

The Right Circles

a Musical

by Richard Hack and Mark S. Meritt

Cast of Characters
(in order of appearance)

MIRANDA BECKER
Mid 20s, a law student working as a bartender

BILL MANN
Late 20s, a struggling actor who waits tables (of course)

ARTHUR WILSON
Mid 40s, a successful New York playwright

LARRY GOLD
Late 30s, a Broadway songwriter with the Midas touch

ROOT RENOIR
Early 40s, founder and artistic director of the Theatre Wok

RODERICK JOHNSON HARDING
Bill's alter-ego, the Bohemian author of "Round"

QUINN
Forties, a seasoned stage veteran

TRISH VAN BUREN
Early 20s, a flustered actress fresh out of school

GERARD ALLEN
Late 20s, a cocky auditioner

MARIA PIRELLI
Mid 30s, a scat vocalist

TYLER GRANT
Mid 30s, an earthy actor/musician

JOSEPHINE FITZGERALD
Early 30s, a talented and seductive actress

TOM SCHWARTZ
Forties, a disoriented Kabuki artist

Though the performer who plays Bill Mann naturally doubles as Roderick Johnson Harding, the characters of Quinn, Trish Van Buren, and Tyler Grant may double as Tom Schwartz, Maria Pirelli, and Gerard Allen, respectively.

TIME: The present

PLACE: Manhattan, NYC

Scenes and Musical Numbers

ACT I

Scene 1	Mama Creole's The Game	Art, Larry, Bill, Miranda
Scene 2	Miranda's Apartment Birth of a Bohemian	Miranda, Bill
Scene 3	Larry's House Three Historical Figures	Larry, Art
	The Exercise of Art and Larry	Art, Larry
Scene 4	Root's Office, Theatre Wok The Bill of Fare	Root
	The Game (Reprise)	Roderick, Root
Scene 5	Miranda's Apartment On Top	Miranda, Bill
Scene 6	Central Park	
Scene 7	Performance Space, Theatre Wok The Audition	Root, Roderick, Auditioners
	Filet of Soul	Maria
	The Ice Cream Song	Tyler
	Ready and Willing	Josey

ACT II

Scene 1	Performance Space, Theatre Wok The Rise of Man (Opposable Thumbs)	Cast of "Round"
Scene 2	Duffy Square and Broadway Phone Call #1	Larry, Bill
Scene 3	A Bar Part of Your Life	Josey, Roderick
Scene 4	Miranda's Apartment Miranda's Rights	Miranda
Scene 5	Larry's House The Game (Reprise)	Larry
Scene 6	Performance Space, Theatre Wok	
Scene 7	Duffy Square and Broadway Phone Call #2	Art, Bill
Scene 8	A Dressing Room, Theatre Wok Ready and Willing (Reprise)	Josey
	Miranda's Left	Miranda, Bill
Scene 9	Green Room, Theatre Wok Someone Else's Eyes	Root
Scene 10	Performance Space, Theatre Wok Creation	Cast of "Round"
Scene 11	Mama Creole's Damned Fools	Bill, Art, Larry
	The Demise of Mann	Miranda, Bill, Art, Larry
Scene 12	Duffy Square and Broadway	

Act I

Scene 1

A Thursday afternoon in Greenwich Village, lunchtime at Mama Creole's. This Creole-Italian eatery won't be found in Zagat's, but its intimate space and trendy menu make it a popular spot for locals. Scattered throughout the restaurant are a few small tables, all occupied. Some new customers wait by the entrance to be seated. There are half a dozen stools at a bar, behind which is Miranda Becker, tending bar. Near the bar is a swinging door into the kitchen. At rise, a couple vacates one of the tables. Bill Mann, a waiter, rushes to grab his tip. He quickly cleans and sets the table, then dashes to the line of customers. Arthur Wilson, an established New York playwright, waits alone at the front of the line.

BILL: Welcome to Mama Creole's. My name is Bill, and I'll be your waiter this afternoon. *Bill recognizes Arthur.* You're... *Bill catches himself.* You're dining alone?

ARTHUR: Someone will be joining me.

BILL: Okay. Right this way.

Bill leads Arthur to the vacant table and pulls the chair out for Arthur, who sits down and takes a menu off the table to peruse.

BILL: Can I get you a drink while you're waiting?

ARTHUR: Tanqueray on the rocks would be great.

BILL: Olive or twist with that?

ARTHUR: No thanks.

BILL: Not much of a Dickens fan, huh?

ARTHUR: Hmm?

BILL: Oliver Twist. Dickens. Get it?... I'll get the drink.

Bill, embarrassed, dashes to the bar.

MIRANDA: What can I get you, babe?

BILL: Tanqueray on the rocks. *Miranda starts to make the drink.*

Do you know who it's for?

MIRANDA: No.

BILL: Arthur Wilson.

MIRANDA: Help me out.

BILL: Arthur Obie-Award-winner-for-"In Lieu of Flowers"-Wilson?

MIRANDA: The playwright! "Table for Two," right?

BILL: And I just made a fool out of myself in front of him.

MIRANDA: Oliver Twist?

BILL: Yup.

MIRANDA: Perk up, Champ. *Miranda hands Bill the drink.* Couple of these in him, and you'll be back on track.

BILL: Don't patronize me.

MIRANDA, *teasing*: If you're lucky, this could be your big break!

BILL: If I'm lucky, I'll get a tip.

As Bill heads toward Arthur's table, a man enters the restaurant and makes his way past the line of customers to survey the room. It is Larry Gold, the famous Broadway composer. Larry spots Arthur and hurries to his table, reaching it simultaneously with Bill.

BILL: Tanqueray on the ro-

LARRY: Arthur! I'm so sorry I'm- *To Bill:* Oh, excuse me. Cranberry and seltzer. *To Arthur:* I'm so sorry I'm late. *Bill heads toward the kitchen.*

ARTHUR: Larry. Good to see you.

BILL, *to Miranda, as he enters the kitchen:* Cranberry and seltzer.

LARRY: I'm catching a cab down here from Penn. At the corner of Seventh and Bleecker, I hear this thud. The cab stops. We hit a man.

ARTHUR: Jesus!

Bill enters from kitchen, tray in hand, heads toward one of his tables.

BILL, *to Miranda as he passes*: Have I got something to tell you.

LARRY: One of those bicycle couriers. He's lying on the road, and his Schwinn is twisted on the sidewalk, the back wheel is still spinning. Mail is everywhere, the driver's screaming in his native tongue, it was a mess.

ARTHUR: Was he okay?

LARRY: I don't know. All I'm thinking is I got nine blocks to cover and I'm already late. I toss a twenty over to Mujibar, don't even wait for the change. I figure he can put it toward his deductible.

Bill, finished serving his other table, goes to the bar.

MIRANDA: Seltzer and cran. So what's up?

BILL: You know "The Better Mousetrap"?

MIRANDA: Of course. Great show.

BILL, *referring to Wilson's companion*: That's Larry Gold.

MIRANDA: Get real!

BILL: Yeah.

MIRANDA: Cool.

BILL: Yeah.

MIRANDA: Did you humiliate yourself in front of him, too?

BILL: Not yet.

MIRANDA: Then hey, you're chances are increasing by the moment.

BILL: One never knows...

MIRANDA: What, are you actually gonna hit them up for a part or something?

Bill winks at her, then brings the drink to Art and Larry's table.

ART: And did you see the review in the *Times*?

LARRY: Yes! Awful!

Bill places the drink on their table.

BILL: Seltzer and cranberry.

LARRY: Thanks.

BILL: I'll be back in a few minutes to take your order.

ART: Okay.

Bill leaves them.

LARRY: I feel so bad for him. What'd Crutchfield say about the, uh, the pantheon?

ART: "In one swift stroke, Hal Berman has yanked himself out of Broadway's pantheon of talented directors. Lacking even the vision of Oedipus, what little ability he has left might suit him better directing traffic."

LARRY: Ouch! Nothing deserves that! I mean, it was no masterpiece, but I gotta give him credit. He took a lot of risks, made some... courageous choices, some bold-

ART: Larry.

LARRY: What?

ART: It sucked.

LARRY: ...I didn't want to say anything, because I know how far back you and Hal go.

ART: Say something.

LARRY: It blew chunks.

ART: Feel better?

LARRY: God, yes. All I've been doing is spieling out that nice crap. And the opening night party was the worst. Everybody

talking about, "What a risktaker he is! What a bold statement!" I was in pain from keeping a smile pasted on my face. I'm so glad I wasn't the only one.

ART: I was actually relieved when the review came out. For the first time, Crutchfield and I saw eye to eye.

LARRY: Art, thank you so much for meeting with me today. Even if things don't work out here, I feel so much better.

ART: Then let's ask the question. Are things going to work out?

LARRY: Okay then. Let's cut to the chase. I assume you've thought about what I asked you at the party?

ART: Naturally.

LARRY: ...Well?

ART: Why me?

LARRY: Because for years, Broadway has been lacking a brilliant, solid book. A piece of drama that stands equal to the score, that doesn't depend on cheesy lead-in lines to cheesy songs to carry the show.

ART: So why ME?

LARRY: Your plays are real. They're not superficial. They're about real people, with real emotions... they're honest.

ART: And Broadway needs honesty?

LARRY: You could bring things to a whole new level. I mean, Art, you are the best Off-Broadway writer around. It's no secret. But you could be so much bigger. I don't think there's anyone better than you, Broadway or anywhere.

ART: Much appreciated, but I don't need to be bigger. I'm not in this for the money.

LARRY: Neither am I. Don't get me wrong, I'm a rich man, and I don't mind it. But I am just sick of writing these bubblegum shows. They're all the same. Curtain rises, big opening number, romantic lead pines for love, he meets a girl, love duet, love duet reprise! I write shows with a bunch of tunes. For once in my life, I want to write a score. I want to create something important.

ART: And you want me to help you do it?

LARRY: Yes.

ART: Well-

Bill approaches their table.

BILL: Are you gentlemen ready to order?

LARRY: Just a few more-

ART, *never having glanced at the menu*: I'll have the brucholoni.

BILL: Okay. *To Larry*. Are you all set?

Larry rifles through the menu hastily.

LARRY: Yeah, one second. I'll, uh, have the, what's this sandwich? Mu, mufa-

BILL: Muffeletta sandwich?

LARRY: Yeah, give me one. And bring some ketchup.

BILL: Okay. Thanks a lot.

Bill turns to leave.

LARRY: You were saying.

BILL, *spinning back to table*: "Anyone who puts ketchup on filet mignon is not welcome here!"

LARRY: ...Are you serious?

BILL: No. *He points to Art*. It's a quote from one of his plays.

ART: "A Higher Level of Stupidity."

LARRY: Oh, right!

BILL: I used that monologue in my acting class.

ART: An assignment or your own choice?

BILL: My choice.

ART: I'm flattered.

BILL: You can express your gratitude in my tip.

LARRY: You want a tip? Get out of acting. Ha!

BILL: Thanks. I'll back in a few minutes.

ART: Thanks a lot.

Bill leaves their table, heads toward kitchen.

MIRANDA: So are you famous yet?

BILL: What are you, crazy? These things take time. Ten more minutes, max. *Bill exits.*

LARRY: So will you write me a book?

Art takes a small stack of papers out of his attache.

ART: I'd love to.

Art holds his hand out for a shake, Larry accepts.

LARRY: That's twice today you've given me great relief... Well.

ART: Yes.

LARRY: Now that we've agreed to work together, we should decide what we're going to work on, right?

ART: I suppose that would be a good start.

LARRY: Any thoughts?

For the first time in the play, music starts: "The Game."

ART: I don't know about you, but I've got a list three pages long.

LARRY, *taking out his own list*: Four.

ART: We have to narrow things down first.

LARRY: These days films are the big thing for musicals, but books and plays are always classic. Any favorites?

ART:

With an adaptation I might be
Author, though once-removed
I crave to craft a story that's mine not
Merely one new, improved

LARRY:

So it's an original

ART:

But who's
Idea to use, yours or mine?
We need something that can be ours

LARRY:

Then what do we do?

ART:

I'll give you an outline
1945 is the year and
Nuremberg is the place
Lotsa Nazis are on trial for
Crimes against the human race

LARRY:

I like the angle - History let's us
Both take a shot at breaking ground

ART:

Six million lives avenged with a dozen
Justice is blind to numbers, what's more profound?

LARRY:

Subject could get you the Pulitzer Prize
One flaw, however, there's too many guys
Though you are clever
Make one more endeavor 'cause
Having a strong leading dame
Is a rule of the game

ART: Okay. But I always thought a court-room musical would be interesting.

LARRY: Like what? Inherit the Wind? Male. Twelve Angry Men? Need I say.

ART: How about Roe vs. Wade?

LARRY: Hands off!

Bill bursts in from the kitchen.

MIRANDA: Eight minutes and counting.

BILL: I'm working on it.

MIRANDA: So what's your plan?

BILL: I figured I'd start with... the obvious.

Complimentary pecan pie
All drinks on the house
Make them strong
I'll belt a Gershwin song
When they're good and soused

MIRANDA:

Free dessert and a showstopper
Really you're just futz-
ing about
You lose on both accounts
They may not like nuts
As far as the drinks go
Gold is dry as hay
If you wish, I'll put an extra twist
In his Perrier

BILL:

Stop being a wise ass - At
Least I took a shot

MIRANDA:

But you missed
When will you get the gist?
You need a devilish plot
Heap extra cayenne pepper
Onto their entree
When they cry
Don't bring the water by
Till you're in their play

BILL:

Or I could conceal a
Bone inside their lunch
As they cough
I'll pull the Heimlich off
They'll be pleased as punch

MIRANDA:

Don't get me wrong, though you are mistaking
What I intended, I'm glad you're taking
Better aim
It's fine to make aggressive advances
But if they die then you kill your chances
Stick to your guns but don't ever kill or maim
Keep the upper hand and you'll win the game

BILL: Thanks so much for the tip. So what should I do now?

MIRANDA: Hit table four. That woman's been waving at you for
the last five minutes.

BILL: I shall return.

MIRANDA: You know where to find me.

Bill exits.

LARRY: No, no way am I doing a musical about Virginia Woolf.

ART: Okay. I've thrown two pitches. Come up to the mound to relieve me before I strike out.

LARRY:

If you want a writer, I've got the
 Perfect one, Hemingway
 Ace reporter to expatriate
 Writing in a French cafe
 Ran with the bulls in the streets of Pamplona
 Traveled the world high and low
 His was the voice of the Lost Generation
 Until he blew his head off in Idaho!

ART:

Though I'm a fan and the story's got scope
 Suicide shows that he simply lost hope
 I'm recommending a
 Happier ending
 To throw in the towel's a shame
 Leave it out of the game

Bill enters.

MIRANDA:

Take them hostage, imprison them
 In this restaurant
 You'll use brain-
 Altering drugs to gain
 Everything you want

BILL:

Blackmail them with photos
 we'll sell to a tabloid
 We'll play rough
 Capture them in the buff
 Right on celluloid

MIRANDA:

I'll take all my clothes off
 To bait the booby trap
 Picture me
 Naked on Larry's knee

BILL:

And me on Arthur's lap!

MIRANDA:
 Spoil their image, they're sure to hate you
 Slander and libel aren't the way to
 Stake your claim

BILL:
 I'm not so dumb, I knew we were kidding
 I'll stick to something more benefitting
 Than trying to take hostages or defame
 If I break the law than I lose the game

Bill exits.

ART:
 I am almost at the end of my
 list

LARRY:
 So what have you got?

ART:
 Dr. Seuss, Tiannemen Square and
 DaVinci round out the lot

LARRY:
 No! DaVinci reminds me of Galileo
 And I despise Brecht
 I hate all things avant garde
 They try much too hard
 To impress with their pseudo-intellect
 Weird tribal chants, hidden meanings that don't
 exist in those strangely produced plays
 I work for years on my shows, I could
 Compact avant garbage in two days

ART:
 Larry, I've got a radical notion
 I know what we can dramatize
 Let's whip an "artsy" play up in just two days
 We could do it as a quick exercise

LARRY:
 What an experiment, please count me in

ART:
 Improvise

LARRY:
 Give them a taste of their own medicine

ART & LARRY:
 Best yet, the play could succeed
 The one thing that we need
 Is a scapegoat to blame
 Take our place in the game

Bill enters.

MIRANDA:

So what's the plan?

BILL:

I haven't decided

MIRANDA:

Think fast before the chance that's provided
Goes up in flame

BILL & MIRANDA:

I'm sick and tired of waiting and waiting
It's time to make a move in creating
My/your own good luck and fortune to score some fame
Every player's gotta get in the game

ART & LARRY, *with Bill and Miranda below:*

Best yet, the play could succeed
The one thing that we need
Is a scapegoat to blame
Take our place in the game

BILL & MIRANDA, *with Art and Larry above:*

I'm sick and tired of waiting and waiting
It's time to make a move in creating
My/your own good luck and fortune to score some fame
Every player's gotta get in the game

Bill hops onto the table next to Art & Larry's, and sings to the tune of Gershwin's "I Got Rhythm."

BILL: I got rhythm, I got my gal, I got music, Who could ask for anything-

LARRY: How would you like to play the part of your life?

Blackout.

Act I

Scene 2

That evening, Miranda's apartment. This modest Greenwich Village studio has a kitchenette and a convertible sofa. A door leads to the only other room, a bathroom. On the walls are Georgia O'Keefe and Monet prints from museum exhibits, and a picture of Einstein sticking out his tongue. Near the kitchenette is a small table, which doubles for dining and deskwork. A television sits on a chest. Books fill all corners of the place. Bill and

Miranda enter, still dressed in their Mama Creole's uniforms. Both are silent for a few seconds, Bill grinning wildly, Miranda about to burst. He casually strolls to the fridge for a drink. Miranda finally explodes.

MIRANDA: So what the hell's the big secret?

BILL: Relax!

MIRANDA: Relax? I feel like I'm on a goddamned sitcom! People come home from dinner, they say "Oh, what a great meal!" They've got a whole ride home, but they don't talk 'til they get in their front door. You tell me not to talk 'til we get home, fine. We're here! What the hell's going on?

BILL: Don't get angry, I've got good news.

MIRANDA: I'm not angry! I'm excited!

BILL: Oh, look at the time! Gotta watch "Jeopardy."

Bill starts to move toward the sofa. Miranda pulls a butcher knife out of a drawer, stops him.

MIRANDA: Minor surgery involving removal of the male foreskin. What is circumcision, Alex?

BILL: I was just kidding!

MIRANDA, *pleasantly*: Me too.

BILL: So put the knife down.

MIRANDA: Not until you talk.

BILL: Correct me if I'm wrong, but isn't information obtained through coercion inadmissible in court, or haven't you taken that class yet?

MIRANDA: Nope. We're still working on assault. *Miranda puts the knife down.* What did they talk to you about?

BILL: ...They offered me a part in their new play.

MIRANDA: Bullshit.

BILL: All right, they offered me a chance to get a part in their new play.

MIRANDA: What, are they giving you an audition?

BILL: Sort of.

MIRANDA: Should I get the knife?

BILL: Listen. They're writing this play together this weekend.

MIRANDA: This weekend!?

BILL: Just listen. They've never worked together before. They're doing this experiment, like an exercise before they get onto a big project. They're gonna write a whole play this weekend, a real bullshit avant garde piece. Totally pretentious, just lots of junk thrown in. They don't want it to be any good. They want to see if someone out there in the artsy community'll think it's the most brilliant play ever, even though it's really just garbage.

MIRANDA: So what?

BILL: Look, they're both famous. People'd recognize them. And they sure don't want to put their names on this piece of trash they're about to write. Somebody's gotta to be the author, the unknown, brilliant, innovative dramatist.

MIRANDA: You.

BILL: Bingo. So Monday morning, I start peddling this thing around town, try to find a theatre to back it. If I can get it produced, great. I go with it and see what happens.

MIRANDA: What about your job?

BILL: Bye-bye, Mama Creole.

MIRANDA: You're quitting? You're gonna give up your job and spend your life doing this errand for a couple of clowns playing a practical joke?

BILL: Those clowns are giving me ten thousand dollars. And on top of that, they're guaranteeing me a role in they're first Broadway collaboration if I can get this thing into production.

MIRANDA: They're giving us ten thousand dollars?

BILL: Us? *He throws the cushions off the sofa, opens it quickly into a bed, and speaks playfully.* Baby, you're gonna have to

earn your share.

MIRANDA: Not yet! You've got a lot of work to do! If you're gonna be this brilliant, innovative playwright, you've gotta start getting inside your character.

BILL: The only thing I want to get inside right now is your pants.

MIRANDA: You can mount this production later. First, tell me what he's like.

BILL: He's hot, horny, and ready to celebrate.

MIRANDA: Not you, the playwright.

BILL: Can't it wait?

MIRANDA: No.

BILL: Okay. He's... your typical Bohemian guy, sort of Beatnik, intellectual... I'm done.

MIRANDA: You call yourself an actor? That is the vaguest character sketch I've ever heard.

BILL: Hey, this is hard for me.

MIRANDA: That's besides the point.

BILL: Really! I've created lots of characters before, but I've always had a script to help me out. *Music starts: "Birth of a Bohemian."*

MIRANDA:

My boy Bill
Has a role to fulfill

BILL:

And he will
But it doesn't exist yet
I can't write
I'm an actor

MIRANDA:

Despite opening night
Jitters nobody's hissed yet
Don't fear of the blank page awaiting
I'm here to help out procreating

BILL: What do you know about creating a character?

MIRANDA: I have a very active fantasy life.

BILL: Oh, yeah? Prove it.

MIRANDA:

You're decked in black from un-
tucked mock turtle neck to
Tight jeans and wire frames re-
flect your intellect. A
trenchcoat around you is
Bound to have desired effect

BILL:

If I'm a pervert who
Wants to hide the fact I'm erect

MIRANDA:

This should be easy 'cause it's
Nothing new and you know the laws
Color your character with
Motivations, virtues and flaws
Shut up and start
Act well your part
You're no lost cause
Don't be amateur
Then you'll get your
Applause

BILL:

So what's next?
I'm a little perplexed
With no text
I still have lots of questions

MIRANDA:

Ask away

BILL:

Am I straight, bi or gay?

MIRANDA:

Either way
Let's flesh out the conception

Miranda takes off her blouse.

BILL: Definitely straight.

MIRANDA:

You read Romantics

BILL:

Like Playboy magazine?

MIRANDA:

No. The sisters Bronte. They're
clean. Don't be obscene

BILL:

We're taking our clothes off

MIRANDA:

A perfect time to ponder cuisine
Strict vegetarian

BILL:

I'd rather dine on you than soybean

MIRANDA:

Stop thinking sex

BILL:

I'm an inferno and you're feeding my flame!

MIRANDA:

Go take a shower, earthly
pleasures aren't your character's aim
You're into New Age
Zen's all the rage
Tarot's your game
We'll bump and grind
After we find a
Name

BILL:

Can't it wait till dawn? Hop in bed with me
That's enough Bohemian Rhapsody
Please don't put me off, I'm a dog in heat
And a rose without a name would still smell sweet

MIRANDA:

Calm your passions down, my dear Romeo
I still want you more than your Average Joe
And I use these names 'cause they're tried and true
They should show you just how much a name can do
With one you're someone, a quantity known
While no-one without one has name recognition
When we invent an identity on-
ly then can things come to fruition

BILL:

I give in, so what will I answer to?

MIRANDA:

Who am I to say when it's up to you?

BILL:

Up to us, you mean, now that I agree
We should find a name, don't abandon me

MIRANDA:

I was kidding

BILL:

Good - where do we look?

MIRANDA:

Wouldn't the best place
To find names be
In the phone book?

Miranda throws the phone book to him.

BILL: Yes!

Lotsa Johns and Stevens and Michaels

MIRANDA:

Weak! You're a fool believing that they're unique

BILL:

Maybe Trevor?

MIRANDA:

Clever

BILL:

Or Duncan or Cyril?

MIRANDA:

Duncan isn't a hunk and Cyril isn't too virile

BILL:

What about Eugene?

MIRANDA:

Doesn't sound to keen

BILL:

Maybe Colin

MIRANDA:

You mean as in -oscopy?

BILL:

Then there's skip

MIRANDA:

Skip skip

BILL:

Maybe Kip?

MIRANDA:

Not hip

BILL:

Frank and Earnest

MIRANDA:

You've gotta be Josting me

BILL:

Maybe Leo or Ryan

MIRANDA:

Like the hunter and the lion?

So you want to be a star?

BILL:

Not in outer space

Down to earth, my name'll

Get critical acclaim

Like an Tony or an Oscar

MIRANDA:

Or at least an Ace

BILL:

Here's a Hugh

MIRANDA:

Has color but it might fade out

BILL:

Maybe Parker

MIRANDA:

Darker

BILL:

Malcolm

MIRANDA:

Chuck it - X it out

BILL:

Surely Midas or Welby have to be alright

MIRANDA:

Well you might as well be Dracula 'cause these names bite

BILL:

Look, I'm sick of this, forgive me,
but my interest begins to Wayne

MIRANDA:

But you cannot just be any
Harry, Dick or Tom, they're too Plain Jane

BILL:

I don't Noah 'bout this Tom but
Harry Dick sounds like the Guy for me

MIRANDA:

But you have to use your head

BILL:

Which one?

MIRANDA:

Whatever one comes naturally

BILL:

So anatomy's the plan

MIRANDA:

It's the trick to naming Mann

BILL & MIRANDA:

The solution is at hand!

BILL:

We can start with Willy

MIRANDA:

It sounds so silly
And Peter's neater and Woody's cool

BILL:

Well there's Rod and Dick

MIRANDA:

Make them Roderick
Baby, bigger's better for the family Jules

BILL:

With a first name gained
Only last remains

MIRANDA:

And it must roll trippingly off the tongue

BILL:

Germany's got Weiner

MIRANDA:

Ireland O'Toole

BILL:

And on occasion that I'm Asian I'd be Wang Lo Hung

MIRANDA:

But the first has length
What you lack is strength
Something proudly standing the test of time

BILL:

Polish off my thing
With a classic ring
Like John Thomas or John Hancock

MIRANDA:

Simply Johnson's fine

BILL:

But it's such a bore

MIRANDA:

So let's add some more!

BILL:

Don't you make this harder than it has to be

MIRANDA:

But it's not so hard turning hard to Harding
So you're Roderick Johnson Harding

BILL:

Roderick Johnson Harding

MIRANDA & BILL:

Roderick Johnson Harding

BILL:

That is me!

They jump into bed. Blackout.

Act I

Scene 3

That Saturday afternoon, the music room in Larry's home in the Hamptons. A baby grand is centrally located, bookcases filled with sheet music along the perimeter of the room. Two reel-to-

reels with several tape reels sit on a shelf unit. Larry tinkers around on the piano as Art paces nearby.

LARRY: Pretentious, pretentious, pretentious.

ART: Pretentious plot, pretentious concept, pretentious metaphor, pretentious analogy.

LARRY: Pretentious analogy: all the music's in a certain style that has to do with the plot.

ART: What do you mean?

LARRY: Like a play about baseball with all swing music. *He fakes a rimshot.* Ba-dump bump!

ART: Or one about foreign policy. Naturally, we'll use country.

LARRY: What about a play about Birthday presents? With...

ART: Let me guess. Rap.

LARRY: You got it.

ART: At the risk of being serious about something we don't want to be serious about, we should probably set a few guidelines for the weekend.

LARRY: Shoot.

ART: First off, I think we should agree that, no matter what, we're going to finish this by tomorrow night.

LARRY: Agreed. It'd be tragic to waste any more of our lives on this than we have to.

ART: And it would be against the spirit of the experiment.

LARRY: That too. What else?

ART: ...That's about it.

LARRY: So let's get cracking. Where do we start?

ART: Well, this all started with DaVinci, didn't it?

LARRY: Perfect! *Larry improvises a tune and sings like a Viennese gondolier: "DaVinci."*

DaVinci painted con motto brio
 His good friends, they would all call him Leo
 He got hungry when he finished Mona Lisa
 For his last supper, he invented a pizza!

They both crack up.

ART: That was awful!

LARRY: That's the point! Come on. Gimme another.

ART: Ah... Napoleon.

Larry switches to a mournful, French cafe sound, and does a Maurice Chevalier impression: "Napoleon."

LARRY:

He was mean as Atilla ze Hun
 Zo he stood a wee five foot one

ART:

But Waterloo caught him unaware
 He got kicked in ze derriere

LARRY: Now you're getting it! How about this? *He begins a polka: "Einstein."*

Scientific genius with the messed up hair
 Yes, it's the Einstein Polka

ART: Oh, good Lord.

LARRY:

Theorizing how E equals m-c squared

ART: Stop! *Larry stops abruptly.* Look. WE don't have to take this seriously, but it's got to seem like somebody took painstaking effort to do this crap. Those songs just aren't going to cut it. Got anything a bit less fluffy?

Larry vamps a la Kurt Weill: "The Exercise of Art and Larry."

ART: Okay. Now I think we were onto something with those historical figures.

LARRY: Yes, very pretentious.

ART: Who do we pick?

LARRY: Why choose? Put them all in.

ART: Yes, very pretentious!

LARRY: A musical revue of history's greatest iconoclasts.

ART: Darwin, Copernicus...

LARRY: Galileo!

ART: Gandhi!

LARRY: Madonna!

ART: Back up a second. I'm thinking about Darwin. I'm thinking about evolution, and creationism. I'm thinking about the very nature of life itself.

LARRY: I like it! Can't get any more pretentious than that.

ART: Is that a dare?

LARRY: Yeah.

ART: Okay, give me a minute. Talk it out with me.

LARRY: Shoot.

ART: Okay, word association. Creationism.

LARRY: God.

ART: Pre-determination.

LARRY: Garden of Eden.

ART: Okay. Evolution.

LARRY: Reality.

ART: Wow. Okay. Science.

LARRY: Big bang.

ART: Explosion.

LARRY: Climax.

ART: Orgasm!

LARRY: Madonna!

ART: Which brings us back to God.

LARRY: Ha! Good. But let's up the ante a bit more.

ART: Fine. How?

LARRY: God is a woman.

ART: Keep going.

LARRY: God is two women.

ART: What?

LARRY: There's more than one god.

ART: How many?

LARRY: Three.

ART: Why three?

LARRY: Okay, four.

ART: Fab! *Art physically stops Larry's vamping.* Are we creating our own creation myth here?

LARRY: Now that's what I call "more pretentious."

ART: Can you play with a bit more drive?

Larry escalates the intensity of his vamp.

ART: Yes!

LARRY: You like it?

ART: It's militant! Powerful!

LARRY: Is it too good?

ART: No.

Larry stops playing.

LARRY: What's wrong with it?

ART: Nothing. Keep going.

Larry resumes playing the piano. "The Exercise of Art and Larry" commences in earnest.

LARRY: Ready for lyrics?

ART: Sure! Pardon my ignorance, but how does one normally go about that?

LARRY: Normally, one spends a great deal of time and effort. But we're not going to do that.

ART: So?

LARRY: Whatever comes off the top of your head. You start.

ART: Where?

LARRY: Start!

ART:

Making up lyrics
All I know is I need a good rhyme
To please my partner in crime
Hey I did it!

LARRY: Go with it!

ART:

Arthur and Larry
Collaborating on their first show

LARRY:

You sing with gusto
While I will play the piano

ART: Wow, that's bad.

LARRY: With a little work, it'll be truly awful! I'm just warming up!

Now, my comrade
Is the time to screw our talents up

ART:

Starting from a clean slate
We can both play God as we create

LARRY: The myth begins! You go first.

ART:

In the beginning

Lotsa Gods
 LARRY:
 A party of four
 ART:
 Like couch potatoes
 For them existing's a bore
 LARRY:
 Eternally starving
 For a little fun and excitement
 The cosmic kitchen
 Becomes a place where they invent
 ART:
 They get out their cookbook
 Looking for a tasty recipe
 They flip through the pages
 'Til they stumble on humanity
 LARRY:
 With their spice rack
 They begin to add variety
 ART:
 Gallons of greed
 LARRY:
 Add a cup of self-righteousness
 ART:
 An eye of newt and-

Larry abruptly stops playing.

LARRY: Eye of what?
 ART: Newt. "Eye of newt, and toe of frog..."
 LARRY: We're creating life, here. There were no newts yet.
 ART: Every good potion's got eye of newt.
 LARRY: All right, I guess. *Larry resumes playing.*
 Pour all the contents
 Into a large cast iron crock
 ART:
 Bring to a boil
 You get organic soup stock
 LARRY:
 Stirring for eons
 Elements and junk start to congeal
 ART:
 Finally something
 To their godlike palates did appeal

LARRY:

From the mixture
There emerged a form of life ideal!

ART: But ideal for what?
Gods are sadistic
Playful torture fills them with joy
To them a human's a toy

LARRY:

All throughout history
People thinking that they're special
That they're so brilliant
That they control their own will

ART:

But they're just puppets
For the four gods who pull all the strings

LARRY:

And if they're fickle
They can put an end to everything

ART:

Then the quartet
Starts another game with a new pet

LARRY: What do you mean?

ART: When they're tired of playing with Man, they throw him
aside like an old Barbie doll, and they get a new toy. Something
else they can give hopes and dreams to, only to dash them on the
rocks of reality! Something like... cockroaches.

LARRY: Love it! Very Kafkaesque.

ART: Bugs, destined to rule the world!

LARRY:

God, this is easy
My artistic nightmare has come true!
Creating garbage

ART:

God took seven days, but we'll take two!

ART & LARRY:

What a sly sting
Art is imitating life askew
That's the icing
On the cake

ART:

No, better yet the coup
de grace!

LARRY:

Cha cha cha!

Blackout.

Act I

Scene 4

Wednesday, a few weeks later, Root Renoir's office at Theatre Wok. It is cramped but meticulously kept. Framed photos line the walls. There is a desk, behind which is a framed painting of Theatre Wok's logo, the comedy and tragedy masks as yin and yang. Root Renoir, founder and artistic director of Theatre Wok, sits behind the desk. He wears a smock, has wildly unkept hair, and smokes from a cigarette holder. Opposite Root is Bill, who fully inhabits his new persona, Roderick Johnson Harding. Roderick's appearance is as anticipated from Bill and Miranda's brainstorm session: his mop top hair is jet black, as are all his clothes, from mock turtle neck and denim jeans to cowboy boots and trench-coat. He wears oval wire framed glasses, several turquoise and onyx rings on both hands, and an ankh around his neck.

ROOT: Your piece... The songs.

RODERICK, *correcting*: Musical poems.

ROOT: Yes. Very well-crafted. Very alarming. They seem so haphazard, chaotic, yet the direction is always so clear.

RODERICK: Without chaos there could be no order.

ROOT: Mmm. Yin, yang. Earth, heaven. Moon, sun. Female, male.

RODERICK: Mother, father.

ROOT: Birth, conception.

RODERICK: Negative, positive.

ROOT, *abruptly*: The title is "Round." Round. A globe, a circle, infinite, unbound. The endless cycle of life, history doomed to repeat itself. One might look at this piece as if Man were innocent, a victim of the cruelty of divine puppeteers. But your piece isn't about that, is it?

RODERICK: Go on.

Root begins to pace.

ROOT: Man is the toy of the Gods, their central preoccupation. He lives and dies at their whim. But if only this were true! Man could then claim no responsibility for his own actions! The world is a pinata, and for thousands of years Man has beaten it with big stick, blind to his deeds. It is only a matter of time until it cracks wide open!... I see the Gods as mere figments of Man's imagination. Man is simply a dot, a near silent hiss in the cosmic white noise, but he is too arrogant to accept such a small role in the universal drama. He fabricates someone to blame for his shortcomings, a scapegoat. The Gods! In fact, four, to further diffuse his own guilt!

RODERICK, *awestruck*: Finally. A theatre where my work is understood!

ROOT: I sensed in myself a uniquely strong bond to your words.

RODERICK: Mr. Renoir-

ROOT: Please! Root.

RODERICK: Root, you have given me a great gift. Even should you reject my play, as many of your peers have, I can walk away from this experience inspired by having imparted the message which is the cornerstone of my existence.

ROOT: Of OUR existence!

Roderick nods in acknowledgement.

ROOT: Where have you been before Theatre Wok?

RODERICK: Oh, uh... The Arboretum, Schnitzler's Loft, Esthetique Nouveau-

ROOT: What did they say?

RODERICK: Sit down. *Root does.* I was made the victim of ridicule. They accused me of a lack of spirituality. They said "Round" was trite, drab, devoid of meaning.

ROOT, *happily*: Myopic fools! How can they be so shortsighted? *Music starts: "The Bill of Fare."* Ah, well, a fool and his gold are soon parted!

Without rhyme or reason
They go picking their season
They'd be better off picking their nose
Though they think they're in front
Their cutting edge has gone blunt
'Cause when you're in the avant garde then anything goes
The shows that others showcase
They show that they have no taste
They think they've got variety, but everything's bland
But Theatre Wok
Won't serve that schlock
The plays that grace this place
Are so well done it's rare that we get panned
They try to get you fatter
Force feeding pu pu platters
But I cut to the meat, they can't compete or compare
Long as you utilize
Your noodle
That is what matters
'Cause food for thought is on the bill of fare
The Wok began naturally
I started from scratch and we
Brought many a play to the stage
Since the marquis's been dim
Some say our future is grim
But I treat the wok so well that we get better with age
My theatre is a vessel
In which ingredients'll
Combine into a histrionic stir-fry galore
Yet each retains
Its own domain
The flavors don't wrestle
And less'll always leave them wanting more
So drop your shopping, stop your looking
You're set to get a booking
And I'd provide direction oh so extraordinaire
Peruse the menu
Choose our venue
Then you'll be cooking
Come get your share, help us prepare the bill of fare
For this I swear, success will come to you, mon cher
And if you care for a fanfare just say when and where!
But if you dare to go elsewhere,
You'd best beware and say a prayer
'Cause I'll become your worst nightmare
And put you in intensive care
You'll live your life confined to a wheelchair
Don't be a square get on the bill of fare

RODERICK: I am intrigued by your eagerness to make a commitment.

ROOT: Please! I must be candid with you. Some would say that Theatre Wok has floundered over the years. That I've gone off the deep end. And unfortunately, my audiences have ebbed and flowed along with the tide of public opinion. But I've been planning a piece. It first came to me as a small trickle of an idea, but has since grown into a great tsunami. Next week, I was planning to hold auditions for this piece, a Kabuki presentation of "The Threepenny Opera." It was going to kick off my comeback season. But I will scrap these plans, Mr. Harding. "Round" has the makings of a brilliant stir-fry. Let me be your spatula.

RODERICK: Your words are kind. I'm truly flattered.

ROOT: It would be my privilege.

Roderick gets out of his chair and moves to the door. At the door, he turns abruptly back to Root.

RODERICK: The repercussions of my decision are potentially enormous. I must think.

Roderick exits. Root is left dumbfounded. Moments later, Roderick enters again. Music starts: "The Game (Reprise)."

RODERICK:

I'll call next week, I just came for my coat

ROOT:

Answer me now or you might miss the boat

Next week's too late

So please don't hesitate

RODERICK:

You've convinced me, no more need to hound

My director is found

ROOT & RODERICK:

And working together we're bound

For success to come 'round

Blackout.

Act I

Scene 5

That night, Miranda's apartment. Bill, still wearing Roderick's