

BRAVO! Excerpt

MUSIC

The transition for each scene is accompanied by brief music passages that the Maestro would have conducted or played when he was in England (e.g., Bach's "Violin Concerto #1 in A Minor"). They can either be recorded by a local music group or played live. A link to these selections is below. (However, if no scene change music is available, the sounds of war can be substituted.)

[BravoSceneChanges.zip](#)

SCENE 1:	01 Music for the Royal Fireworks: Handel
SCENE 2:	02 Violin Concerto #1 in A Minor: S. Bach
SCENE 3:	03 Piano Concerto #21 in C, the Andante: Mozart
	04 — Es geht eine dunkle Wolk herein (A dark cloud is closing in)
	05 — <i>Au Clair de la Lune</i>
SCENE 4:	06 Bach: Cello Suite #5 In C Minor, BWV 1011
SCENE 5:	07 Beethoven's "Piano Sonata #8 in C Minor, Adagio Cantabile
SCENE 6:	08 The German march, "Der Hohenfriedberger"
	09 Tomaso Albinoni: Adagio in G minor for Strings & Organ

A NOTE ON PRODUCTION

This is a one set play: the three caravans of the company. Many Shakespeare quotes and misquotes are sprinkled throughout the Maestro's speeches, as well as there are some brief speeches or scenes from Shakespeare's plays. The Drudge plays all manner of instruments and his character can either be a musician or the music can be recorded as can the scene change music. Cannon fire from nearby battles can be heard throughout the play, most notably at night. It represents the subtext of the story, even during the comic moments.

TIME

The early 1800s, during the Napoleonic wars.

SETTING

A field on the outskirts of a town somewhere in the heart of Prussia. There are three caravans on stage. In the centre is the largest. This is the MAESTRO's home which he shares with GUINEVERE. It faces directly to the audience. On the side of the caravan, in large block letters, is the name of the travelling troop: THE KING'S PLAYERS. There are steps and a small landing leading to a central door. On either side of the name are the faces of the two muses, Comedy and Tragedy. All are a bit faded. Either side of the caravan, at an angle, are two smaller wagons. Each has a door in front with a stoop and stairs and a door at the end. The doors on the fronts lead to sleeping quarters. The doors on the ends lead to storage spaces. The front of one of

the wagons is painted to look like a villa. Much of the paint has begun to fade. The other wagon is painted to look like a ship. It too has begun to fade. A CYC behind the wagons represents the sky.

A note about language and accents. In the style of old Hollywood movies, what language they all speak or the fact they all speak the same language is never explained or alluded to. If, however, the actors are to have accents of origin (English, French, German, etc.), they shouldn't be too pronounced.

ACT I

SCENE 1

The stage is DARK at CURTAIN. Low in the background, but building to loudness, we hear the sounds of a great battle. As the sounds increase, the sky begins to flash from the battle. A near full moon is in the sky. The stage is dark except for these flashes. Slowly underneath the battle sounds, we hear Handel's "Music for the Royal Fireworks." As the music grows louder, the battle sounds begin to fade away. And slowly a spot comes up on the MAESTRO. It is night. He wields a broom as if it were a baton. He is conducting to the music. In the middle of the music, the door to the MAESTRO's caravan opens and GUINEVERE steps out onto the small landing in front of the door. She is in her nightgown, her hair undone for sleep. She watches him with compassion but isn't surprised at what he is doing.

When the music ends, the lights come up to their normal night time levels. The sounds of battle are slight and sporadic throughout the scene.

GUINEVERE

(She claps.) Bravo Maestro! Bravo!

(The MAESTRO gives her a formal bow, then turns to the audience and bows again.)

GUINEVERE (Continued)

That was beautiful, Maestro. Bravo!

MAESTRO

A little rusty, but yes, it had the flavour, the essence of greatness. (*turns to her as she comes to meet him*) Ah Gwen, Guinevere my dear, that was a moment, was it not?

GUINEVERE

(*patiently, as if talking to a child; they have done this many times*) Yes it was, Maestro.

MAESTRO

Bravo was the chorus. (*waves broom*) Bravo! Bravo! (*He bows to the audience.*) I had tears in my eyes. So did all the musicians. So did the audience. Tears of such joy. Of such magnificence. Ah Gwen, we have known the best of our times, have we not?

GUINEVERE

We have, Maestro.

MAESTRO

To soar with Handel, Mozart and Bach. To fly among the greats. In Hanover Square Rooms. In front of the King himself. Truly a moment in history. To be long remembered and cherished.

GUINEVERE

Truly, Maestro. Don't agitate yourself. Now come to bed. It's late. It'll be morning soon.

MAESTRO

I fear it's too late for me, Guinevere. The good die early and the bad die late. Handel and Mozart, they have been the birth of me and I fear they will bring me to my knees. (*remembering*) A moment to cherish, was it not? The King. His mistress. Such an adoring audience. Tears! But all that was not enough.

GUINEVERE

Maestro, please. Let it be and come to bed.

MAESTRO

Not enough for that bastard Sir Richard and his blasted nephew when they came mincing into my dressing room all with sickly smiles. Those churlish words he dared to utter at me: *Such an interesting performance, Maestro, but too slow, too ponderous*. Too "too." And then he informs me that that snivelling, weaselly nephew of his is going to take my place as the King's master musician and conductor—My God, I think both of them had even bedded the King's mistress—and then Sir Richard and that bastard blacken my name to all and sundry so that no one will hire me to even catch rats. All because I called his blasted nephew—who wouldn't know Handel from a barroom ditty—all because I called him a mother licking son of a whore, which I'm sure he was. (*He clutches his belly.*) Ah!

GUINEVERE

Maestro, please, remember your indigestion. (*takes his arm*) To bed now.

MAESTRO

Unhand me woman. Get thee to a nunnery! Mincing, I say, like some odious slime too putrid for its own good. Mincing into my life. Sucking the creative vapours out of me until I am the shell of the man you see before you.

GUINEVERE

Yes, Maestro. *(takes him gently by the arm)* You look tired. You must sleep. Tomorrow is another day.

MAESTRO

(pulls away from her) Blast “tomorrow is another day.” That was my life he tore apart. That was my bravo he stole from me. It didn’t belong to his blasted nephew.

GUINEVERE

(takes his arm again) Yes, I know Maestro.

MAESTRO

(backs away from her) And don’t you give me another of your “tomorrow is another day.” I am sick of your tomorrows.

GUINEVERE

Of course, Maestro.

MAESTRO

I am sick of being lost in the middle of this blasted continent. *(the sounds of cannon fire)* In the middle of this blasted war. Sick of drowning in this artistic wilderness with nothing but a sorry band of players playing to an equally sorry bunch of patrons. *(another burst of cannon fire)* That’s right, blast everything to hell. See if I care.

(She leads him back to the caravan, but he stops and faces the audience.)

MAESTRO (Continued)

(as an actor) “I say there is no darkness but ignorance, in which thou art more puzzled than the ...” than the ... the, the, the. Blast the firmament! *(to GUINEVERE)* Damn it, Gwen. Who was more puzzled?

GUINEVERE

(calmly as if she done this many times) The Egyptians, Maestro.

MAESTRO

The Egyptians? Why in heaven’s name would they be puzzled? I am puzzled by their puzzlement. *(a beat)* Oh, I am cursed to pretend to be a bad actor when I’m really a great musician.

GUINEVERE

Yes, Maestro.

MAESTRO

(snidely) Yes Maestro. Why must you always “yes Maestro” me? Yes, Maestro. No, Maestro. You sound like an idiot full of the sounds of the demented.

GUINEVERE

I am sorry, Maestro. *(takes his arm)* Now you must get yourself into bed.

MAESTRO

(recoils from her touch) Leave me, woman. I am lost in strange lands amongst ignorant people and you cannot find me. I am reduced to play acting the fool for the foolish because I have no orchestra to conduct. *(She reaches out to him.)* Don’t touch me. Oh, you are the worst of the lot, Guinevere. Because you had greatness. The light of the London stage. I merely had bravo. And you threw it all away for me and for these filthy scurvy knaves that call themselves The King’s Players. Players, indeed. Why vomit has more sense of theatre and music as do these so-called players.

(There is a beat of silence as the MAESTRO considers what he has said.)

MAESTRO (Continued)

You think me a fool, Gwen. Don’t you?

GUINEVERE

I think you’re tired, Maestro. You haven’t slept soundly in I don’t know how many days.

MAESTRO

It’s this God awful war. Wherever we go, it follows us. All because of a pipsqueak of a pretender who wants to take over the world. *(pats his stomach)* Even my stomach complains. How many towns have we been kicked out of? Too many to count. Soon we will be out of food and fodder. We will have to sell some of the horses and that will mean we will have to get rid of one of the wagons. And then, what will we do with our stuff and where will our foolish players sleep? Have I not tried for three days to find us a space in which to perform. Who among those town and soldier ninnies will venture out this far to witness our sad troop of players? And so Guinevere—sweet Guinevere whom I berate because I cannot kick Sir Richard’s ugly ass—I howl at the moon like some pathetic wolf who has lost its mate. And so I have. My mistress: Art. Ah, nymph in thy orisons, be all thy bravos remembered.

(More cannon fire.)

MAESTRO (Continued)

I howl at the moon. They try to shoot it down. *(as an actor)* To live a barren sister of a life. Chanting faint hymns to the cold fruitless moon.

(looking at GUINEVERE)

MAESTRO (Continued)

Don't say it. I cannot bare another "tomorrow is another day." Besides, it is tomorrow and tomorrow is already what it is. And no humpback intoning of the word will change that.

(GUINEVERE takes him by the shoulder.)

MAESTRO (Continued)

All right. All right. I'll come. But don't think you can lie in my bed. Art is my only mistress. You know that. You keep to your bed. I'll keep to my Strad. No compromise. That has always been our agreement.

(Another round of cannon fire. This time it brightly lights up the sky. The MAESTRO suddenly collapses on the steps to the caravan.)

GUINEVERE

Maestro, what's wrong?

MAESTRO

(holds his head in his hands) Nothing. My head!

GUINEVERE

(truly concerned) Oh, my dear. What is it? Are you ill? Please come inside so you can lie down.

MAESTRO

(shakes her off) No, no, my head! It is *in* my head. Epiphany! *(stands)* EPIPHANY, woman!

GUINEVERE

What?

MAESTRO

Damn it, don't you know the word? EPIPHANY! My god, why hadn't I thought of it before? But the cannons—they helped do my thinking. *(more cannon fire)* That's right. "Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! Rage! Blow! You cataracts and hurricanes!"

(He grabs the broom and proceeds to bang on the walls of the other wagons.)

MAESTRO (Continued)

Blow winds, you damned fools and get up. GET UP! GET UP! Or else I will rage, rage until the heavens fill with brimstone. GET UP! GET UP! You demented players. GET UP! ALL OF YOU!

(NOELLE peaks out from one of the wagon's door. She is in her dressing gown, her hair undone. Afterwards, NIKI opens the other wagon's door and stands in the doorway. He is fully dressed, but his clothes are rumpled because he has slept in them.)

MAESTRO (Continued)

(to NOELLE) There you are, Noelle, my little Christmas treat. My Comtesse. And Niki. Nicolas of the no surname. EPIPHANY! Do you hear me? EPIPHANY!

NOELLE

(fearful, half asleep) What is it, Maestro? Are we being attacked?

MAESTRO

Epiphany, my dear. Gwen, tell her.

GUINEVERE

Maestro, come to bed. We can settle this in the morning.

(The sky lights up with more battle sounds.)

MAESTRO

Niki, do you hear that?

NIKI

Jesus, Maestro. I was sleeping.

MAESTRO

No blasphemy here. You know that's my rule.

(NOELLE goes to GUINEVERE)

NOELLE

What is happening, Guinevere? Are we to be attacked?

GUINEVERE

No, dear. Not us. Only the Maestro.

(more cannon fire)

MAESTRO

Listen to that, Niki. A call to creative arms. All of you, listen.

GUINEVERE

(to NOELLE) He is having another one of his creative attacks.

MAESTRO

Blast it, woman. Don't talk behind my back. Epiphany, I tell you. It has come to me in a flash of cannon fire.

(He herds them to sit on the steps of his caravan. NIKI resists.)

MAESTRO (Continued)

Sit, sit. All of you.

NIKI

Save it for tomorrow, Maestro. I want sleep not your epiphany.

MAESTRO

Oh, you mean you want to return to your beauty in your bed.

NIKI

(to NOELLE) No. I have given up all my beauties since the Comtesse has come among us. *(He bows to her.)*

MAESTRO

Blast your beauties. Sit with the rest of them.

(NIKI sits beside NOELLE. He puts his arm around her. She removes it. He tries again. She removes his arm.)

MAESTRO

Save your breath, Niki. She is a Comtesse. You are a peasant.

NIKI

(to NOELLE) Is that how you think of me?

NOELLE

(considers) No. Not exactly. But first you must ask permission.

NIKI

Very well. *(stands and then gets down on one knee)* Noelle Maria Anne, Comtesse d'Agincourt, may I respectfully put my arm around your magnificent shoulders?

NOELLE

No.

(He shrugs and sits next to her. She suppresses a giggle.)

MAESTRO

Enough of this innuendo. Listen to me, all of you. *(cannon fire)* Listen to that. What does it tell you?

NOELLE

(once again fearful) That we are about to be attacked?

GUINEVERE

(suddenly worried) Do you think so, Maestro?

MAESTRO

No, no. Oh, you pack of idiots. Niki. Gwen. Do you not remember Brussels? Epiphany? That brilliant idea that suddenly came to me? All because of that small child who was run down by a runaway horse. What a play it inspired me to write. We played that show until it was in rags. Until we were all thoroughly sick of its lines. All over Belgium, France, Austria, Hungary. We had money. We had fame. We had more bravos than the freckles on a milkmaid's face. Don't you remember Niki? Gwen?

GUINEVERE

(cautiously) Yes, Maestro. You want us to do the little boy play again?

MAESTRO

No, no, NO. Not to these dull souls, who, as we have discovered, are mostly soldiers and their hangers-on. No. No pathetic children for them. That is my epiphany. We must give them what they want. WAR! Unleash these dogs. A drama of war that will make their hearts explode with passion. If it's war they want. War is what they will get.

NOELLE

(naively) We are to fight the soldiers?

MAESTRO

(shakes his head at her stupidity) No, my little jewel. We mean to *play* at war. Not wage it. *(as he goes downstage)* Oh, merciful father, save me from this rabble.

(The MAESTRO puts his head in his hands.)

NOELLE

Is the Maestro ill?

(There is more cannon fire. MAESTRO reacts by raising his hands to the heavens.)

GUINEVERE

No.

NIKI

He's thinking. But if I don't get my rest, it is I who will be ill.

MAESTRO

Shut up, Niki. I *am* thinking. *(There is silence while he thinks. He then goes to them.)* Aha. I have it. The cannon fire has blown away my mental cobwebs and I have it. Another triumph for the Maestro. So where is the Drudge. We must have the Drudge. I must have the Drudge. Why is he not here when I need him? My epiphany is not complete without the Drudge. *(races around the stage)* Drudge! Drudge! Drudge! Where are you, you puke eating idiot? Unmask yourself.

Come out of hiding. Epiphany, I say to you. DRUDGE! You infantile, worthless human being. Do as your master commands and appear. *(to GUINEVERE)* Where do you think he may be?

GUINEVERE

Since you won't give him a wagon to sleep in, he might be anywhere.

MAESTRO

Enough of that argument. You don't expect him to sleep with the Comtesse.

NOELLE

(shocked) Maestro, never!

(The MAESTRO puts up a hand as if to say he didn't mean that.)

MAESTRO

And Niki won't have him.

NIKI

(to NOELLE) Only soft flesh warms my bed.

(NIKI starts to put his arm around her, but when she gives him a haughty look, he retreats.)

MAESTRO

Oh, you people. Chatter, chatter, chatter. Where is my Drudge. Come hither before my epiphany evaporates. DRUDGE!

(The DRUDGE enters from behind one of the wagons. His clothes and hair are rumpled from sleep. If NIKI plays the part of the hero, the DRUDGE is the essence of heroic.)

MAESTRO

Ah, there you are. Hiding among thieves, no doubt.

(The DRUDGE slowly takes in the three sitting on the steps.)

DRUDGE

(stutters) H-h-horses.

MAESTRO

Horses? What does he mean horses?

GUINEVERE

(annoyed) He means, he was sleeping with the horses.

MAESTRO

Why in heaven's name was he sleeping with the horses? Is he one of them?

GUINEVERE

(more angry) Because, Maestro, he has nowhere else to sleep.

MAESTRO

(warns her) Enough of that. Drudge, listen to me. All of you, listen to me. Your fate, my fate, perhaps even the fate of this cursed war depends upon it. We are down to our last Reichsthaler. We may be down to my last epiphany, but hear me out. For it will save us. *(He pauses dramatically.)* Well, what do you all say? *(He mimes clapping his hands.)* Drudge, what do you have to say in your stuttery way? Gwen? Niki?

GUINEVERE and NIKI

(They exchange a glance. They have done this before.) Bravo, Maestro. Bravo. *(They clap.)*

MAESTRO

Bravo, indeed. Now Drudge, listen. All of you listen. *(cannon fire)* Do you hear? Now imagine this. A garret in a bombed-out city. Drudge, we will need a backdrop for the walls of the garret. Our hero—that is you, Niki. Our hero is slumped on a divan. No. Better to be lying on the floor. You got that, Drudge? On the floor. He is horribly wounded. Drudge, when you make his costume, it must be torn and bloodied from battle. Yes, torn and bloodied. Niki, you lie in agony from your wounds and from the defeat of your army. Drudge, now you blow your trumpet and then we hear the charge of the hussars. Yes, Niki, you are down to your last breath. But wait. Whom do we see? Why it is a helpless mother and daughter caught in the hellfire of the battle. They seek refuge in Niki's garret. Drudge, that's when you give us a little Mozart on your clarinet. Mother and daughter are alone in the world. Niki, you are dying.

(He pauses dramatically.)

MAESTRO (Continued)

Well, is it not brilliant? Will not the pathetic souls and soldiers of this berg come undone from this drama? If they cannot weep for a dying child, they will surely weep for a brave, fallen hero.

NIKI

(A beat. Sincerely.) Well done, Maestro.

MAESTRO

Brilliant, yes. *(anxiously)* What do you think, Gwen?

GUINEVERE

(cautiously) Is there more?

MAESTRO

More? Of course there's more? What do you take me for? A dilatant? What a stupid question. Noelle, what do you think?

NOELLE

(also cautiously) Am I to be injured, too?

MAESTRO

Oh, you people. Niki, you understand, don't you? We men understand the poignancy of our art.

NIKI

It is brilliant, Maestro. I'll make a great hero.

MAESTRO

See. *(a beat)* Okay enough of this epiphany. It has exhausted me. Drudge, give me a playscript by morning. And make sure there is plenty of music. We must educate the masses to the great works of our time. Now everyone, clear off the steps to my home. I must to bed. To sleep. Perchance to dream of all the bravos we shall earn. Come, Guinevere, mistress to Arthur's kingdom. Help me to my bed. I grunt and sweat in my weary life from too much epiphany.

(He does truly slump and seem weary. GUINEVERE puts an arm around him and helps him up the stairs.)

MAESTRO (Continued)

Get me my Stradivarius, Guinevere, my dear. I must sleep with her.

(They exit into his caravan.)

NIKI

Well, now that I'm thoroughly wakened, what say you, Noelle? Have some tea with me?

NOELLE

Some tea, will you give me? Are you sure you're man enough for that?

(NIKI tries to put his arm around her. She quickly moves out of reach.)

NIKI

Don't tease me, Noelle. Why is it you always tease me? Am I not the man of your dreams?

NOELLE

I tease you because I enjoy teasing you.

NIKI

You don't tease the Drudge.

NOELLE

That's because he's no fun to tease. You, on the other hand, make me giggle.

NIKI

It must be because you like me.

NOELLE

Must be because I like to tease you.

NIKI

You don't take me seriously.

NOELLE

How can I when you've known so many women. Gwen has told me all. You merely want me to be one of *them*.

NIKI

Ah, but there you have me all wrong. I have given up all women. Just for you.

NOELLE

But Niki, if you have given up all women and I am a woman, why then, you have given me up as well. Is that not so, Drudge?

(The DRUDGE grunts.)

NIKI

What does he know? It's doubtful he has ever had a woman. *(The DRUDGE grunts.)* So. Tea? I will be on my best behaviour.

DRUDGE

(to NOELLE) T-t-tea. It w-w-will k-keep you a-a-awake.

NOELLE

(ignores the DRUDGE) A Comtesse does not sup with a commoner. Is that not so, Drudge?

NIKI

We are all commoners here. Even The Maestro. *(a beat)* So?

NOELLE

So, good night, Niki. Parting is such sweet sorrow but I must keep to my bed and you must keep to yours. Perhaps some day.

NIKI

Do you mean that, Noelle? Why I would be your slave forever.

NOELLE

(goes to her wagon door) Perhaps some day ... when you have become a Count. Nothing less.

NIKI

Oh! You should be careful, you little tease. I may grow tired of wooing you and take someone else to my bed.

NOELLE

Well, since you have given up women, I hope it won't be one of the Drudge's horses.

(NOELLE laughs. NIKI curses to himself and exits into his room.)

NOELLE (Continued)

Drudge, come here. Did I not ask you yesterday to sweep out my room? How do you expect me to sleep in such filth?

(With NOELLE, his stutter is much less pronounced.)

DRUDGE

You sh-shouldn't play such games with N-Niki. One day, you'll be s-sorry.

NOELLE

I can look after myself. I'm a Comtesse, after all. And what concern is it of yours?

DRUDGE

No concern. J-Just a warning. I know Niki.

NOELLE

Hah, you know nothing. You're just the Drudge.

DRUDGE

That I am.

NOELLE

And why do always pretend not to be able to speak well when the others are around? Do you mean to insult me with your familiar manner?

DRUDGE

Yes. But s-since you are a Comtesse, it will have no effect.

NOELLE

You have it right, Drudge. No one can insult nobility. Not even nobility. *(a beat)* Well, now that we have laid that to rest, I will retire and sleep. And you, I suppose, will go back to your horses.

DRUDGE

No, I d-don't think so. I-I have a play to write.

NOELLE

Oh that. Don't pretend to be an artist. The Maestro has written it all for you. All you have to do is copy his words. Even you can do that. Goodnight. *(She exits into her room.)*

DRUDGE

Yes. Even I can do that.