, I almost forgot Trine; she's always loaded.

TRINE: Yes, I still have some of the money my mother gave me the other day. Does Fru Bitteralmond want me to bring her another Rigsdaler?

FRU BITTERALMOND: Would you please, my dear little Trine. I'll pay you back, along with the five Rigsdaler you loaned me yesterday, plus the seven Rigsdaler and two Marks I borrowed last week. That makes thirteen Rigsdaler, two Marks total. Oh yes, I'll also return the silk scarf I borrowed — and the five handkerchiefs — and . . .

TRINE (*Who's made several attempts to leave the room, but halted by each of Fru Bitteralmond's confessions, finally interrupts*): Fine, just fine, Fru Bitteralmond. There's no hurry — with any of it. (*She runs into Constance's room.*)

FRU BITTERALMOND (*To Hr. Fop*): God be blessed! Help is always at hand when the need is greatest. I was afraid Madam Pleasant's gifts would never get here.

HR. FOP: True enough! We would have been quite embarrassed this evening without a morsel to offer the guests.

EIGHTH SCENE

(*Miss Trumpmeier, wearing heavy boots, and bespattered with mud from head to toe, bounces through the door from the foyer.*)

MISS TRUMPMEIER: Philipine! Hr. Fop! (*Then to Fru Bitteralmond*) Every good fortune and happiness, conceivable under the sun, should be yours on your birthday.

HR. FOP: Drat! Outdone again—I wanted to be the first to congratulate her. (*He looks, chagrined, at the bouquet he's forgotten to give Fru Bitteralmond.*)

MISS TRUMPMEIER (*Laughing*): That's right, you're our own April fool. . . . (*Turning to Fru Bitteralmond*) on this very first day of a new year for you.

TRINE (*Coming back into the school-room*): Here you are, Fru Bitteralmond.

FRU BITTERALMOND: Thank you, my child, thank you very much. (*Turning to the shopkeeper's assistant*) Here, young man, take this Rigsdaler as a tip. And give Madam Pleasant my heartfelt thanks.

SHOPKEEPER'S ASSISTANT: Many thanks! (*He leaves the room.*)

NINTH SCENE

MISS TRUMPMEIER: Double congratulations are in order, now that I see you've finally received a much-needed gift.

FRU BITTERALMOND: Yes, from the ever-gracious Madam Pleasant.

MISS TRUMPMEIER: What, precisely, is in the basket?

FRU BITTERALMOND: Venison, hares, oysters, apples, grapes.

MISS TRUMPMEIER: In short, all the bounty one should expect from a fruit and game dealer. Shall we go and inspect the wares?

FRU BITTERALMOND: No, let's first drink a cup of birthday-coffee, all together in peace and quiet. I've hardly had a free moment today.

MISS TRUMPMEIER: Not a bad idea. I could stand a cup of coffee myself; I've trudged about the entire morning. (*Miss Trumpmeier, Fru Bitteralmond, and Hr. Fop seat themselves around the coffee table, while Trine and Constance stand chatting quietly at the edge of the room.*) The house is certainly peaceful today without those confounded children. But those hours in the city! They've been simply unbelievable. (*In the meantime, Fru Bitteralmond has poured the coffee.*) I can't stand it any longer! I've got to see what's in the basket. (*Jumps out of her chair.*)

FRU BITTERALMOND: No! Stay here! Your coffee will get cold.

MISS TRUMPMEIER (*Sitting down again*): That's true. (*Turning to Hr. Fop*) Don't forget the poem for Philipine!

HR. FOP (*Offended*): Of course not.

MISS TRUMPMEIER: You won't believe how many places I've been in one morning.

FRU BITTERALMOND: That's precisely why you should relax when you have the opportunity.

MISS TRUMPMEIER: Impossible! I'm in perpetual motion.

FRU BITTERALMOND (*Offering her tobacco snuff*): Would you like a pinch of tobacco snuff to calm your nerves?⁵

MISS TRUMPMEIER: Yes, thank you. A pinch of snuff should hit the spot. (*Sneezes.*)

HR. FOP: God bless you!

FRU BITTERALMOND: God bless you!

CONSTANCE: God bless you!

TRINE: God bless you!

MISS TRUMPMEIER: Thank you, everyone. (*To Fru Bitteralmond*) I had almost forgotten—may I ask you something in private? (*Hops from her chair.*)

FRU BITTERALMOND (*Walking over to her near the front of the stage*): What is it?

MISS TRUMPMEIER: Have you gotten the . . . ah, you know what I mean?

FRU BITTERALMOND: Received what?

MISS TRUMPMEIER: The present from the children?

FRU BITTERALMOND: No.

MISS TRUMPMEIER: Then you'll probably get it this evening. We bought the shawl—the one you picked out yourself that costs 70 Rigsdaler. Every one of the pupils made a contribution.

FRU BITTERALMOND: Thanks for your assistance, for I was uncertain whether I should choose the shawl or some material for curtains. But the shawl really was the better buy.

MISS TRUMPMEIER: I agree wholeheartedly. But don't let the others get suspicious—it's supposed to be a surprise. (*They seat themselves again at the coffee table.*) Now let me see . . . Trine! Didn't you eat lunch at home with your mother on Wednesday? (*Trine nods her head in assent.*) I completely forgot to ask you what was on the menu.

TRINE: Sago soup and fried meatballs.⁶

MISS TRUMPMEIER: Was there any wine in the soup?

TRINE: I think so.

MISS TRUMPMEIER: Didn't you have anything to eat with the meatballs?

TRINE: Yes, yellow turnips.

MISS TRUMPMEIER: What happened the rest of the day? Did anyone stop by during the afternoon?

TRINE: Only the butcher, Mr. Longbone.

MISS TRUMPMEIER: And what did he do when he got there?

TRINE: Sat down and talked with my mother.

MISS TRUMPMEIER: What did they talk about?

TRINE: I don't remember.

MISS TRUMPMEIER (*To Hr. Fop*): He's sweet on Madam Pleasant. I'm sure they'll be married soon. (*Then to the rest of the characters*) Now, to get back to what I've wanted to tell you ever since I arrived—just listen to where I've been today. (*Song III; check glossary for translation of place names.*)

1.

First to Gammelmynt I hurried,
Taught an hour there of French;
Then to Østervold I darted,
Rectified their style in Dansk.
Then to Hestemøllestræde
For an hour of music.
Onto Christianshavn so gaily
Over Langebro I clipped.
Do you know a better way?

THE OTHERS:

No, no, no! No, no, no! No, no, no! No, no, no, no, no! No!
No, from Hestemøllestræde
Langebro's the shortest way.

2.

MISS TRUMPMEIER:

Then I flurried to Kastellet,
Trained their nimble hands to sew,
Yet I postponed Nørrefælled
Much too far for me to go.
Walked instead to Grønnegade,
Taught an hour there in song;
Thereupon I briskly waded
Down through Peder Madsens Gang.
Do you know a better way?

THE OTHERS:

No, no, no! No, no, no! No, no, no! No, no, no, no, no, no! No!
If you came from Grønnegade,
Best to use Pe'er Madsens Gang.

HR. FOP: Miss Trumpmeier, I am impressed, very impressed indeed, with your stamina. It isn't one o'clock yet, and you've already accomplished so many things.

MISS TRUMPMEIER: Thank you, but you mustn't forget, I began my rounds at seven o'clock, on the dot, this morning. More important than that, everything I heard and saw today makes all my scurrying worthwhile.

FRU BITTERALMOND: Well, then, tell us all the news.

HR. FOP: Yes, tell us, please! I implore you!

MISS TRUMPMEIER (*With a self-important air*): Would you believe that Counselor Terp in Gother's Street is getting married?

FRU BITTERALMOND: You can't be serious.

HR. FOP: Impossible!

MISS TRUMPMEIER: I sympathize completely, but I assure you it's true. Now try to guess who he's marrying. Oh, you'll never figure it out—the eldest daughter of Madam Lamb, from Vester Bridge.

FRU BITTERALMOND: I don't believe a word of it! She's still a mere child.

MISS TRUMPMEIER: That's what I said, too, when I heard it. The girl hasn't even completed her lessons with the pastor and she's supposed to be confirmed a week from Sunday. And wait 'til you hear this—she's been engaged to the Counselor for three months! I overheard some people discussing it across the inner harbor in Christianshavn; it's simply unbelievable how well-informed people are in that district. They know more about what's happening over here than we do. At any rate,

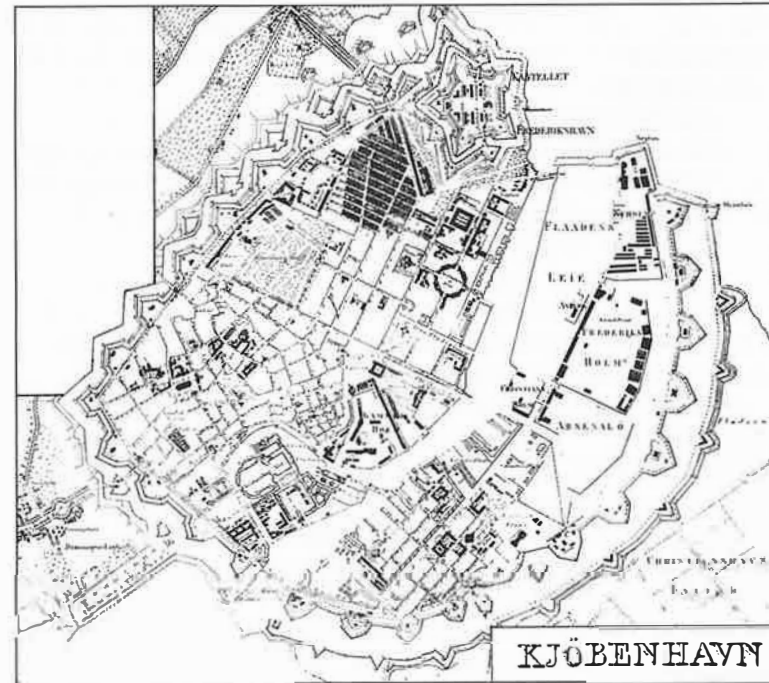
some of my sources claim that the wedding has been moved up for a very good reason—do I really need to make myself any clearer? But I heard a more plausible explanation from another confidante over in Christianshavn—that Mrs. Stream, who’s had an eye on the Counselor for many years, not only approved the match with Madam Lamb’s daughter but even initiated it. It’s simply horrible! Mrs. Stream was afraid the Counselor would spurn her one day and fall head over heels in love with some attractive, bright girl. So she decided it would be in her best interest to have the Counselor marry Madam Lamb’s daughter, who everyone knows is the dumbest goose in all of Copenhagen. Why her, you wonder? It’s so obvious!! For then the Counselor will come running back to Mrs. Stream as soon as he tires of his stupid wife.

FRU BITTERALMOND: You’re absolutely correct.

MISS TRUMPMEIER: And don’t forget that Madam Lamb is in dire economic straits. She’s ecstatic to have anyone at all interested in marrying her daughter, regardless of his circumstances.

HR. FOP: Are you sure about that?

MISS TRUMPMEIER: Tsk, Tsk! It’s common knowledge, my good man. She’s in debt up to her ears. She owes money to the baker, the grocer, the butcher and the milkman. Even worse, she hasn’t paid rent



rent for the last six months. Just listen to what I heard a few days ago at Madam Winter’s in Christianshavn, who lives caddy corner from The Church of the Redeemer. Miss Smallkopf and Attorney Stonegaard visited Madam Lamb on a Wednesday afternoon last month. Miss Lamb served them tea, but when she sent the maid to the grocer for a half pound of granulated sugar, the grocer refused to put it on the tab until she paid the outstanding balance. There are many days when she doesn’t have a Rigsdaler in the house.

TRINE (*Looking at Mrs. Bitteralmond and raising her eyebrows*): Can’t that happen to anyone?

MISS TRUMPMEIER: Why is that goose interrupting me?
(*There is a knock on the door from the foyer.*)

FRU BITTERALMOND: Come in!

MISS TRUMPMEIER: Ah! how upsetting! Never a moment to chat in peace and quiet.

TENTH SCENE

(*Enter Sparklemann, Simon, Wavy, and Moisty.*)

HR. FOP: Herr Sparklemann!

FRU BITTERALMOND: Herr Simon!

HR. FOP: Herr Wavy!

MISS TRUMPMEIER: Herr Moisty!

FRU BITTERALMOND: Welcome, gentlemen!

SPARKLEMAN, SIMON, WAVY, AND MOISTY: (*Align themselves in a row for Song IV, a quartet.*⁷)

1.

This day we greet with festive cheer
is first in the month of April.

When violets sweeten the forest floor blooming, a’blooming,
a’blooming, a’blooming like new.

This day we greet with festive cheer
is first in the month of April.

When violets sweeten the forest floor blooming, a’blooming,
a’blooming, a’blooming like new.

They have awakened the slumber of winter;
like sun will follow the thunder of heaven,
will follow the thunder, bright and blinding,
will follow the thunder, bright and blinding,
will follow the thunder, bright and blinding.

2.

Beyond the Hawthorne a rare tree blooms,
and towers like cedar and sandal.

So likewise you swagger, you swagger, you swagger, you swagger,
around the school children.

Beyond the Hawthorne a rare tree blooms,
and towers like cedar and sandal.

So likewise you swagger, you swagger, you swagger, you swagger,
around the school children.

Oh noble, oh sweet Fru Bitteralmond!
Nobody matches your market value,
nobody matches your market value—,
nobody matches your market value.

For you're the top!

For you're the top!

FRU BITTERALMOND: Oh, my heaven! I'm moved to tears.
Most sincere thanks! Who wrote the beautiful lyrics?

HR. FOP (*Taking a piece of paper from his vest pocket*): Would the
lady please accept a copy?

FRU BITTERALMOND: I should have known it was you. Your
poetry is cultivated from careful reading of classic works.

MOISTY: I would like to point out that we just sang a quarktet
in your honor.

SIMON: Ja richtig! Dat art von musik is more popular dan otter
duetter. Only dis morgen, I met upon da street my good friend, his excel-
lence von Stein, and he sagde to mich: "My good Herr Simon, where are
you heading dis early in de day? Kan't you kommen home with mich for
a glass bier and a smoke?" I answer him straight out, "Nein, your excel-
lence! I must rehearse a special duet with tree guten friends—it's called
a . . . what was it now?

MOISTY: A Quarktet.

SIMON: Richtig! A Quark . . . whatever. Whereafter his excel-
lence says, "Oh Herr Simon, you're always up on the latest fads." (*A
knock on the door!*)

FRU BITTERALMOND: Come in!

ELEVENTH SCENE

(*A journeyman enters the parlor.*)

JOURNEYMAN: Birthday greetings from Wine-merchant Watermann,
who humbly asks the head of the institute to accept two casks of fine
Medoc wine.

FRU BITTERALMOND (*Aside*): That name doesn't register at
all. (*Then to the journeyman*) Who sent you?

JOURNEYMAN: Wine-merchant Watermann in Christianshavn.

MISS BITTERALMOND Oh him! (*Aside*) I don't know anyone
by that name. (*Then to the journeyman*) Please thank him heartily for
me. (*Turns toward Trine*) Little Trine, will you loan me another Rigs-
daler? Then I would owe you 14 Rigsdaler, 2 Mark.

TRINE: Certainly, Fru Bitteralmond. (*She goes into her room.*)

JOURNEYMAN: I'm embarrassed to have to ask the head-
mistress if she has a large basket I could use to bring back the bottles?
Hr. Watermann has none to spare today.

FRU BITTERALMOND: Fortunately, I kept Madam Pleasant's
basket. I'll empty it straight away so you can bring me the wine. And
would you be kind enough to ask Hr. Watermann if he and his entire
family will attend my party this evening? We'll begin with tea, followed
by a concert, ballroom dancing, and supper, more dancing, bouillon
before midnight, coffee afterwards.

JOURNEYMAN: On behalf of my master and mistress, thank you
for the invitation; but my mistress died three years ago.

FRU BITTERALMOND: Oh, I'm so sorry to hear that! But
doesn't he have children?

JOURNEYMAN: Oh yes, indeed—eleven girls and sixteen boys.

SPARKLEMANN (*Aside to Miss Trumpmeier*): Good gracious!
That's manga, manga children. (*To the shop assistant*) All by the same
wife?

JOURNEYMAN: No, he's been married three times.

FRU BITTERALMOND: Then I hope to see all twenty-seven of
them.

SIMON: Dat wine, mein soul, is no longer ein bargain.

FRU BITTERALMOND: No problem—they're only children.
We'll fill them up with sandwiches and raspberry-vinegar.

TRINE (*Returning from her room with a Rigsdaler*): Here you are,
Fru Bitteralmond.

FRU BITTERALMOND: Here, young man, is your tip in
advance. I trust you'll deliver the wine promptly and in good condition.

JOURNEYMAN: Certainly, but may I have the basket?

FRU BITTERALMOND: Of course, I'll empty it immediately.
HR. FOP: Absolutely not, priceless lady! Should these guests be deprived of your magnetic presence, even for a few minutes? I'll empty the basket. But may I first take off my jacket and lay it in the cupboard?
FRU BITTERALMOND: Ok, but don't toss it on the Wiener-torte in there.
HR. FOP (*As he puts his jacket in the cupboard*): Good gracious, what a magnificent torte! (*Everyone walks over to admire it.*)
MISS TRUMPMEIER: It's a masterpiece!
MOISTY: A work of art!
SIMON: Where did you get it?
FRU BITTERALMOND: From Confectioner Papageno.⁸ His daughter attends the institute.
HR. FOP (*To the journeyman*): Follow me! (*The two leave the room.*)

TWELFTH SCENE

FRU BITTERALMOND: If I only knew why Wine-merchant Watermann sent me a present.
MISS TRUMPMEIER: Isn't it obvious? With eleven daughters, he probably wants to enroll some of them in the institute.
FRU BITTERALMOND: Perhaps. (*Turning to the three men still in the parlor*) Tell me, gentlemen, can I still count on your promised contributions to this evening's festivities? Herr Simon, you'll sing your aria, won't you—the one about the two aunts?
SIMON (*Confused at first, then suddenly brightens*): Ah, now I know what you mean—de Italian one. (*He sings*) “Your Auntie counts to ten, your Auntie Lene!”⁹ Yes, on mein soul, I will sing dat one!
FRU BITTERALMOND (*To Moisty*): And you?
MOISTY: I'll perform a flute concerto. In addition, I hope to bring along little Kink—you know, the son of the night-nurse at General Hospital. He's remarkably talented. I'm sure you'll agree after hearing him play the guitar and singing, “If Only You Were Mine,” “Beatific Hope,” and “Open the Door for the Little Person.”¹⁰ I'll also bring along two of my colleagues, both barber-surgeon apprentices; one plays violin, the other double bass.
FRU BITTERALMOND: Can I also count on your group to play during the ball?

MOISTY: We'll relieve each other, my dear lady, so each of us has a chance to dance. You won't be disappointed. Anyway, Kink won't dance. He'd prefer to play his violin long into the night.
FRU BITTERALMOND: Poor kid. Does he ever fall asleep in the middle of a number?
SIMON: Vas is das? He's da son of a night-nurse, isn't he?
FRU BITTERALMOND: Ah, you're just teasing me.
SIMON: No mein soul, never. Everything is inherited. The son of a peasant is best suited for agriculture, so he becomes a peasant, too. The son of a duke becomes a duke. Therefore, the son of a night-nurse is understandably active and awake at night.
SPARKLEMANN: I shall arranger a the entire ball, and myself play violin, if necessary.
WAVY: As for me, I don't trust myself to do anything but help the ladies with their coiffures, should anyone require assistance. I'll bring along several bottles of Ode to Colonne.¹¹
MOISTY: And in the wee hours of the morning, I'll shave all the gentlemen before they leave.
FRU BITTERALMOND: Doesn't this prove what I've said so often? Someone with good friends wants for nothing!

THIRTEENTH SCENE

(*Hr. Fop dashes into the parlor.*)
HR. FOP: Hurry! Let me have my jacket. Madam Pleasant is at the door. I saw her walking through the courtyard.
FRU BITTERALMOND: Where did you empty the basket?
HR. FOP: In the foyer. I was in a hurry, so I dumped the horn of plenty onto the floor. It's only a short distance to the kitchen from there.

FOURTEENTH SCENE

(*Madam Pleasant enters the parlor.*)
MADAM PLEASANT: Good day, Fru Bitteralmond, good day! Congratulations on your birthday.
FRU BITTERALMOND: Thanks, but I'm terribly embarrassed by all the wonderful things you sent me.
MADAM PLEASANT: It's nothing, really. Hello, Trine!
TRINE: Hi, dearest mother!

MADAM PLEASANT: How is Trine behaving, Fru Bitteralmond?

FRU BITTERALMOND: Very well, Madam Pleasant! She is, without a doubt, the most industrious and well-behaved pupil in the institute. You should be very pleased: Trine's making excellent progress.

MADAM PLEASANT: I certainly hope so! I'm overwhelmed by the responsibility of raising a young girl like her.

MISS TRUMPMEIER: You have nothing to worry about; we are very satisfied with her.

HR. FOP: Yes, an A+ pupil.

SPARKLEMANN: By Jove! Mamsellen does everything mycke bra.

MADAM PLEASANT: I'm relieved. I thank God every day that I found a place for Trine here; the boutique takes too much time for me to keep an eye on her, too. That damnable boy, Hans Mortensen, is sweet on her. Please, Fru Bitteralmond, don't let him set one foot in this institute. Hans Mortensen is trouble!

FRU BITTERALMOND: My sentiments, precisely!

MISS TRUMPMEIER: Rest assured, he'll never slip into our school!

MADAM PLEASANT: Keep in mind, though, he's a clever kid. This morning, for example, I found him sniffing around the boutique. When I asked what he was up to, he acted as if the city council had sent him on official business. It was nothing but a ploy to see if Trine was home. I swept him out of there so fast his head was in a tizzy. But he still had time to steal half a score of my best apples.

FRU BITTERALMOND: As God is my witness, I promise he'll never come here again. In fact, I haven't seen him since Christmas.

MADAM PLEASANT: I trust you, Fru Bitteralmond, for I insist that Trine should have nothing to do with that damnable boy. But let's talk about something else. (*They all seat themselves around the coffee table.*) Trine has made remarkable progress in sewing. She gave me a beautiful lampshade for my birthday.

MISS TRUMPMEIER: Yes, indeed—it was her examination project.

MADAM PLEASANT: I'm not complaining, mind you, but then why did I pay 5 Rigsdaler for it if she sewed it herself?

MISS TRUMPMEIER: There's a simple explanation. During exams, the pupils are so busy they can't finish their own sewing. Therefore, we farm out the unfinished projects to poor girls in the city and pay them each a Rigsdaler.

MADAM PLEASANT: Don't you mean 5 Rigsdaler?

MISS TRUMPMEIER: Excuse me, I misspoke.

MADAM PLEASANT: No, no, please excuse me. I shouldn't have asked; those 5 Rigsdaler are well spent if the poor receive them. Although I only came by to wish the director happy birthday, could I save time by turning this visit into a conference about Trine's progress in her academic subjects? All her teachers are present, I believe.

HR. FOP: Your wish is our command, Madam. Let's begin with geography. Tell me, little Trine, where is Amsterdam located?

TRINE: That's the capital of England.

HR. FOP: Whoops!

MADAM PLEASANT: Even I know that's a wrong answer. I may be uneducated, but I know that Amsterdam is in Holland because that's where delicious Dutch oysters come from.

HR. FOP: But Trine knows that, too. She merely misspoke. But you must admit she wasn't that far off—isn't Holland close to England? Don't they both end in "land"? Just watch how she handles the next question. (*To Trine*) Since you mentioned the capital of England, what is it? (*Pause*) How about "Lon . . . Lon . . . Lond . . .

TRINE: London.

HR. FOP: Absolutely correct! What's the population of London?

TRINE: More than four thousand.

HR. FOP: Most assuredly!

MADAM PLEASANT: I agree, since I've been told that there are more people in London than in Copenhagen and Christianshavn together. But is she learning her religion?

HR. FOP: Of course. Tell me, Trine: To whom are people responsible?

TRINE: First and foremost to themselves. Second . . . second . . .

HR. FOP: Let's stick with the first for a moment; what are our duties to ourselves?

TRINE: Eat, drink, dress ourselves, make lots of money, keep clean, and anything else necessary to take care of ourselves.

MADAM PLEASANT: Wow! She nailed that one! How about her accomplishments in foreign languages?

MISS TRUMPMEIER: Trine, translate a passage from our French textbook for your mother.¹²

TRINE: Where should I begin?

MISS TRUMPMEIER: Wherever you happen to open the book. Right there will do just fine.

TRINE: "Laissez la vanité." Hmm, "Laissez" means . . .

MISS TRUMPMEIER: Nev . . . Nev . . .

TRINE: Never!

MISS TRUMPMEIER: Correct. Continue.

TRINE: Hmm, "la vanité."

MISS TRUMPMEIER: What does van—i—té mean?

TRINE: Watery tea.¹³ "Never drink weak tea." (*Then reads*) "Donnez moi une marque." That means, "Give me a Mark."

MADAM PLEASANT: She's clicking right along, now.

MISS TRUMPMEIER: That's enough translating. Trine also speaks French very well; just listen. (*To Trine*) Marchez vous quelque-fois dehors et promenez? Allons, courage, ma petit mademoiselle!

TRINE: Oui comça.

MISS TRUMPMEIER: Combien êtes vous âgé?

TRINE: Oui comça.

MISS TRUMPMEIER: Il est bien-tôt été. Voulez vous prendre avec l'institut au jardin des bêtes?

TRINE: Oui comça.

MADAM PLEASANT: Like a spoke in a wheel. Of course, her responses aren't very long . . .

MISS TRUMPMEIER: But what she does say is well enunciated.

HR. FOP: Only someone with a thorough understanding of a language can speak with such brevity.

SPARKLEMANN: Yes, Mamsellen has an unusually fine Francisk accent.

HR. FOP: Her German is just as remarkable. (*To Trine*) Wann sollen Sie zu Confirmation stehen?

TRINE: Sechzig Jahr [sixty years old].

MADAM PLEASANT: I understand that. She says she'll be confirmed when she's sixteen—or did she say sixty? It doesn't matter. Her mastery of these languages will be helpful when foreigners visit our shop. But I'm most interested in how Trine is doing in arithmetic—the most important subject for a working-class woman who'll be responsible for the household budget.

HR. FOP: She has an excellent grasp of fundamentals. Trine, explain the Regula de Tri for your mother.¹⁴

TRINE: I can't remember the precise rule, but here's an example: If a pound of cherries cost two Marks and eight shillings, how much is a parquet ticket to the theater?

MADAM PLEASANT: That's gibberish, child. Everyone knows the Royal Theater is closed during the cherry season.

HR. FOP: Au contraire, Madam! Trine means a ticket to the Entertainment Theater in Vester Bridge.¹⁵

MADAM PLEASANT: In that case, she's on the right track. But can she finish the problem?

HR. FOP: It might take a while.

MADAM PLEASANT: Forget it, then; I don't want to be a bother. How's she doing in music?

MISS TRUMPMEIER (*Seats herself at the piano and says*): Trine, sing the aria, "In these holy halls."¹⁶ (*Silence*) What's the matter?

TRINE: I've got a cold; my throat is raw and sore.

MADAM PLEASANT: Just a short piece, then.

MISS TRUMPMEIER: You can do it! (*Plays the prelude, but stops when Trine still remains silent.*) You missed your cue.

TRINE: I really can't sing today.

MISS TRUMPMEIER: Rubbish! Just get on with it!

TRINE: (*Song V*)

1.

No, you truly must forgive me.

For today I dare not sing,

and a single roulade

is too much for me to sing.

If I must, Mama,

I could tra-la-da,

tra la la la la la la la la la la la la la la la!

(*Miss Trumpmeier stops playing and walks over beside Trine, who continues singing.*)

2.

I'm so full of snot, I'm so wheezy,

The notes I hardly see.

Not a tune from the Magic Horn

could I hoot.

MISS TRUMPMEIER (*Interrupts to correct her*): The Magic Flute.

TRINE (*Finishes the refrain*):

If I must, Mama,

I will tra-la-da:

tra la la la la la la la la la la la la la la la!

MADAM PLEASANT: Ok, ok. If she can't sing, let's not push her any more.

SPARKLEMANN (*Pulls a small violin from his jacket pocket*): But since Mamsellan's cold isn't in her feet, she can show Mama her

progress in the dance. Trine, assume the proper position. *(Turns to Madam Pleasant and says)* This is a pas de deux I choreographed for the Misses Goldenasparagus, daughters of His Excellency Duke Goldenasparagus, who is married to a daughter of Baron Silverpotato. The Duke owns many estates in my homeland, Sweden. I've been the family dancing-master for manga years. *(To everyone)* Attendez! Mamsellan will dance a solo, although I'll join in now and then for the Madam's benefit. *(The others push the coffee table toward the back of the stage, to the right of the door. When everyone but himself and Trine are seated in a row to the left of the door, Sparklemann says)* All right, commencez!

(SPARKLEMANN plays a few notes on the violin, then sings/plays while Trine dances. Song VI)

1.
En avant deux, en arrière!
Legs out, turn out! Head straight!
That's right! Now you've got it!
No! No! Lighter on your feet!
Tom-Cat's Tail: Give me your hand!
First the right one, then the left one.
Animation, if you please!
You are mucha talented.
Hold, hold! Hold, hold!
Now I'll dance all by myself, Mamsellen watch me spin.
None here have ever seen, a solo like this one.

CHOIR
So lovely a solo none here have ever seen.
No, so lovely a solo none here have ever seen.

2.
(SPARKLEMANN)
And what is this? Oh so ghastly!
Legs out, legs out! Head straight!
Will you never do as I say?
Oh, how truly peevish!
Come, come, come! Don't dilly dally.
Rounded arms, Avec grâce!
Head is straight! Keep time! Ta Ta!
Yes! Now it goes mycket bra.

Hold, hold! Hold, hold!
And we'll dance together; how beautiful is that!
There now take your position and last, a pirouette!

CHOIR
We've never laid eyes on so fine a pirouette!
No we've never laid eyes on so fine a pirouette!

MADAM PLEASANT: My, oh my! Trine's dancing makes up for anything she might not learn in her other subjects.
SPARKLEMANN: If Madamen is satisfied, then I'm mycket flattered.
MADAM PLEASANT: Yes, I'm pleased to tears with my daughter's improvement in all her studies at this institute. If only she realized how fortunate she was to have you as her teachers.
FRU BITTERALMOND: We do everything we can for her.
MISS TRUMPMEIER: Absolutely everything!
HR. FOP: We do everything required to make her a worthwhile, female member of society.
MADAM PLEASANT: She's in good hands, that's for sure.

FIFTEENTH SCENE

(A housemaid enters the parlor.)

HOUSEMAID: Wine-merchant Watermann has sent over some bottles for you.
FRU BITTERALMOND: Where are they?
HOUSEMAID: In the foyer, guarded by the journeyman and two apprentices. They want to know where you want them placed.
HR. FOP: Leave them there, in the basket of course. I'll shelve them myself shortly. Tell the journeyman that he can return to his other duties.
(The housemaid leaves the parlor.)
MADAM PLEASANT: Well, I've taken enough of your valuable time. But I'll see you again this evening; when do the festivities begin?
FRU BITTERALMOND: Five o'clock.
MADAM PLEASANT: Good! Farewell 'til then. But I would appreciate having my basket back this afternoon.
FRU BITTERALMOND: I'll have someone bring it to you shortly.
MADAM PLEASANT: When it's convenient. *(Then speaks directly to Miss Trumpmeier)* Any luck finding a birthday present?

MISS TRUMPMEIER: We chose the shawl for 70 Rigsdaler. The children will present it tonight.

MADAM PLEASANT: A fine choice! Good-bye, all! (*Exits.*)

MOISTY: I must also take my leave until this evening. I have several clients waiting at the shop for haircuts.

SIMON: I tink we'll all be going; it's dinner-time.

FRU BITTERALMOND: Dinner? Why, for heaven's sake?

SIMON: I always have dinner at 2:00 o'clock.

FRU BITTERALMOND: Not today, my friend. We just had coffee and cakes. Let's save our appetites for the supper after midnight.

SIMON: I can't go that long on an empty stomach.

WAVY: Nor can I. Let's go.

(*Wavy, Moisty, Sparkemann, and Simon exit.*)

FRU BITTERALMOND (to Hr. Fop): You'll stay with me, won't you?

HR. FOP: Certainly, my dear lady. I'm at your beck and call.

MISS TRUMPMEIER: I can't stay, much as I'd like to. I have to teach at Miss Lumpkin's Institute, then an errand near the army barracks, and—of course—a quick stop at the department store. But I won't be later than five, I promise. And I won't spoil my appetite for this evening, either. (*Exits.*)

HR. FOP: Don't you think, Fru Bitteralmond, we should bring the basket into the parlor? From here, we can carry bottles into the ballroom as they are needed.

FRU BITTERALMOND: An excellent idea!

HR. FOP: I'll carry it in myself.

FRU BITTERALMOND: No, that's beneath an instructor's dignity.

HR. FOP: Fiddlesticks! But permit me to take off my jacket, first. (*Pulls off his dress jacket and lays it carefully in the closet.*)

FRU BITTERALMOND: If you insist. When you finish, would you accompany me while I run some errands in the city? We still need a few things for this evening.

HR. FOP: I'd be delighted to join you. (*Exits.*)

FRU BITTERALMOND: Trine, can you loan me another Rigsdaler?

TRINE: I'll get you a fiver, in case you need more.

FRU BITTERALMOND: Thanks, my dear girl. Then I'll owe you a total of 19 Rigsdaler and 2 Mark. (*Trine exits the room.*) Constance, handle things while I'm gone. (*Walks to the door at the back of the stage and yells*) Ok, you can come in and clean up after coffee. (*To Constance*)

And would you see to it that the large basket with wine bottles is emptied and returned to Madam Pleasant.

TRINE (*Returns to the parlor and hands Fru Bitteralmond a five Rigsdaler bill.*) Here you are, Fru Bitteralmond.

FRU BITTERALMOND: Thanks, my child. (*As Fru Bitteralmond enters her private room through the door to the right, two female servants enter the parlor from the back door and remove the coffee service. Meanwhile, Hr. Fop directs two male servants as they place the basket in front of the piano. The male servants exit the parlor.*)

HR. FOP: No one can accuse me of being a slacker. I've worked like a horse today. Fortunately, my good clothes are none the worse for this manual labor. (*He walks over to the closet, extracts his jacket, and enters Fru Bitteralmond's room.*)

SIXTEENTH SCENE

(*Constance and Trine are now alone in the parlor.*)

CONSTANCE: Oh Trine, I'm at wits end! What a horrific morning!

TRINE: What about me? I had to endure that grueling examination in all the arts and sciences.

CONSTANCE: Small potatoes compared to what I've had to contend with—not a moment alone to read this letter! (*Takes the letter from her dress.*)

TRINE (*In a derisory tone*): Poor thing! And I'm complaining? (*Then becomes interested.*) Are you sure it's safe to read it now?

CONSTANCE: I don't care. I can't wait any longer.

TRINE: Hurry up, then, before Fru Bitteralmond finishes dressing. (*The two begin to sing, alternating lines except for the refrain. Song VII*)

1.

TRINE: Aloud, please!

CONSTANCE: "Your favorite flowers should make clear"

TRINE: Your favorite flowers should make clear!

CONSTANCE: "Who it is who loves you dear."

TRINE: Who it is who loves you dear.

CONSTANCE: "Flowers bloom and flowers wither."

TRINE: Again, please?

CONSTANCE: "Flowers bloom and flowers wither"

TRINE: Flowers bloom, flowers wither!

CONSTANCE: "But I'll never leave your side."

TRINE: I will never leave your side!

CONSTANCE and TRINE: He will never leave your side!
CONSTANCE: Would you read it, Trine?
TRINE: “Your favorite flowers should make clear”
CONSTANCE: “Who it is who loves you dear.”
TRINE: “Flowers bloom, flowers wither!”
CONSTANCE: “But I’ll never leave your side!” Your side!
TRINE: “I will never leave your side!” Your side!

CONSTANCE and TRINE: He will never leave my/your side!
By your side! By my side! [alternate]. Never to leave!
Always near. Yes, always near.

SEVENTEENTH SCENE

(Fru Bitteralmond enters the parlor from her room.)

FRU BITTERALMOND: Good heavens! She’s reading the letter. Con-
stance, what are you reading?
CONSTANCE: Nothing, really!
FRU BITTERALMOND: Nothing? It looks like a letter to me.
CONSTANCE: No it isn’t. Is it a letter, Trine?
TRINE: Absolutely not!
FRU BITTERALMOND: Rubbish! The two of you are in league
against me. I know a letter when I see one, and I also know who wrote
that one.
CONSTANCE: You’re mistaken, auntie.
FRU BITTERALMOND: No I’m not. Let me see it.
CONSTANCE: Oh my God! (Fru Bitteralmond grabs the letter.)
FRU BITTERALMOND: Now we’ll get to the bottom of this. But
where did I put my glasses? (Lays the letter on the table and rummages
about in her purse.) That’s right, it’s on my bedroom dresser. (Starts to
leave, but stops short.) Hold it! I’m not about to leave the two of you
alone in here to conspire against me. Come with me!
CONSTANCE: How could you imagine such a thing, auntie?
TRINE: What makes you think we would do that?
FRU BITTERALMOND: No back talk from either of you! Come
with me, now—both of you! (She pushes them ahead of her toward her
boudoir.) Oh my gosh! The letter! But nothing can happen to it here.
(They leave the parlor.)

EIGHTEENTH SCENE

(Sigfrid Miller jumps out of the basket.)

SIGFRID: A lucky break! (Takes the letter from the table.) But what can
I put in its place? (Searches his pockets.) I need something inconse-
quential. (Pulls something from one pocket.) How about this one? Better
not; I might need it another time. (Finds something else.) This will do—
a bill from my tailor. (Puts the bill on the table.) I hear them coming.
(Climbs back into the basket.)

NINETEENTH SCENE

(Fru Bitteralmond, wearing glasses, and Hr. Fop enter the parlor, with
Constance and Trine in tow.)

FRU BITTERALMOND: Now we’ll get to the bottom of this intrigue.
HR. FOP: My dearest Constance, I can’t believe my ears: a secret
letter?
CONSTANCE (Places herself in front of the table): Forgive me,
please! I confess, it is a letter—a poem, rather.
FRU BITTERALMOND: Just as I thought!
HR. FOP: Unbelievable! And a poem, no less!
FRU BITTERALMOND: I demand to know who sent it!
CONSTANCE: It’s from . . .
HR. FOP: That damnable carpenter, isn’t it? And he made a fool
of me by hiding it in that bouquet of flowers I bought for you. Well,
that’s the last time anyone will make an April fool of me this year.
CONSTANCE: Please, I beg you not to read it!
FRU BITTERALMOND: Hush up, damn it! Now see what
you’ve done? You made me swear.
HR. FOP: Talk is cheap! (Grabs the bill from the table.)
(Fru Bitteralmond and Hr. Fop begin to sing, alternating lines except for
the refrain, a second verse of Song VII)

2.
FRU BITTERALMOND: Aloud, please!
HR. FOP: “My fee for repairing a vest”
FRU BITTERALMOND: Fee for repairing a vest!
HR. FOP: “Four Mark when rendered complete”
FRU BITTERALMOND: Four Mark when rendered complete?
HR. FOP: “Payment given, signed and dated.”

FRU BITTERALMOND, CONSTANCE, AND TRINE: What did you say?

HR. FOP: "Payment given, signed and dated."

FRU BITTERALMOND: Payment given, signed and dated.

HR. FOP: This is merely gibberish.

FRU BITTERALMOND: This is merely gibberish.

FRU BITTERALMOND and HR. FOP: Oh yes, whatever is this about?

HR. FOP: Would you read it, Frue?

FRU BITTERALMOND: "My fee for repairing a vest"

HR. FOP: "Four Mark when rendered complete"

FRU BITTERALMOND: "Payment given, signed and dated."

HR. FOP: This is merely gibberish.

ALL FOUR: This is merely gibberish, this is merely gibberish.

Gibberish! merely gibberish! Gibberish, merely gibberish.

Oh, this is merely gibberish!

FRU BITTERALMOND: What's going on here? This is a bill from a tailor.

CONSTANCE: That's right, but didn't I say it was nothing special?

FRU BITTERALMOND: You said it was a letter.

HR. FOP: A poem!

TRINE: Don't you know, Fru Bitteralmond, that a tailor's bill is street talk for a love letter or a New Year's poem?

FRU BITTERALMOND: Oh, shut up! Nobody's talking to you!

HR. FOP: Well, then, little maiden, how did you get hold of this bill?

TRINE: It was wrapped around a salami for the party tonight. I took it off so I could have something to read.

HR. FOP: Are you crazy? Couldn't you lay your hands on something more uplifting and cultivated than a tailor's bill?

FRU BITTERALMOND: It seems as if we have been unduly suspicious of Constance—this time. But promise me that you'll be good while I step out for a bit. Oh, and don't forget to have the basket emptied and returned to Madam Pleasant. I'd better lock my room, however. (*Locks the door and puts the key in her sewing bag.*) Come, Hr. Fop! (*She and Hr. Fop leave through the back door.*)

TWENTIETH SCENE

CONSTANCE: I'm completely flummoxed! How did that happen?

TRINE: Maybe there's a friendly elf in the room.

CONSTANCE: But the envelope must be here somewhere. (*They search the room.*) I'm having trouble remembering that beautiful poem. Help me out, Trine.

TRINE: I know the first line was, "Your favorite flowers should make clear."

CONSTANCE: "Who it is that loves you dear." That's the second line.

TRINE: "Flowers bloom and flowers wither." That's the third.

CONSTANCE: I can't remember the fourth one.

TRINE: How did that go?

SIGFRID (*Pops out of the basket*): "He will never leave your side!"

CONSTANCE AND TRINE: Yikes!

SIGFRID: Don't be frightened! I'm no elf—just the happiest lover in the world!

TRINE: Unbelievable! In all the novels I've read, the lover has never jumped out of a basket. (*Peers into the basket.*) Where are the wine bottles?

SIGFRID: There never were any. It was just a trick to get me into this locked cloister. I happened to see Madam Pleasant's basket carried into the institute; so I asked a friend to masquerade as a journeyman wine-merchant who could transform the basket into a lover's carriage. I had a feeling that today would bring choppy waters to this place—and make for good fishing.

TRINE: But who'll bring the wine for Fru Bitteralmond's party?

SIGFRID: Not me, that's for sure!

TRINE: How about Hr. Winemerchant Watermann?

SIGFRID: There's no such person in Copenhagen.

TRINE: It's shaping up to a confusing evening.

CONSTANCE: What a daring spoof!

SIGFRID: Nothing ventured, nothing gained.

TRINE: Moreover, your rival, Hr. Fop, brought both your letter and yourself to Constance. What a fantastic trick; you've certainly made a complete fool of Hr. Fop.

CONSTANCE: I feel like a fool, too. I was sure you had completely forgotten me.

SIGFRID: Forget you, Constance? Never!

CONSTANCE: I'd certainly not forgotten you—I'm true to my name.

SIGFRID: And I to mine: I'll overcome all obstacles and make a lasting peace with my enemies.

CONSTANCE: Time will tell. But why haven't I heard from you in many weeks?

SIGFRID: How could I get in to see you? My rival, as Trine calls him, has a guard at every door to the institute. And Fru Bitteralmond won't let you outside by yourself. Without this unusual opportunity . . .

TRINE: Yes, it was unusual!

SIGFRID: But let's not talk any more about that damned pen-pusher, that penmanship corrector, that walking thesaurus, that eternal giggler—that silly versifier! A cabinet-maker, on the contrary, is an altogether different type—just the man for a lovely and polite girl.

CONSTANCE (*Sarcastically*): You sound quite full of yourself!

SIGFRID: Listen carefully. You'll soon agree. (*Song VIII*)

1.

When the cabinet-maker escorts his bride home,
She'll find every room has been furnished well.

He's built her a sofa, a comely wardrobe,
Fine-sanded and painted to perfection.

2.

The couple will live (oh so nicely) a year,
Amid all the comfort of furnished rooms.

If a stork should arrive with the flowers of spring,
Then he'll set to carve out a cradle.

3.

CONSTANCE: But if death pulls his lover away from his arms,
He will mournfully saw and plane the timber.
And lay out a coffin so snug and so warm,
Rubbed down with his sorrow and tears.

4.

SIGFRID: Then I'd rather forgo all the toil and the tears,
And live mirthfully in good humor.

CONSTANCE: But sadly she'd dampen her cheeks with her tears,
If she were to leave her beloved.

5.

SIGFRID: Yes, parting is a frightful prospect.

CONSTANCE: It would snuff out all of our joy, our life.

BOTH: But if bravely our love with each other is bound,
It will lend us the wings to our future.

CONSTANCE (*Suddenly cautious*): Hush! I thought I heard someone in the foyer.

TRINE (*Runs to the door, listens, and returns*): There is somebody out there.

CONSTANCE: What are we going to do now?

SIGFRID: I'll hide in the basket again.

CONSTANCE: No, you won't. **Someone's** bound to look in it. My room is safer. (*She and Sigfrid leave the stage.*)

TWENTY-FIRST SCENE

(*Hans Mortensen enters, with a belt of books slung over his shoulder and munching an apple.*)

TRINE: Oh! It's only you?

HANS: What d'ya mean, only me? Aren't I good enough?

TRINE: You come at a bad time.

HANS: A bad time? You're too much! I fall head over heels in love with a crazy girl, figure out the most ingenious ways to see her—and when I've overcome every conceivable obstacle, she tells me, "You come at a bad time."

TRINE: What "ingenious plans" have you come up with?

HANS: Forget it! Want an apple? It isn't polite to eat in front of someone.

TRINE: Nice one, Hans! Offer me an apple you pinched from my mother.

HANS: What? Who dares accuse me of stealing?

TRINE: My mother, that's who.

HANS: She'll rue the day. I seek revenge from anyone who attacks my honor. It'll end up costing her 3 Marks.

TRINE: How's that, darling Hans?

HANS: I'll tell you, darling Trine. Since your mother has already accused me, I will actually steal something from her worth 3 Marks.

TRINE: But then you're a thief.

HANS: A thief of the heart, darling Trine!

TRINE: An apple-thief, darling Hans!

HANS: No, a thief of the heart, darling Trine, if I steal you from your mother.

TRINE: Really? I'm only worth 3 Marks?

HANS (*Flustered*): Give me a break, Trine! You're worth more than 3000 Marks.

TRINE: Your estimates fluctuate wildly. But tell me, what plans have that clever head of yours devised?

HANS: Need you ask? What could be cleverer than to sneak in here the very day your mother forbids me to see you, when teachers, servants, and who-knows-what have bolted the doors to keep me out?

TRINE: How did you ever pull off such a daring deed, my son?

HANS: It was a cinch! I was hiding across the street when Fru Bitteralmond and Hr. Fop left the institute. When they were out of sight, I snuck under the kitchen window and took a few apples from the ledge—although you'll accuse me again of stealing them from your mother's shop!

TRINE: O.K., Hans, I believe you.

HANS: That's my sweetheart! (*Kisses her hand.*) Where was I? Oh, Yes—then I threw an apple through the kitchen window, snuck into the courtyard, where I hid under a large washtub. Fru Bitteralmond's servants came rushing out of the house, looked around, and began combing both ends of the street for the culprit—who, meanwhile, sauntered through an unguarded door and now stands before you.

TRINE: Shame on you, Hans! What a childish prank!

HANS: The pot calling the kettle black? Get off your high horse. Anyway, I brought you a book—a travel book this time. This morning, your mother bawled me out for lending you immoral novels. Why don't you give her something useful, she said, like travel books. So I found one entitled *A Journey from Unhappiness to Depression*.

TRINE: You're so thoughtful, Hans!

HANS: You're welcome. By the way, you won't believe how many people I've fooled today.

TRINE: Really, Hans? Tell me about them. (*Song IX*)

1.

TRINE: Tell me who became
Your first fool today.

HANS: Peter Mule was
My first fool today.

TRINE: Oh, my, an excellent choice!
But let me hear what you've done,

Mister Hans, explain, Mister Hans, explain.

HANS: Hear now!

TRINE: Go on.

HANS: He slept in the schoolyard,
I snuck close and pinched his book,
He awoke and dashed home again
To look for it there.

BOTH: He slept in the schoolyard,
I/He snuck close and pinched his book,
He awoke and dashed home again
To look for it there.

TRINE: Oh my, my!
Just a harmless prank!

BOTH: Ha ha ha ha ha!

TRINE: Yes, my Hans
Is a smarty-pants!

BOTH: Ha ha ha ha ha!

2.

TRINE: Tell me who became
your next fool today.

HANS: The grammar teacher
was my second fool today.



TRINE: Oh, my, an excellent choice!
But let me hear what you've done,
Mister Hans, explain. Mister Hans, explain.

HANS: Hear now!

TRINE: Go on.

HANS: I said: Michael's kissing
the cook in the kitchen.
Zip, zap, zoom, he ran from the room,
He's a green-eyed dude.

BOTH: I/He said: Michael's kissing
the cook in the kitchen.
Zip, zap, zoom, he ran from the room,
He's a green-eyed dude.

TRINE: Oh my, my!
Just a harmless prank!

BOTH: Ha ha ha ha ha!

TRINE: Yes, my Hans
Is a smarty-pants!

BOTH: Ha ha ha ha ha!

3.

TRINE: Tell me who became
your third fool today.

HANS: Madam Pleasant was
my third food today.

TRINE: Oh, my, a ghastly choice!
I cannot think what you've done.
Are you crazy, Hans? Are you crazy, Hans?

HANS: Listen!

TRINE: Must I?

HANS: Your mom has forewarned
to seek not my Trine.

Zip! Here I stand before you;
Hans is not a fool.

BOTH: Your/My mom has forewarned

to seek not my/his Trine.
Zip! Here I/he stand(s) before you/me;
Hans is not a fool.

TRINE: My, oh my!
Just a harmless prank!

BOTH: Ha ha ha ha ha!

TRINE: Yes, my Hans
Is a smarty-pants!

BOTH: Ha ha ha ha ha!

HANS: Actually, I've made fools of dozens more, but why bore
you with more stories.

TRINE: But hasn't anyone made an April fool of you?

HANS: You must be joking!

TRINE: Don't get too cocky, my boy—it's still early in the day.

TWENTY-SECOND SCENE

(Enter Constance.)

CONSTANCE: What's going on in here? Trine, are you mad? Both your
mother and my aunt warned you that Hans Mortensen was never to set
foot in this institute again—and here you are, talking and singing with
him.

TRINE: Look who's calling the kettle black! You scold me when
you-know-who's in your bedroom?

CONSTANCE: Hush, Trine! I don't need to justify my actions to
a mere girl.

TRINE: Is that so? What about the contents in that basket?

CONSTANCE: Enough, Trine! Do as you please, but be careful.
(As an aside while returning to her bedroom) That boy's middle name is
"Trouble."

TWENTY-THIRD SCENE

TRINE: Outrageous!

HANS: What's going on, Trine?

TRINE: She has the gall to moralize about you being here with me when she is in the bedroom with her sweetheart, Sigfrid Miller—he's not allowed in this house, either.

HANS: Amazing! What fun—two secret couples under one roof!

TRINE: When she can be with her sweetheart, why can't I be with mine?

HANS: I agree, that's only fair!

TRINE: If I tell you how he got in, promise you won't repeat it to anyone.

HANS: My lips are sealed.

TRINE: This morning, Hr. Fop, who is madly in love with Constance, brought her a bouquet of flowers in which Sigfrid Miller had hidden a letter. Shortly thereafter, this basket arrived with what Fru Bitteralmond thought was a birthday present from a wine merchant. Hr. Fop, himself, lugged the basket in here, completely unaware that Sigfrid Miller lay inside.

HANS: What happened to the wine?

TRINE: There never was any. It was a ruse, from beginning to end.

HANS: I'm impressed! This trick was nearly as clever as me breaking a kitchen window.

TRINE (*Sarcastically*): Absolutely, little Hans, you're the best trickster in Copenhagen!

HANS: Think about it, Trine. While his required careful planning and a romantic disposition, mine demanded greater strength and courage. (*In a didactic tone*) More strength means less cunning. The bravest and noblest animals are the least cunning.

TRINE: Yes, you are quite the strong and fearsome beast, Hans. But despite your amazing strength and courage, you must leave before Fru Bitteralmond returns.

HANS: That's not fair! I'm not leaving unless the cabinetmaker in the bedroom goes, too.

TRINE: Be reasonable, Hans! What does he have to do with us?

HANS: More than you think, my girl. If we're discovered and a storm envelops this school, the lightning will strike the tallest trees—Sigfrid and Constance; little saplings like us will be spared during the hullabaloo . . . and a master prankster like myself will have a free hand to make more mischief.

TRINE: No, Hans! Dampen your blazing courage and think about my reputation.

HANS: My dearest Trine, does your reputation have a more stalwart defender than Hans Mortensen?

TRINE: Predator is more like it! You don't care one whit about my reputation! I have another bone to pick with you!

HANS: What's that?

TRINE: You've been blabbering to one and all that we are an item. Our secret has become common gossip . . . and who pays? Me! For the rest of my life, I'm damaged fruit in the eyes of the world. Men are all alike—you can't keep secrets. Only women are faithful and silent to the grave.

HANS: Cut me some slack, Trine! I only told a couple of my friends; I'm proud of our love. What's the harm in that?

TRINE: Nothing, if done in moderation. But you have so many friends, apparently, that we've become the talk of the town. You don't believe me, do you? Hans, we're being lampooned!

HANS: How so?

TRINE: *Hans and Trine in the Rosenborg Gardens*—on sale in local bookstores.

HANS: I promise you, I'll pummel the guy who wrote it.

TRINE: Then you'll have to fight an entire cast, too. *Hans and Trine* is a play and it's already been performed. The actors were spitting images of us, although the one who played Hans is really an old geezer who was outfitted as a schoolboy. How humiliating!

HANS: It's downright shameful that the law permits an actor to make fun of a respectable schoolboy.¹⁷

TRINE: Good Heavens! I hear someone in the foyer. (*Hans runs to the main door and locks it.*) What are you doing, Hans?

HANS: Locking the door to give myself time to hide.

HR. FOP (*Outside*): Open the door!

TRINE: What do we do now?

HANS: I'll hide in the basket.

TRINE: No! In the closet.

HANS: Whatever you say. (*Trine walks with him to the closet and opens the door.*)

HR. FOP: Will you please open the door, Trine. I hear you in there.

HANS: Goodbye, dear Trine, goodbye! (*Hugs her.*) Danger lurks! A thundercloud is gathering over us—but for your sake, I'll step into this pitch-black darkness! (*As he turns to enter the closet, he stops abruptly.*) Man alive! What a beautiful Wiener-torte!

TRINE: Hurry up, Hans!

HANS: Hope to see you again (*Hugs her again and enters the closet; Trine closes the door behind him.*)

HR. FOP: Trine, how long are you going to keep me waiting out here?

TRINE: Coming! (*She opens the door for Hr. Fop.*)

TWENTY-FOURTH SCENE

(*Hr. Fop enters from the foyer.*)

HR. FOP: What's going on in here? Why was the door locked?

TRINE: Because I was alone in this big house.

HR. FOP: But I heard you talking to someone.

TRINE: You heard wrong.

HR. FOP: I distinctly heard you, in this room, talking with someone! Now, someone's talking in the bedroom? Who's in there?

TRINE: Constance.

HR. FOP: I mean, who's Constance speaking with?

TRINE: How should I know?

HR. FOP (*Putting his ear to the door*): It's the cabinetmaker!

TRINE: Impossible!

HR. FOP: You're a liar, you deceptive little wench. You and Constance are trying to make fools of us. The two of you locked the door after letting the cabinetmaker in to see Constance.

TRINE: You've got it all wrong.

HR. FOP: Fess up, Trine! Or I'll lock you in the attic until Fru Bitteralmond returns.

TRINE: You wouldn't dare.

HR. FOP: Oh, wouldn't I? (*As he reaches to grab her arm, Trine runs to the back of the room.*)

HANS (*Steps out of the closet; he's eating a large piece of the torte*): Hey! Were you about to abduct my Trine?

HR. FOP: So, you're in here too, eh?

HANS: You have insulted my Trine, and I demand satisfaction. You called her a deceitful liar! She's neither deceitful nor a liar, whereas you are an April fool twice over: you first brought Constance the cabinetmaker's letter, then the cabinetmaker himself—hidden in that basket you thought was filled with wine bottles.

HR. FOP: You're kidding! (*Runs to the basket and opens the lid.*)

TRINE: Hans is a blabbermouth, but it's all true.

HR. FOP: Now listen carefully, my children. I forgive you both and I'll even put in a good word for Hans with Fru Bitteralmond—if, and only if, we keep these goings-on to ourselves. My reputation as a teacher will suffer irreparable harm if anyone else learns that a mere cabinetmaker made an April fool of me. Just you wait and see, I'll make a fool of that scoundrel. I'll fry him in his own fat! He won't be the only rooster to hop out of that basket, 'cause I'm climbing in myself so I can eavesdrop on his conversation with Constance. Then I'll disgrace them both. Can I count on your support?

TRINE: Sure!

HANS: Absolutely!

TRINE: But you must keep your word, too, and say nothing to Fru Bitteralmond.

HR. FOP: Of course. (*Opens the lid.*) Whoops, that's a dirty basket. I'd better take off my good jacket. (*He takes off the jacket, folds it carefully, and lays it in the closet.*) Now I'm ready! (*Hans and Trine help him into the basket.*)

TWENTY-FIFTH SCENE

(*At that moment, Miss Trumpmeier, dressed in an evening gown, quietly enters the parlor.*)

MISS TRUMPMEIER (*Unseen by the others, she says to herself*): Why is Hr. Fop standing in the wine basket?

HR. FOP: This basket is dirtier than I thought. I'm afraid that my best trousers will suffer.

TRINE: Perhaps I can find something for you to sit on.

HR. FOP: That'll take too long. I'll sit on my hands.

MISS TRUMPMEIER (*Again to herself*): Now I've seen everything!

HR. FOP: I'm ready. Now, close the lid and latch it.

MISS TRUMPMEIER (*To herself*): I'd better hide until I find out what this is all about. (*She sneaks into the closet and peeks from between partially closed doors.*)

TWENTY-SIXTH SCENE

(Constance and Sigfrid open the door to her bedroom.)

CONSTANCE (While holding a white apron, she surveys the living room): It's only Hans and Trine. Sigfrid, you must leave, now.

SIGFRID: Why?

CONSTANCE: Because we mustn't be seen together in the house.

SIGFRID: Too bad Hr. Fop isn't here to escort me out.

CONSTANCE: Don't joke about it, Sigfrid. He's probably nearer than we think.

TRINE: You can say that again.

CONSTANCE: Please, Sigfrid, just do what I ask. Carry the basket to Madam Pleasant. Aunt Bitteralmond told the servants that I'd take care of it. You'll look like a boutique apprentice in this apron, and no one will pay any mind when you leave the house.

SIGFRID: But the servants didn't see me come in the house; they'll be suspicious.

CONSTANCE: No they won't. They'll assume you slipped in when they weren't minding the door. I'll accompany you all the way to the street.

SIGFRID: OK! Tie the apron around my waist—I'll keep it as a pledge of your love until we meet again. (After she ties the apron for him, he goes to the basket.) I think I'll carry the basket on my back. It has straps—and it's empty, anyway.

CONSTANCE: Do what you like, just hurry up and go.

SIGFRID: You don't love me very much, do you?

CONSTANCE: Don't be silly, Sigfrid. Someone could come through the door at any moment.

SIGFRID: Moreover, you're sending me off with an empty basket. That's a bad sign, you know.

CONSTANCE: No, it's not. You're simply carrying out what you came in.

SIGFRID: True enough! OK, let's get to it, then. (Attempts to lift the basket, but immediately drops it.) Why is it so darn heavy?

CONSTANCE: Hold on, let's look inside.

TRINE: No need! There's a stone in it my mother wanted to install in a new mill she's having built outside the city walls. She bought it from the housekeeper, who had it placed in the basket.

SIGFRID: Hell's bells! Why should I kill myself carrying a millstone? What do you say, Constance? Let's dump the stone, you climb in, and I'll carry the basket to a church where a minister will marry us?

CONSTANCE: Stop lollygagging, Sigfrid! Get going!

SIGFRID: Just what I expected—you don't really love me! If you did, you'd be more courageous, be willing to take some risks, and . . .

CONSTANCE (Interrupting): Stop spoofing! Your presence in this house is risky enough for me.

SIGFRID: I'm deadly serious.

CONSTANCE: I'm the one who'll die if my aunt walks in that door. Goodbye! I'm getting out of here if you won't leave.

SIGFRID: Then give me a goodbye-kiss.

CONSTANCE: Hush your mouth! There are children about.

SIGFRID: A lame excuse. The truth of the matter is you don't love me as much as I love you—me, a silly fool about to cripple myself for life by lugging a damnable millstone to Trine's mother.

CONSTANCE: If you love me half as much as you say, then leave this house immediately.

SIGFRID: Will you kiss me first?

CONSTANCE: You're making me angry, Sigrid. I said no and I mean no!

SIGFRID: Goodbye! (He puts his arms through the straps and lifts the basket on his back.)

CONSTANCE: Goodbye, Sigrid!

SIGFRID: It's goodbye forever, Constance!

CONSTANCE: What did you say?

SIGFRID: I'm going to jump off the Lange Bridge. The millstone will carry me to the bottom.

CONSTANCE: For heaven's sake!

HR. FOP (Pushing his head out of the basket, but kept inside by the straps which pass over the lid): Help! Help! Help!

SIGFRID: What was that?

CONSTANCE: Hr. Fop?

SIGFRID (Turning around, but unable to see him in the basket on his back): Hr. Fop? Where?

HR. FOP: Behind you, Hr. Miller!

SIGFRID: Behind me? (Spins around several times.) I don't see anyone!

CONSTANCE, TRINE, HANS (Laughing): On your back! In the basket!

SIGFRID: Ah ha! The millstone comes to life!

HR. FOP: Please, please, I beg you! Let me out before you jump into the water.

SIGFRID: Absolutely not! As I drown, I'll console myself with the fact that my rival for Constance's hand dies with me.

HR. FOP: What if I withdraw as a suitor?

SIGFRID: Will you stop pursuing Constance? Now and forever?

HR. FOP: Yes! Yes! Yes! Or the devil can grill me to a crisp!

SIGFRID (*Sets the basket on the floor next to the baby grand piano*): Good! I'll let you live—if you confirm your promise with a signature (*Takes a folded piece of paper from his vest*). I had a feeling you'd come to this decision at some point or other, so I took the liberty of drawing up an agreement in advance. Sign it!

HR. FOP: Let me out, first. How can I write my name when I'm sitting in a basket?

SIGFRID: I imagine there's space enough to stick your arm through the same opening you found for your head. Dip a pen in the inkwell for Hr. Fop, Trine.

HR. FOP: I'll cry for help if you don't let me out first.

SIGFRID: Scream all you want, Hr. Fop. We'll tie down the lid and throw the basket from the attic window.

HR. FOP: All right, give me the pen.

TRINE: Here you are.

HR. FOP (*Signs the paper and hands it to Sigfrid*): There you have it! May I come out now?

SIGFRID: Certainly (*He pulls back the lid and Hr. Fop crawls out*.)

HR. FOP: Oh my God! Look at my trousers! And my shirt . . . the frills need ironing again.

SIGFRID: You are a mess.

HANS: Congratulations, Hr. Fop!

HR. FOP: For what, I pray?

HANS: You just became an April fool for the third time today.

(*There is talking in the foyer.*)

CONSTANCE: Someone's coming! Hide in my room, Sigfrid.

TRINE: Hide, Hans!

HR. FOP: I can't be seen looking like this! My jacket!

(*Constance and Sigfrid walk quickly into her room. As Hans and Hr. Fop run toward the closet, Miss Trumpmeier pulls its folding doors together from within and turns the lock.*)

HANS: It's locked. (*Instead, Hans climbs into the basket.*)

HR. FOP: My jacket! Where shall I hide? (*Looks at the door to the right, but it's closed; runs to Constance's room, and bangs on the door.*)

Let me in! Let me in! (*When the door doesn't open, he opens the lid to the basket.*) Get out, boy, and let me hide in the basket.

HANS (*Sticks his head above the rim*): No way! I got here first! (*Sits down again and pulls the lid closed.*)

HR. FOP: I'll have to crawl under the table. (*He lifts the tablecloth and hides himself.*)

TRINE: I'm not about to face the music alone. (*Runs to the basket and opens the lid.*) Hans, is there room for me, too?

HANS: Sure is! But I'll let you have it for yourself. (*Hans jumps out and Trine climbs in. Hans crawls under the piano, leans his back against the basket, and soon falls asleep.*)

TWENTY-SEVENTH SCENE

(*Fru Bitteralmond and a maidservant enter through the door at the back of the stage.*)

FRU BITTERALMOND: God help us! How did it happen?

HOUSEMAID (*Crying*): A thief must have opened the door and stolen the venison, plus all the rabbits, oysters, apples, and grapes from the foyer.

FRU BITTERALMOND: But why weren't you and the other stupid girls more careful? Why wasn't the door locked?

HOUSEMAID: It was a well-conceived plot, believe me. We were in the kitchen when a stone came crashing through the window. Everyone ran into the street to catch the urchin who threw it, when the thief must have seized the moment to slip into the kitchen and snatch everything.

FRU BITTERALMOND: The fates have conspired against me again. What will we serve all those guests? Where is Constance when I need her? And where is Trine? And Hr. Fop—hasn't he returned yet? Has anyone seen Miss Trumpmeier? (*The housemaid, crying again, runs into the kitchen.*) Yes, indeed! When the cat's away, the mice do play!

TWENTY-EIGHTH SCENE

(*Moisty, Sparklemann, Simon, and Wavy enter, one at a time, and face Fru Bitteralmond.*)

MOISTY: Ak, my dear lady! Disappointment is my name. The Surgeon I work for just sent for me. I must rush to a village outside the city because the local midwife and a little girl both need bleeding. I cannot

possibly be back in time to play tonight at your party. Nor can Kink. His mother is feeling poorly, so he must take her shift as night nurse at the hospital. Moreover, one of the surgical students in our little orchestra—the violinist—is indisposed. Last night at Fru Plant's institute, a drunken dilettante accused him of playing out of tune. A fight ensued, our man took such a licking that he cannot get out of bed today. Fortunately, his associate on the contrabass avoided the brawl and will be honored to take his place this evening.

FRU BITTERALMOND: What good will a lone contrabass do? Tell him to go to hell with everyone else who's left me in the lurch. So, the concert is a washout, too!

SPARKLEMANN (*Enters the room, one arm in a sling, the other maneuvering a cane*): By Jove, I'm a miserable creature. A wagon ran me down in the street and rolled me under two wheels. My lady, I cannot possible dance at the ball tonight.

FRU BITTERALMOND: What's the difference. The ball is already canceled for lack of an orchestra.

SIMON (*Enters, singing at full blast*): "Your Auntie counts to ten, your Auntie Lene." Yep, by mein soul, I've got it now! I've been practicing all day!

FRU BITTERALMOND: Isn't there something the matter with you as well?

SIMON: Nope! By mein soul, I feel fresh as a fish!

WAVY (*Runs onto the stage*): As promised, here's Ode to Colonne for the ladies.

FRU BITTERALMOND: Put a lid on it, Wavy. You and your buddies can go to hell in a handbasket—there'll be no ball, no concert, and no supper in this institute tonight.

EVERYONE ELSE: What?

WAVY: But there are already guests at the door.

FRU BITTERALMOND: God help me! The guests!

SPARKLEMANN: I saw mammsellar in the foyer, taking off their boots and putting on their dancing shoes.

SIMON: My colleagues are correct, dear lady. By mein soul, I passed a horde of ladies, husbands, and children on my way into the house.

MOISTY: And here they come!

FRU BITTERALMOND: Brace yourselves for a riot!

TWENTY-NINTH SCENE

(*Servants bring some chairs into the parlor. A chorus of children, plus parents and extended family, all dressed for a ball, enter the stage. Song X*)

1.

CHORUS: Good ev'ning, good ev'ning, we're here every one.

FRU BITTERALMOND: Delighted you're here!

(*Aside*) How I wish you had simply never come!

CHORUS: We thank you, thank you, for this invitation.

FRU BITTERALMOND: My pleasure entirely!

SIMON: Oh what confusion!

CHORUS: Lis'n!

2.

Now, congratulations from one and from all.

FRU BITTERALMOND: How kindly you are.

(*Aside*) Devil take, take you, one and all!

CHORUS: God grant you long life and more days of sheer bliss.

FRU BITTERALMOND: My thanks everlasting!

SIMON: God save me from this!

CHORUS: Lis'n!

3.

FRU BITTERALMOND: I've little to offer, so please don't be cross.

CHORUS: We'll gratefully swallow what morsel you toss.

FRU BITTERALMOND: Oh, pickings are slim on the day of my birth!

CHORUS: You're always demeaning yourself and your worth!

Lis'n!

4.

Excuse's displease us and false modesty.

We did not come here to sip hot chocolate and tea!

There's rumor afoot that you've plenty of food,

Delectable dishes to heighten the mood!

Lis'n!

5.

When music will call for the dance to begin,

With body and spirit conjoining we'll jump in!

A MADAM (*Dragging along a small girl*): My dearest and best Fru Bitteralmond. As the mother of this bungling child, I must speak for her and her classmates about a most unfortunate incident.

FRU BITTERALMOND: Speak without hesitation, Madam. A day like this one has prepared me for any eventuality.

MADAM: Even one that has its source in an unspeakable evil?

FRU BITTERALMOND: Evil has stalked me since daybreak.

MADAM: Do you know what I'm about to say?

FRU BITTERALMOND: No, but I've had unbelievable problems of my own today and must soon apologize to all the guests for what is about to happen—I should say, what will not happen.

MADAM: Things are shaping up badly. But first, the guests—at least the pupils—owe you an apology.

FRU BITTERALMOND: But they have done nothing to apologize for.

MADAM: Oh yes they have!

FRU BITTERALMOND: Oh no they haven't!

MADAM: (*Loses her patience*): Damned if they don't, if you'd only shut up long enough to listen to me. We bought you a shawl for 70 Rigsdaler . . .

FRU BITTERALMOND: I know!

MADAM: You do? How?

FRU BITTERALMOND: Oh no, no, no, my apologies. I mis-spoke. What I meant to say was that a shawl for 70 Rigsdaler doesn't require an apology. That's expensive enough for the likes of me. My feelings aren't hurt.

MADAM: But my dear lady, I'm trying to tell you that there is no shawl to give you.

FRU BITTERALMOND: Why not?

MADAM: It's a bit complicated. The pupils drew straws to decide which one would have the honor of presenting the shawl and reciting a poem composed by Hr. Fop. My clumsy Karoline picked the short straw. But this hussy (*the girl begins to bawl loudly*) threw both shawl and poem into the gutter.

FRU BITTERALMOND: Well, the universe is in balance. For I must confess to the entire assembly that someone stole our supper and nearly all my dilettante artists are indisposed. In short, there'll be no food, no music, and no dance at my birthday party.

ALL ADULTS: Oh no!

ALL CHILDREN: What a bummer! (*They start crying.*)

FRU BITTERALMOND: Please don't cry, my children, don't cry. The thief did not make off with the cake. (*She attempts to open the closet door.*) The door must have slammed shut. Good grief, where's the key? (*Searches in her sewing bag.*) If I don't find it, there'll be no cake, either. Everything is so bewitched today. Ah, here it is! What a wonderful surprise I have for you. (*She opens the closet. Miss Trumpmeier steps out with a scarf over her face.*) Who in the world is this?

CHILDREN (*Shouting in unison*): Miss Trumpmeier!

FRU BITTERALMOND: What are you doing in there?

MISS TRUMPMEIER: I'm such a bashful person, you know. One of my shoelaces came undone, so I stepped into the closet to tie it. Someone closed the door on me. I was too embarrassed to cry for help.

CHILDREN (*Shouting in unison*): Our cake, Fru Bitteralmond!

FRU BITTERALMOND: Of course, my little lambs, I'll get it for you immediately. (*She walks into the closet and comes out holding Hr. Fop's jacket.*) What in the world is this?

CHILDREN (*Shouting in unison*): Hr. Fop's Sunday jacket!

MADAM PLEASANT: What were you doing with Hr. Fop's Sunday jacket, Miss Trumpmeier?

MISS TRUMPMEIER: Nothing! Believe me, I didn't know it was in there.

MADAM: It is very unseemly for an unmarried woman to be locked in a closet with a man's Sunday jacket.

FRU BITTERALMOND: Promise me, children, not a word about this outside these walls! Miss Trumpmeier's reputation is at stake.

MISS TRUMPMEIER: I'm simply dying of shame.

SIMON: Fiddlesticks! How can a man's coat, by mein soul, harm the woman's reputation?

CHILDREN (*Shouting in unison*): Our cake, Fru Bitteralmond!

FRU BITTERALMOND: Of course, of course! I'll find it for you now, I promise. (*She enters the closet again, and emerges with a plate containing only crumbs and a few small morsels.*) My God, Miss Trumpmeier! You ate the whole thing!

MISS TRUMPMEIER (*Bursts into tears*): How can you accuse me of such a vile act! I have no idea who ate it.

FRU BITTERALMOND: Never in my life have I seen such confusion. Here children, eat what's left. (*The plate circulates among the children.*) Now, where is Constance? Or Hr. Fop? Or Trine? One of them is bound to know why my institute turned chaos this afternoon. (*She attempts to open the door to Constance's room, but it's still locked.*) Constance, are you in there? Where can she be? I'm going for my master key right now!

THIRTIETH SCENE

(The door opens and Constance steps out, with Sigfrid in the background.)

CONSTANCE: I'll spare you the trouble, auntie.

FRU BITTERALMOND: What have we here? Why did you lock your door? *(As she attempts to enter the room, Sigfrid steps forward to block her way.)* Oh no! *(She begins to faint, but Sigfrid catches her before she can fall and leads her to a chair.)* This blow is the worst.

MADAM: Fru Bitteralmond, these are very tawdry examples for our children. What kind of institute are you directing?

FRU BITTERALMOND: My dear madam, I'm totally surprised myself. *(To Constance)* You shameless girl! Didn't I forbid you to see this damnable cabinetmaker? You know very well I've chosen Hr. Fop as your intended husband.

SIGFRID: Hr. Fop has relinquished all interest in making Constance his wife. It's in writing. Please, read it for yourself. *(Gives her the agreement that Hr. Fop signed under duress.)* Nothing should prevent Constance's engagement to me. I'm a qualified cabinetmaker. I make a good living.

FRU BITTERALMOND: I don't believe this piece of paper. If only Hr. Fop were here.

MISS TRUMPMEIER: He's closer than you think. Look under the table.

CHILDREN *(In unison)*: Under the table! *(They lift the tablecloth.)* Hr. Fop is hiding under the table! *(When Hr. Fop crawls out, the children shout and clap.)*

MADAM: My dearest Fru Bitteralmond! This has be the oddest institute in Copenhagen—a teacher in his shirt sleeves, hiding under a table?

HR. FOP: Hand me my jacket! *(As he puts it on, the children giggle.)*

FRU BITTERALMOND: This will be the death of me!

MADAM PLEASANT: I'm sure there's a reasonable explanation for his strange behavior.

FRU BITTERALMOND: Hr. Fop, is this an authentic document?

HR. FOP *(Hemming and hawing)*: Well, hm, well, ah . . .

SIGFRID *(Whispering to Hr. Fop)*: Say yes, immediately, or I'll tell everyone about your little adventure in the basket. You'll be a laughing-stock in the eyes of the children, despised by the parents, and never find work in Copenhagen again.

HR. FOP: Yes, Fru Bitteralmond, I signed this document.

SIGFRID: Therefore, I have no rivals for Constance's hand.

SIMON: Under the circumstances, dear lady, you must by mein soul approve their marriage. They were in her bedroom behind a locked door.

FRU BITTERALMOND: Then wed yourselves! The sooner, the better, so I am rid of this insolent girl.

SIMON: A great deal has, by mein soul, occurred in this house today. I think we should sit down and sort it out. But dear lady, I'm feeling very dry. Will you open a bottle of wine for us first?

FRU BITTERALMOND: My pleasure. But I'm too exhausted to leave this chair. Will someone bring a few bottles from the basket over there?

MADAM PLEASANT: I will, dear lady. *(Opens the lid on the basket.)* Oh no!

FRU BITTERALMOND: Did the thief steal the wine, too?

MADAM PLEASANT: Trine is sleeping in the basket. *(Several children run to the basket and look inside.)*

FRU BITTERALMOND: What?

MADAM PLEASANT *(Shouting)*: Trine, wake up! She's sleeping like a stone. *(With help from others, Madam Pleasant tips the basket a bit to reveal Trine sound asleep. Hans, who is also asleep and leaning against the basket, falls backwards with a thud, awakening them both.)*

TRINE: Huh?

HANS: Huh?

MADAM PLEASANT: Now, this is really too much to excuse! *(She sinks onto a chair.)*

FRU BITTERALMOND: God help me now! *(Trine, already halfway out of the basket, crawls out and stands up as Hans rises from the floor.)*

MADAM PLEASANT: This is beyond the pale, Fru Bitteralmond. You solemnly promised me that Hans Mortensen would never set foot inside this house again—and here he is, sleeping beside my Trine.

FRU BITTERALMOND: Can it get any worse than this?

SPARKLEMANN: Heavens preserve us! This is highly unseemly.

TRINE *(Rubbing the sleep from her eyes)*: I don't believe it, Hans! The sun is shining—we must have slept through the entire birthday concert and dance.

MADAM PLEASANT: I'm pulling Trine out of this institute immediately!

MADAM: My Karoline won't spend another day here, either.

OTHER PARENTS (*Speaking out*): Nor Marie, Lise, Sophie, Christiane, Rikke, etc.

SIGFRID: Hold on, everyone! Don't be hasty! While there are institutes with better discipline and a tighter curriculum than this one, keep in mind that accidental circumstances and April Fool's Day pranks caused most of the confusion. We've had some good laughs, but we meant no lasting harm to anyone, not even to Hr. Fop. My advice to everyone is, go home and get a good night's sleep before making a decision about your children's education. But before you leave, Fru Bitteralmond invites all of you to Constance's and my wedding, where we will provide the food, the music, and the dancing that you expected tonight.

MADAM: In the meantime, I'll wash and dry the shawl we bought for Fru Bitteralmond.

HR. FOP: Don't forget to clean my poem, too!

EVERYONE: Good! See you then!

CONCLUSION (SONG XI)

1.

SIGFRID: Fortune will oft make us her fool.
typical were the scenes before you.
Try as he may, his eye to fix,
He'll usually wallow in his beer.
Ev'ry day, a jest and poke,
Life is no more than an April fool's joke.

CHORUS: Ev'ry day, a jest and poke,
Life is no more than an April fool's joke.
Ev'ry day, a jest and poke,
Life is no more than an April fool's joke.
April fool's joke!

2.

CONSTANCE: Here on this stage we've tried to show
What oft transpires in the school of living.
Our institute has many woes,
Life is more than a drum and fife.
Life is short, art evermore,
But art can hold life's own mirror.

CHORUS: Life is short, art evermore,
But art can hold life's own mirror.
Life is short, art evermore,
But art can hold life's own mirror.
Life's own mirror.

3.

HR. FOP: Amor made me his fool,
Thrice I became a taken fellow.
I'll revenge, outside this school,
Find me a widow, wealthy and old,
She can be courted short of love,
Why need I ask for help above?

CHORUS: She can be courted short of love,
Why need he ask for help above?
She can be courted short of love,
Why need he ask for help above?
For help above?

4.

MISS TRUMPMEIER: When a girl, my fondest hope
Was to roam free of rules and classrooms.
Though I now wear a lady's cloak,
School will still likely tailor my tomb.
Day in, day out, I plod along,
Life is always more than a song.

CHORUS: Day in, day out, she plods along,
Life is always more than a song.
Day in, day out, she plods along,
Life is always more than a song,
more than a song!

5.

FRU BITTERALMOND: Pity the poor one who is born
On February twenty-nine.
When there's a party, who will come?
Leap-year will be something to pine.
Yet those like me have fared far worse.
For we are born on April first.

CHORUS: Yet those like her have fared far worse.
 For they are born on April first.
 Yet those like her have fared far worse.
 For they are born on April first,
 on April first!

6.

HANS: Many a lesson goes kaput.
 Though my mind can ne'er stop thinking
 Of turmoil seen in this institute,
 Leaving me shaking, blinking and dazed.
 When I'm grown withered, old and gray.
 I will never forget this day.

CHORUS: When he's grown withered, old and gray,
 he will never forget this day.
 When he's grown withered, old and gray,
 he will never forget this day.
 forget this day!

7.

TRINE: Life is short, art evermore.
 So we have staged a vaudeville,
 For your mind and for your joy.
 Something to ponder, pleasures galore.
 Do we deserve a clap or two?
 Make us not into an April fool.

CHORUS: Do we deserve a clap or two?
 Make us not into an April fool.
 Do we deserve a clap or two?
 Make us not into an April fool,
 an April fool!

AFTERWORD

Johan Ludvig Heiberg was the only child of an infamous *mésalliance* in Scandinavian cultural history. His mother, Thomasine (Buntzen) Heiberg, was raised in a prosperous, middle-class Copenhagen household. Her father was a shipping broker and amateur astronomer with a rationalist, deistic worldview. Her mother developed an intense pietistic religiosity after the death of an infant son, then died in a subsequent childbirth. Young Thomasine Buntzen immersed herself in pietistic tracts and Romantic literature; her favorites were Goethe's *Sufferings of Young Werther* and Rousseau's *La nouvelle Héloïse*. To counteract this orientation, her father hired Peter Andreas Heiberg, who shared his Enlightenment disposition, to tutor her and her sisters. P. A. Heiberg came from Norwegian stock. He had written essays in the style of the English writers, Jonathan Swift and Samuel Johnson, and plays in the vein of the Danish-Norwegian playwright, Ludvig Holberg. Tutor and oldest pupil became infatuated with each other and were married in 1790. P. A. Heiberg was thirty-two, Thomasine Heiberg seventeen. John Ludvig Heiberg was born in December 1791.

During the 1790s, the Heibergs entertained emissaries from France, exiles from Sweden, and republican-minded Danes. He incurred the wrath of several high-ranking individuals in the Danish absolute monarchy when he defended Robespierre's radical and violent leadership in the French Revolution. He was found guilty of lese majesty after a sensational trial, during which P. A. Heiberg published the proceedings and thereby popularized republican principles. When the death sentence was commuted to permanent exile, the Danish republican found congenial hosts in Paris and eventually worked for Talleyrand as a translator in the French Foreign Office. But in the year after he was escorted to the Danish-German border, P. A. Heiberg still entertained hopes for a royal pardon. His wife, however, had different hopes. Thomasine Heiberg did her best to thwart her husband's return because she had begun an affair with C. F. Gyllembourg, a Swede exiled for a minor role in the assassination of King Gustav III. When she eventually informed her husband and asked for a divorce, he reluctantly agreed on the condition that he retained legal custody of their child. The divorce decree in December 1801 gave Thomasine Heiberg her freedom, reinstated her husband's exile, and left ten-year old Johan Ludvig Heiberg in limbo: his father had legal custody but did not want him to leave Denmark as the Napoleonic Wars intensified.

The upshot for young Heiberg was two very unsatisfactory placements with foster parents in Copenhagen, but a first-rate education. He

had several private tutors including Hans Christian Ørsted, the natural philosopher and discoverer of electromagnetism, who prepped him well for the entrance examinations to the University of Copenhagen. In 1817, Heiberg was awarded a doctorate after writing a dissertation on the Spanish dramatist, Cervantes—an early favorite of his father's. Shortly thereafter, Heiberg left on a state-funded scholarship to write a book about Spanish drama. A stopover in Paris to visit his father turned into a three-year holiday, albeit the official explanation was that he was undertaking research in natural history at the Botanical Gardens. In 1822, the Danish monarch appointed Heiberg lecturer in Danish language and literature at the University of Kiel in the Danish duchy of Holstein. On a holiday in Berlin during 1824, he met Hegel and several of Hegel's disciples. Hegel's philosophy offered Heiberg a synthesis of the antagonistic versions of Romantic and Enlightenment worldviews that had separated his own parents and had created a hostile climate of opinion in contemporary northern and western Europe. Shortly after his Berlin trip, Heiberg became a corresponding member of an emerging Young Hegelian movement, with a particular commitment to popularize his master in Scandinavia.

When university authorities in Kiel and Copenhagen hindered his efforts to make Danish palatable to German-speaking students, Heiberg grew discouraged with his situation. In 1825, he visited family in Copenhagen during the Easter holidays and then feigned illness to keep from having to return to Kiel. Although Heiberg continued to draw a salary, he hoped to establish himself as a free-lance playwright and essayist in Copenhagen. Past efforts were not encouraging, however. Two youthful satires of the established Danish Romantics, B. S. Ingemann and N. F. S. Grundtvig, had brought him fleeting notoriety. Two dramas were flops.

He decided to take a different tack. During the summer and early fall, he wrote the first Danish vaudeville, *King Salomon and Jørgen the Hatter*; its premiere on 28 November 1825 set in motion a box-office bonanza for the financially strapped Royal Theater. Three additional vaudevilles premiered in 1826, including *The April Fools*. But a cabal of critics turned the fourth vaudeville into a circus of catcalls and hooting, after which the directors of the Royal Theater suspended performances of all the vaudevilles while Heiberg plotted a rejoinder. His essay *On the Vaudeville* (1826) situated the genre within the tradition of Danish comedies from Ludvig Holberg to P. A. Heiberg. When his critics failed to mount a persuasive response, the Royal Theater resumed performances of the most popular of Heiberg's four vaudevilles already in the repertoire. But Heiberg's financial situation was still precarious. At the

time, the Royal Theater paid an honorarium for plays that were performed five times; thereafter, playwrights received no royalties, regardless how often their works were staged. So Heiberg wrote new Danish vaudevilles and translated others. In the next few seasons, one of every four performances was a Heiberg vaudeville. His two-decade dominance of the Danish Royal Stage had begun.

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Although financial considerations were paramount in the creation of the first Danish vaudevilles, Heiberg's substantive objective was to popularize Hegelian philosophy. Like his mentor, Heiberg believed that the fundamental, recurring pattern in world history was a gradual increase in the amount of real freedom. At any one time, however, such freedom was inconsistently diffused over the globe and often ephemeral. That is, in some societies only one person—an absolute monarch, for example—was sovereign in life, liberty, and property; while in others, many people enjoyed the sovereignty associated with full citizenship such as outlined in the French "Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen" (1789). In Heiberg's mind, the only essential requirement for citizenship in any country was sufficient education to develop the mental faculties necessary for clear and independent reasoning. If people could be trained to reflect on how they conducted their everyday lives, they would directly improve their own well-being, indirectly promote social welfare, and contribute to the actualization of freedom in the world. All Heiberg's vaudevilles posed problems for the audience to ponder: Are we educating our children properly? What social and political rights do Danes currently have, and do they match our constitutional entitlements? How do we treat the less fortunate in society? Are courtship mores outmoded and destructive to personal happiness? What are the social consequences of unchecked greed?

In 1827—flush from his successful defense of the vaudeville as a genuine form of Danish comedy—Heiberg launched a journal, *Copenhagen's Flying Post*, that would provide a systematic, Hegelian response to such questions. Heiberg hoped *The Flying Post* (as it was frequently called) would stimulate educated Danes, women as well as men, to reflect on every aspect of contemporary life: personal, domestic, civil society, and the state. This was a problem-based journal, just like the vaudevilles: How do we spend our time? What do we read? Do we organize our daily lives to accomplish productive goals? How should we behave at home, at the theater, and in civil society? What authors in Denmark and elsewhere in Europe are on the cutting edge of historical change?

Heiberg's popularization of Hegelian philosophy was a systematic, broad-ranging cultural critique of Danish society and Danish absolutism that established him as a major intellectual figure during the second quarter of the nineteenth century.¹⁸ Politically, he opposed the importation of English and French models of classical liberalism that began with the formulation of consultative assemblies in the 1830s. He believed that the natural law tradition, with its focus on individualism and limited government, in conjunction with free trade were at odds with modern Danish political traditions. His alternative was a variation on Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*: an organic framework in which family and state nurture individual development and buffer the excesses of capitalism in civil society.

Heiberg's influence on Danish cultural life was complemented by his mother's novellas and his wife's acting. Fru Gyllembourg—the name she kept after her second husband died in 1813—wrote the first of many *Tales from Everyday Life* for Heiberg's *Flying Post*. Although she maintained nominal anonymity, her authorship was assumed since Heiberg listed himself as the editor of her novellas. The socio-cultural arguments in Fru Gyllembourg's "everyday tales" matched the philosophy of her son's vaudevilles and journal. Heiberg's wife, the former Johanne Luise Pätges, made her acting debut in *The April Fools* and by the 1830s was a leading actress at the Royal Theater. For a half-century, Fru Heiberg was an embodiment of her husband's theatrical works and principles. As in *The April Fools*, he wrote many roles with her particular talents at characterization in mind.

To a degree, Heiberg replicated his parents' courtship. The adult male infatuation with prepubescent girls characteristic of P. A. Heiberg's era was still pervasive in the 1820s. Heiberg was thirty-four when he began courting thirteen year-old Johanne Luise Pätges. To win her, he had to fend off another man who considered himself informally engaged because of prior contacts with the Pätges family. Her father was a drunkard; her mother ran a tavern near the King's Nytorv (in central Copenhagen) and kept a stall at an amusement park north of the city. Their ethnic backgrounds were Germanic-Jewish.

Both of Johanne Luise Pätges' suitors offered her opportunities to improve her situation—with the support of her parents. Heiberg gained his own mother's alliance in a plan of Pygmalion proportions: Pätges would live in Fru Gyllembourg's apartment, where Heiberg would informally tutor her to suit his image of a cultivated person. Pätges' parents agreed to Heiberg's plan, the other suitor committed suicide, and mother and son gradually shaped the young woman to their liking. In 1831,

Johanne Luise Pätges became Fru Heiberg. After a few years, Fru Gyllembourg joined the couple in a roomy apartment in Christianshavn, where the Heiberg circle gathered regularly for many years.

Among those who aspired to join this circle were Hans Christian Andersen and Søren Kierkegaard. Andersen's first publications were in the *Flying Post*, and he considered Heiberg his mentor. But when Heiberg criticized his earliest vaudevilles and novellas, Andersen withdrew from the Heiberg circle and—some have argued—wrote fairy tales that often satirized that circle. Andersen never lost his interest in and respect for Fru Heiberg, however, as Per-Olov Enquist depicted in a play, *Scenes from an Earthworm's Life* (*Från regnormans liv*). Kierkegaard, too, rejected Heiberg as mentor but kept a flame going for Fru Heiberg. The *Flying Post* was also the venue for Kierkegaard's literary debut in the mid-1830s. He cut his philosophical teeth on Heiberg's books on Hegelian logic but soon found Heiberg's religion of humanity much too tepid. Mentor and pupil were soon at odds, although they often maintained a cordiality that always eluded Heiberg and Andersen.

In 1849, Heiberg became managing director of the Royal Theater. By then, however, his pre-naturalistic stage policies and Hegelian aesthetic principles were no longer in tune with public demands or current literary trends. Several years into Heiberg's tenure, Henrik Ibsen, then artistic director at the Bergen Theater, visited Copenhagen to study stage management. He was graciously received by the Heibergs. It must have come as a shock, therefore, when Heiberg rejected *The Warriors of Helgeland* in 1858 on the grounds that its nationalistic hero-worship heightened a bygone Romanticism. Ibsen shifted his stance, eventuating in naturalistic dramas that featured the problem-based realism that characterized Heiberg's vaudevilles. Georg Brandes, the literary critic in the vanguard of the self-styled "modern breakthrough" of naturalism in Scandinavia, also learned Hegelian philosophy and aesthetics from Heiberg's popularizations. Both Ibsen and Brandes connected the naturalism they espoused in the last quarter of the nineteenth century to the realism in Heiberg's vaudevilles. But Heiberg never saw the "modern breakthrough." He died in 1860.³³

Heiberg wrote thirteen vaudevilles, all characterized by a light hand and a playful mind. As a genre, vaudevilles began in France during the eighteenth century as multi-act parodies of popular plays, often operas. What Heiberg probably saw during his three-year stay in Paris was the Scribean version. Eugène Scribe and collaborators (chiefly Casimir Delavigne) created comedies, interrupted by short songs, that reflected



current popular interests. They featured clear plot lines, complex situations, and witty dialogue by characters always in conflict about something. Although his characters are often in the dark about happenings, the audience is not. The Scribean vaudeville has an inexorable logic of development, often carried out in multiple acts, within which there were seamless scene shifts. During visits to Hamburg when he was an instructor at the University of Kiel, Heiberg saw at least one Germanic variation (a *Liederposse*) on the French vaudeville.

Although Heiberg eventually translated many Scribean vaudevilles for Scandinavian stages, he considered those he wrote himself uniquely Danish. As a genre, "Danish vaudevilles" are one-act, social problem comedies in which the situations especially critical to plot development are highlighted by songs. Heiberg primarily wrote lyrics to currently popular and well-known melodies—tunes from recently performed musicals and operas, folksongs, ballads, and so forth.²⁰ He would use original melodies, however, often ones he wrote himself. Heiberg's settings were always recognizable and contemporary. His characters tended to come from a broad range of social groups, and like Molière and Holberg, the wisest heads rarely sat on well-educated necks—servants, frequently female, children, and artisans usually convey the moral lesson in Heiberg's vaudevilles.

...

Our translation of *The April Fools* (*Aprilsnarrene*) seeks to replicate Heiberg's tone via American-English everyday speech, such as colloquial and idiomatic expressions, slang, and informal syntax—all of

which Heiberg used in a musical comedy that was exceedingly popular among Copenhagen residents from all social layers. *The April Fools* was written as a period piece and performed as a farce. Heiberg chose, and the Royal Theater conveyed, familiar situations and localities, current problems, and—when royal censors did not object—recognizable personalities.²¹ *The April Fools* is still performed. Danish repertory companies take creative license in adapting outdated allusions to contemporary audiences, while remaining faithful to the spirit of Heiberg's original vaudeville. We follow their suit.

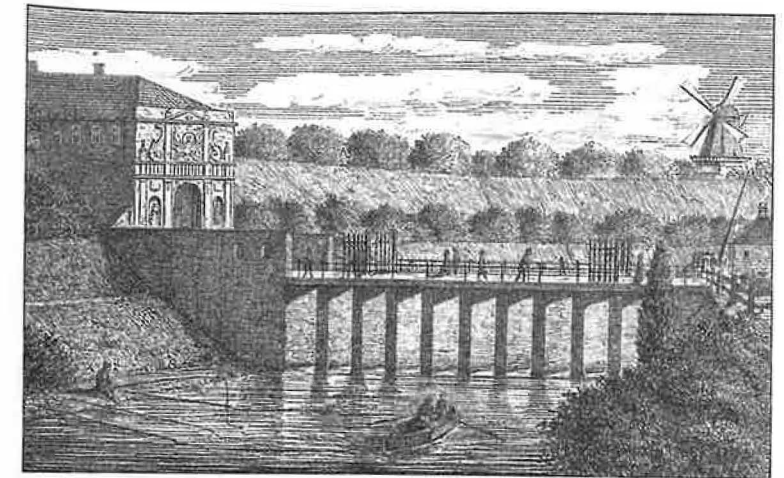
We have preserved those titles and occupational designations essential to understanding the butt of Heiberg's social critique in *The April Fools*: a sudden proliferation of educationally suspect girls' institutes and finishing schools in the first decade after the Battle of Waterloo. All titles in Denmark in the first half of the nineteenth century were freighted with cultural implications of membership in overlapping—and rapidly changing—social and economic categories. Heiberg called it "a period of transition" between vestiges of feudalism and an emerging modern era of liberal capitalism. He thought it had started with a sudden burst of enlightened absolutism in the 1780s, waned somewhat early in the ill-fated alliance with Napoleon, then rapidly escalated again with national bankruptcy in 1812, loss of Norway in 1814, and a protracted postwar recession. Social changes were no less striking. For centuries, Danes had sorted themselves into broad social estates: *Bondestand* (peasants), *Borgerstand* (burghers), *Krigstand* (soldiers and sailors), *Den geistlige Stand* (clergy), and *Den adelige Stand* (nobility). The 1801 census, however, sorted 925,680 Danes into twenty-two categories, including capitalists, manufacturers, merchants, artisans, and day laborers in towns; large property owners, farm owners, tenant farmers, and cottagers in the country; clergymen, teachers, civil servants, and domestic servants in town and country; seafaring folk; and people attached to the armed forces. This complex array of occupational designations symbolizes the extensive alterations in Danish landscapes and country life wrought by the enclosure movement, scientific agriculture and animal husbandry. The new designations also indicate that the sixty-six provincial towns and Copenhagen were contending with an influx of displaced country folk, with industrial and free-trade challenges to the medieval guild system, and with a disaffected intelligentsia.²²

When Heiberg wrote *The April Fools* in 1826, the population of Denmark was approaching one and a quarter million. Eight of every ten Danes still lived in rural areas, while over one hundred thousand people, nearly half of all urban residents in the country, were crammed within the moats of fortified Copenhagen.

The April Fools is about life in the Danish capital during this "period of transition." Although the northwestern quarters were gradually being reconstructed to modern specifications after the English bombardment of 1807, housing conditions and street layouts in the rest of the city harkened backward; the two quarters called the "new city" had been swamps and landfills until late in the seventeenth century. Almost half of all Copenhageners were engaged in crafts or trade, or depended on someone who was. The 1834 census placed all craftsmen in the "industrial class," but their occupational loyalties belonged to self-governing artisan guilds or commercial and professional companies chartered by the monarchy in the middle ages. Among them, master craftsmen and directors dominated local government in the provinces and retained a strong political presence in Copenhagen. Small shopkeepers and peddlers were not as politically powerful, but in Copenhagen there were twice as many of them as there were academic burghers—men who had passed the entrance examination for Copenhagen University.

Heiberg wanted *The April Fools* to reflect contemporary life in the capital, where he was born, educated, and resided again after a five-year interlude in Paris and Hamburg. By and large, the list of characters matches the new census categories. The industrial class is represented by a master cabinetmaker, Sigfrid Møller (Miller), and a journeyman from the guild of wine merchants. Trade occupations are represented by a fruit and wild game retailer, Madam Rar (Pleasant), her dependent daughter, Trine, and a shopkeeper's assistant. Hr. Zierlich (Fop) is an academic burgher, but he would have been tallied in the same census category with the itinerant private tutor, Frøken Trumpmeier (Miss Trumpmeier), the dancing master, Tennemann (Sparklemann), and a journeyman from the barber-surgeon company, Fugtel (Moisty). The social category covering pensioners, capitalists, and entrepreneurs is represented by the widowed headmistress, Enkefrue Bittermandel (Fru Bitteralmond, a widow), her dependent niece, Constance, her housemaid, and a hair stylist, Vinke (Wavy). The soldier of fortune, Simon, might have been listed as a soldier, a pensioner, or someone without a distinct occupation. The other Madam and Hans Mortensen would both have been listed as dependents, probably in either the artisan or trade categories.

The characters' titles, or lack thereof, reflect the changes underway in Danish urban society in the mid-1820s. Hr. Fop was a casualty of intellectual overproduction; he worked in a private institute because there was no job for him at Copenhagen University, a classical school, or a royal academy. An emergent intellectual proletariat is also present in the vaudeville: a female instructor and a male dancing master, both of



whom stitch together a living as part-time teachers and private tutors, as well as a barber-surgeon who poses as a general practitioner.

The social problem in *The April Fools* is the deplorable education offered in private institutes for girls in Copenhagen. Heiberg's purpose was to stimulate debate about how the Danish law mandating universal primary education (the first in Europe) could be better implemented than through a poorly monitored combination of public and private ventures. In other vaudevilles, he launched scathing critiques of current social and cultural problems such as status consciousness among provincial burghers who sought to imitate their Copenhagen counterparts; sycophantic deference to undeserving authority-figures; the narrow-minded and precious viewpoints of academic literary critics; and the demeaning effects of restrictive courting customs.

...

The Royal Theater in Heiberg's time was composed of distinct companies—musical, ballet, and dramatic. Some of the actors specialized in particular genres and roles, others moved easily among the comedies and dramas regularly added to the repertoire. Unlike many theaters today, where a single piece is solely performed for weeks, months, or, in a few cases, years, the Royal Theater mounted scores of different works every season. Audience reaction decided if a new work was performed more than a couple of times. Season ticket-holders did not fill a house that could hold 1500; hawkers who controlled the seats in the galleries could. If a play was popular, hawkers printed their own tickets and crammed gallery boxes to the bursting point. Word of mouth in the streets of Copenhagen often determined whether a play would be repeat-



ed. Heiberg's vaudevilles were phenomenally popular from 1825 until the mid-1830s and modestly popular for the remainder of the century. Apparently, people enjoyed the realism of the vaudevilles—familiar settings, characters remindful of themselves and their neighbors, current issues, and especially memorable, eminently singable songs. Entrepreneurs printed sheet music of Heiberg's songs, which ballad grannies sold in the streets, often singing a few verses to attract the attention of potential purchasers (see the cover illustration).

The directors of the Royal Theater knew they had a cash cow when they saw patrons queuing for tickets to Heiberg's early vaudevilles. Since these vaudevilles were only one act, the Directors supplemented each performance with a second work—sometimes another vaudeville by Heiberg or his disciples. In Heiberg's lifetime, his thirteen vaudevilles were performed a total of 738 times, nearly one-third during the first decade of his popularizing activity. He wrote another eleven original works for the Danish stage, including a five-act variant on the vaudeville form, *Elves Hill* (*Elverhøj*), which is still considered Denmark's "national comedy" and regularly performed. By 1889, there had been over 1600 performances of Heiberg's original stage works.²³ *The April Fools* is a sample of what made Johan Ludvig the most frequently performed playwright on the Danish royal stage in the nineteenth century.

ENDNOTES

¹ The school depicted by Heiberg would probably have been situated on the ground floor of a corner house at a street intersection. Most houses in central Copenhagen were attached, with contiguous frontage often extending an entire block. A corner apartment would have been roomy enough to contain sufficient instructional space on one floor. The foyer, with a front entrance to the street, served as a connecting room between the assembly hall and the parlor. The kitchen at the back of the apartment was off the foyer, as well. Fru Bitteralmond used the parlor (rather than the assembly hall) as a school room so she could monitor the instruction from her bedroom. Fru Bitteralmond, Constance, and the servants lived at the school. The spatial layout of the girls' institute depicted in *The April Fools* was atypical for Copenhagen private schools at the time—Heiberg's way, perhaps, of suggesting from the outset that his fictional school was educationally suspect. See Carol Gold, "Educational Reform in Denmark, 1784–1814," in James A. Leith (ed.), *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, 167 (1977): 49–63 and *Educating Middle Class Daughters*, (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanums Forlag, 1996) for a discussion of historical context relevant to Heiberg's satire in the vaudeville.

² Complete scores of all songs are located in the appendixes.

³ Here, Heiberg satirizes a group of writers at Sorø Akademi who had criticized Heiberg's first two vaudevilles as vulgar pandering to an uneducated public. Instead, the Sorø faction argued that the Danish Royal Stage should be reserved for "serious" plays such as Adam Oehlenschläger's tragedies.

⁴ Rigsdaler is a variant of the German term, Reichsthaler, meaning coin of the realm. One Rigsdaler = 6 Mark or 96 skillinger (1 Mark = 16 skillinger).

⁵ Although many women used snuff in the 18th century, its use by burgher class women in the 1820s was considered ill-mannered. Thus Heiberg used another incident to point out that the female teachers in this school were culturally and socially unsophisticated examples for their pupils.

⁶ Dinner, the main meal of the day, was eaten between 2:00 and 3:00 in the afternoon. Trine mentions two inexpensive dishes—*sagosuppe* (a soup made with grains from the sago tree) and *frikadeller* (meatballs).

⁷ A German singing society, Quintchordium, visited Copenhagen in 1819. The same year, a Danish Quartcordium was founded, which was immediately copied by amateur singing groups who specialized in quartets. One of these was a student quartet, which included C. N. Rosenkilde (the actor who played Hans in the original productions of *The April Fools*) and the composer, H. E. Krøyer. Krøyer initially composed the melody that Heiberg used in Song IV for this student quartet.

⁸ Confectioners specializing in tortes, cakes, and pastries had been popular in Copenhagen since the late 1780s.

⁹ Simon sings to the melody, "Di tanti palpiti, di tante pene," from Rossini's *Tamerado*, performed at the Royal Theater in 1820. Heiberg is poking fun at Simon and Fru Bitteralmond; they claim to be cultivated but mistake the Italian word, "tanti," for the Danish "tante," which means aunt.

¹⁰Moisty refers to three songs that were popular in Copenhagen during the mid-1820s. Although he mangles the titles, Moisty's versions were close enough for the audience to have known what he meant.

¹¹Wavy means to say, eau de cologne.

¹²In the original, Miss Trumpmeier tells Trine to read passages from "Hallagers Læsebog": Marten Hallager, *ABC instructif pour apprendre aux enfants les éléments de la langue françoise* (1797; 7th ed. in 1824).

¹³In Danish, vanité sounds like "vand i te"—literally, water in tea.

¹⁴*Regula de Tri*: The rule for finding the fourth element in a proposition when one knows three of them.

¹⁵Moerskabs-Theatret in Vesterbro, located just outside the city embankments to the southwest, was established in 1817; pantomime was performed during the summer months (the cherry season) when the Royal Theater was closed.

¹⁶"In diesen heiligen Hallen," from Mozart's *The Magic Flute*, which had its Copenhagen debut a few months earlier. Miss Trumpmeier chose an aria that was far outside the range of Trine's alto voice—suggesting Heiberg's critique of musical instruction in contemporary private institutes.

¹⁷Actually, an extract from Poul Martin Møller's comedy, *Scenes from the Rosenborg Gardens* (Scener i Rosenberg Have) was performed at the Palace Theater on 12 February 1826 with Heiberg in attendance. He was fascinated by the interactions between two characters named Hans and Trine—as well as captivated by a fourteen year-old student from the ballet corps of the Royal Theater, Johanne Luise Pätges, who was cast as Trine. Heiberg decided to write a vaudeville which featured Ms. Pätges in a role that was sure to be successful—as Trine in *The April Fools*. Several years later, Johanne Luise Pätges became Fru Heiberg.

¹⁸See Bruce H. Kirmmse, *Kierkegaard in Golden Age Denmark* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990) for a discussion of Heiberg's Hegelian philosophy, primarily as set forth in published lectures from his stint as an instructor at the Royal Military College in Copenhagen.

¹⁹See Henning Fenger and Frederick J. Marker, *The Heibergs* (New York: Twayne, 1971) for a fuller treatment of all four individuals.

²⁰The most comprehensive analysis of the music in Heiberg's vaudevilles is Torben Krogh, *Heiberg's Vaudeviller. Studier over Motiver og Melodier* (Copenhagen: Branner, 1942). We have used the scores for *The April Fools* published by Erik Bøgh, *Den Danske Vaudeville* (Copenhagen: Hansen, 189?), 13–28.

²¹For additional discussion of the vaudeville as a genre, see Carl S. Petersen, ed., Johan Ludvig Heiberg, *Poetiske Skrifter* (Copenhagen: Gad, 1931), i-xxi, as well as his notes to a reprint of *The April Fools*.

²²Folketælling (census) of 1801 and 1834. Copenhagen: County Archives for Sjælland.

²³Arthur Aumont and Edgar Collin, *Det Danske Nationaltheater, 1748–1889. En statistisk Fremstilling* (Copenhagen, 1896–99; for dates of individual performances, see vol 5, as well as Arthur Aumont, *J.L. Heiberg og hans Slægt paa den danske Skueplads* (Copenhagen: 1891). In addition to writing original works for the Royal Theater, Heiberg translated twenty-nine plays and operettas, many of them French and German vaudevilles.

GLOSSARY OF PLACE-NAMES

Christianshavn. Christian's Harbor. The easternmost district in Copenhagen, across the inner harbor from the central part of the city, but within the walls.

Gammelmynt. The Old Mint.

Gother's Street. Gothersgade.

Grønnegade. Green Street.

Hestemøllestræde. Horse-mill Lane.

Kastellet. The Citadel.

Langebrog. Long Bridge.

Nørrefæll. The Northern Common, outside the walls of Copenhagen.

Peder Madsens Gang. Peder Madsen's Alley, a major bordello district.

Sorø. A town in mid-Zealand, approximately 45 miles by coach from Copenhagen.

Vester Bridge. Vesterbro, a residential area outside the western gate to Copenhagen (not a bridge).

Østervold. Eastern Ramparts, the area abutting the eastern fortifications within Copenhagen.

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