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Don Juans in Retirement Land: The Last Drama Quintet 1956

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DON JUANS IN RETIREMENT LAND

THE LAST DRAMA QUINTET

Setting:

Six large speaker's stands are arranged in a semi circle around the stage, each equipped with a reading lamp and microphone. In front of each and very visible to the audience is a large sign with the name of the character on it.

Music:

The music consists of the following pieces:

"Morning" from Peer Gynt

"Wedding March" from Lohengrin

"The Yellow Rose of Texas"

"Ach Du Leiber Augustine"

"Shine, Little Glowworm"

"Pomp and Circumstance"

"There'll Be a Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight"

A piano and violin would do well for all but the last. For that a trombone and perhaps other wind instruments should be added. Musicians should cue in promptly where music is called for. They might be given copies of the script for this purpose.

Properties:

Something resembling steamship tickets will be needed by the Counselor. Knauss should be equipped with a pipe, and Plough with a pocket flash light.

Characterizations:

The writers of the dialogue have conceived of the parts as being read "rather broadly" in the following styles:

J. Moore Brown: with care to diction and a suggestion of a Harvard accent, somewhat in the style of Milton Cross

M. Gary Wichers: with deep voice, slowly and with great authority and dignity

Edie Knauss: in a naughty schoolboy manner, rather saucy and impertinent

P. Henderson Henderson: in the style of Dennis Day - definitely

H. Barker Plough: like Will Rogers or Herb Shriner

E. Carter - Counselor

DON JUANS IN RETIREMENT LAND

THE LAST DRAMA QUINTET

Curtain rises on a completely dark stage. As the identities of the various speakers are established, one by one, reading lights come on at the speakers' stands arranged in a semi circle. When all identities are established, the stage is lighted. As the curtain rises on this dark stage, music is heard playing "Morning" from Peer Gynt.

Wichers: William! Are you there?

Brown: Yes, Wynant. Here I am. Where is H. Glenn?

Henderson: I'm here. Is John around?

Plough: I'm here, too, but what about Jim?

Knauss: I'm here. Donner and Blitzen! What's this all about? Isn't this where they said to meet? Where are the lights? Wynant, did you forget to notify Maintenance?

Wichers: No, James, I didn't forget. But you must remember there isn't any Maintenance where we are now. We've new adjustments to make. The important thing is that we all seem to be here.

Brown: I'll not take another step until someone gets a light. Emmy wouldn't approve. I'm sure she wouldn't approve.

Henderson: (chants) The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light.

Brown: Well, I don't require a great light.

Plough: I don't either; this little one will do. (He flashes a pocket light.) I always carry this. Never know when I'll have to get under the hood of that Studebaker. There -----! (As he flashes the light around, it picks up the face of the Counselor, who has been silent all this time.) What the ----! Who's this? Look, fellows, I've turned up something. Say, friend, can you help us out?

Counselor: Precisely why I am here. It's my function - and I might say if circumstances reveal themselves as I hope - my pleasure, also, to

greet you and to examine your credentials and to be certain that you have been laminated. (Before he finishes speaking the whole stage has been lighted.)

Knauss: Haven't we had enough of that sort of thing! Thought that was what we were gettin' away from!

Wichers: Quiet, James, the man is serious.

Counselor: I am indeed. It is important that you give close attention to what I have to say.

Brown: (giggles nervously) Goodness, he's intense! You'd think we were freshmen.

Counselor: You are, my friends, you are. And I am your Counselor. I have come to judge whether or not you are prepared for the great course ahead of you. You are about to undergo your orientation. (He points to them one by one as he asks the following questions in a kind of rhythm, not waiting for replies.)

Have you filed your application?

Do you have your identification?

Are you checked for infiltration?

Have you had your notification?

Do you believe in participation?

Did you attend the convocation?

Ah! You are ready to be counseled.

All: Counseled! We're professors!

Knauss: (aside) Too much regimentation.

Counselor: May we have order here. You are indeed professors, but you are about to profess new and great pleasures and I must determine your readiness. I must be sure of your aptitudes, your achievements, and your A.Q.

Henderson: What's an A.Q.?

Counselor: Indeed! It's your Adjustability Quotient. Let us proceed.

Which of you has been waiting longest?

Henderson: I've been waiting 43 years.

Brown: Not so fast, H. Glenn. Are you counting those last four years off the Western Reservation?

Henderson: I was always a member of the Tribe. The wampum came regularly.

Counselor: Very well. Your status is certainly determined by the source of your compensation - and its regularity. Your case will be considered first.

Knauss: (To audience) Arbitrary dum dumeling!

Counselor: There is a problem there, however, of your isolating yourself from the group. In Retirement Land we can't have unsocial behavior. Do you ordinarily retreat from the social situation?

Henderson: I play duets. Once I even played in a trio. I play all the time when people are being joined together.
(The music plays the Wedding March.)

Counselor: Splendid! Splendid!

Brown: (Raising his hand) I sing tenor.

Counselor: Indeed! In a quartet, I trust. Who are you?

Brown: William Robinson Brown. Doctor William Robinson Brown, one of the well known Kitty's favorites at Harvard - born at Leander, Texas.
(As he says Texas, the music off stage plays "The Yellow Rose of Texas.")

Counselor: (Thoughtfully) And do you consider that Harvard has prepared you for retirement?

Brown: No, but 39 years of Chaucer has.

Counselor: Have! You mean have. Remember, Sir, we are not to grow careless in Retirement Land.

Wichers: Thirty-nine years of Chaucer! Nothing at all, my dear William, nothing at all. You should have been president of a Dutch college.

Knauss: Dutch! Dutch?

Wichers: Not your brand of Dutch.

Henderson: Don't take that, Jim. Don't take that. Are you a man or a Knauss?

Knauss: (swelling up) I'm a Knauss. What's the matter with my "brand" of Dutch? Didn't they discover America? Didn't they settle the Atlantic sea board?

Brown: So that's what he's been teaching in his classes for the last thirty years!

Counselor: Is this true? Have you been emphasizing subject matter?

Knauss: I've only been seeking proper recognition of an unappreciated minority group.
(the music plays "Ach du lieber Augustine")

Counselor: Your purpose seems worthy. But I'm disturbed about this overall situation here. I feel a lack of balance in this group. We have here Harvard, the Atlantic Sea Board, a college presidency, organ playing! All a bit high-flown. Have we no appreciation of the simple life, of the common man?

Plough: (humbly, raising his hand) I like bullhead fishing

Counselor: (astonished) Bullhead fishing!

Plough: Yah, bullhead fishing - and I like horseshoes, too.

Counselor: I suppose those could be group activities and they're certainly simple! Where have you engaged in this extraordinary behavior?

Plough: At Wall Lake. I'm John Plough, president of the North Wall Lake Improvement Association. My wife's secretary-treasurer, too.

Counselor: And what does this impressive sounding organization do?

Plough: It improves Wall Lake. It keeps people away. A fellow can go out there in a boat and catch bullheads and think and think and think - all by himself.

(the music plays "Shine, Little Glow-worm, Shine")

Counselor: You mean, think alone. Very undemocratic! Very questionable!
You need further counseling.

Plough: I don't need any counseling. I've got this retirement business all figured out. Just give me my Studebaker and a rowboat.

Counselor: Obviously you have a low A.Q. For the moment I shall suspend your case and turn to the next item on the agenda that I find significant. That concerns this Dutch controversy.

Wichers
and : (both raise hands.) Here I am.
~~Knauss~~

Wichers: (To Knauss) Her majesty, Queen Wilhelmina has recognized only one of us. (to Counselor) I am Sir Wynand of the Order of Orange-Nassau.
(The music plays "Pomp and Circumstance")

~~Knauss~~: Oh, take your finger out of the dyke, Wynand.

Counselor: Sir Wynand! And does this decoration, this title, prepare you for retiring?

Brown: Who ever heard of a retiring Dutchman!

Henderson: (especially in the style of Dennis Day) I've heard of a Flying Dutchman.

Counselor: I assume this is facetious. But in the area of retirement problems we must be serious. We must stay within our frame of reference.

Plough: I want to stay at Wall Lake.

Counselor: Yes, yes, we understand - you and the bullheads. But tell me, Sir Wynant, is your knighthood your only qualification for retirement?

Wichers: No, indeed. I have been president of the Michigan College Association, president of the General Synod of the Reformed Church, president of the Chamber of Commerce, and Executive vice-president of the First State Bank of Holland, Michigan.

Counselor: Very commendable. Very impressive. It certainly seems that you must have attained retirement-readiness.

Knauss: Well, if that's what you're looking for, I've been president of the Kiwanis Club of Kalamazoo, and for years a member of the American Antiquarian Society of Worchester, Massachusetts.

Brown: That's Wooster, James.

Knauss: Wooster - Brewster, who cares?

Counselor: Antiquarian? Antiquarian? Your mind should be on tomorrow.

Knauss: But I like to think about the good old days when we taught History of the United States and the History of Europe, and foundations were strictly for houses.

Brown: And communications were telephone wires, and you could teach freshmen English without a tape recorder.

Henderson: And music was music and not Humanities.

Counselor: Gentlemen! Restrain yourselves! This is not a Faculty Meeting. Remember harmony, adjustability is our goal. And this has many facets. You seem fairly adequate in your achievements, but I'm concerned about your aptitude and adjustability from a narrower view - to be explicit from a family viewpoint - to be even more explicit - from your wives' point-of-view. You do not take this great step along. You each enter this land hand-in-hand with a worthy companion, one who has been accustomed to seeing your face 16 hours a day but will now be called upon to face you 24 hours a day. What have you planned to make her endurance possible?

Wichers: There's no problem with us. Mrs. Wichers loves to travel. We're going around and around the world. We shall sleep in many strange beds.

Counselor: What could make endurance more possible! Splendid. Splendid. Travel is a lovely thing. Here are two tickets on the SS to encourage you. (He holds up the tickets.)

Knauss: Bring me a tulip, Wynand.

Plough: We travel, too. Every week we go to Delton or Cloverdale. And I'm going to get my wife the Handbook for the Repair and Maintenance of the Studebaker. Then we can travel even more.

Brown: If you'd only get a Pontiac - .

Counselor: (interrupts) Gentlemen, no commercials, please. But surely, Mr. Plough, you haven't forgotten the rowboat!

Plough: Sure not. I'm getting my wife a membership in the Bait-of-the-Month Club, too.

Counselor: That certainly is worming your way into her affections! Perhaps we should reach for a higher note, however. What treat have you in store for Mrs. H., H. Glenn?

Henderson: Hazel and I are sharing. Every other Sunday she will play at the Presbyterian Church, and every other Tuesday I'll wear her gray dress and drive the Station Wagon.

Counselor: (pauses and looks at him) Quite novel. Will there be an announcement in the church bulletin as to the Sundays when she plays? But perhaps we should let that pass for the present. Your generosity is certainly commendable. And now Doctor William Robinson Brown, what little treat have you in store for your good spouse?

Brown: Actually, Emmy is going to have much more free time than before. From now on, I expect to do my own reading of the books I review. This will give Emmy at least ten hours a week for washing the Pontiac and mowing the lawn. Her anticipation is great.

*Light
pipe.*

Counselor: I'm sure it is. It's a wonderful arrangement - increased reading speed and comprehension for you and exercise and fresh air for her. (looks at Knauss who has his pipe in his mouth.) Ah, yes! Fresh air. I suppose, Herr Knauss, you are relinquishing your pipes?

Knauss: Certainly not. I'm doing something better than that to make the atmosphere at our house peaceful and calm. I'm going to let Adelaide win at bridge.

Brown: (aside) She can stop holding back at last.

Counselor: Admirable sacrifice, St. James. Generosity itself! You all seem to have thought well of the future. I find my attitude towards you mellowing. But before I sign your Counselor's slips, I must ask a pledge of you. You must solemnly swear you will continue to reside in Kalamazoo, participate in public affairs, enliven Western's functions, and enrich the Recognition Dinner every spring. Do you so swear?

Rise
mhm
All: I do.

Counselor: I hereby grant you, by authority vested in me, permission to enter Retirement Land. You will be welcomed by your new associations. Will the emeriti in the audience please rise?

(They rise) (to the emeriti) Now, if you accept these new members into your band will you indicate by your applause?

(applause)

Louder!

(Louder applause)

Everybody now.

(All applaud)

That certainly is conclusive. I now direct you actors to descend to the audience, discover your alter egos and escort them and their wives to the East Room. There we can all offer them our congratulations for the sterling

manner in which they have passed this examination and our best wishes for their happiness in Retirement Land.

(As the actors go from the stage one at a time, the music accompanies each with his theme song:

(As the actors go from the stage one at a time, the music accompanies each with his theme song:

"Ach du lieber Augustine" for Knauss

The "Wedding March" for Henderson

"The Yellow Rose of Texas" for Brown

"Shine Little Glowworm" for Plough

"Pomp and Circumstance" for Wichers

Each actor stands behind the chair of his alter ego until all have descended from the stage. Then they all march into the East Room accompanied by

"There'll Be a Hot Time in The Old Town Tonight."