**ACT l**

ENSEMBLE

*Opening Song*

Open Up The Door

*Open up the door,*

*Open up the door,*

*Hold your horses,*

*Hit the lights,*

*Open up the door.*

*Pierre reset that light,*

*All right all right all right!*

*Leave the rug,*

*Take the chair,*

*Move it out of sight!*

*He did what?*

*Oh no! I can’t believe it!*

*Get a move on girls,*

*I wonder who she slept with!*

*Are you free tonight?*

*How I adore you!*

*Andre, my men are rich!*

*Renee, you’re sich a bitch!*

*(music/dance break.)*

*Girls be back at two,*

*We have a run through!*

*We have no time to lose,*

*Someone help me find my shoes!*

*Where’s my parasol? I haven’t seen it!*

*Andre, I’ve changed my mind,*

*Renee, I’m not inclined.*

ENSEMBLE

*(The ensemble actors are reflective of 21st century Internet outrage, multiple voices speaking out with authority.)*

ACTOR 1

I saw Sarah Bernhardt become a star!

ACTOR 2

​Who was Sarah Bernhardt?

ACTOR 3

A magnificent actress! A sublime woman, a seductress, the most famous woman in the world!

ACTOR 4

Sarah was a sinner!

ACTOR 5

Sarah was a saint!

ACTOR 3

Sarah was divine!

ACTOR 1

Sarah was Goth/she wore a bat on her hat!

ACTOR 2

I have a signed photograph of Sarah Bernhardt in her coffin! I love her!

ACTOR 4

I would die for her! I fought a duel for her!

ACTOR 5

I was committed to an insane asylum.

*(Sarah’s apartment, Visual montage of the Georges Clairin paintings of Sarah’s apartment lots of color and splendor lots of possible images)*

GILES

*(a servant)*

Mademoiselle, Mademoiselle Sarah Bernhardt!

SARAH

*(questions)*

What is it?

 GILES

For you, Mademoiselle!

SARAH

What is it?

GILES

A letter marked “urgent” From the House of Moliere!

SARAH

*(with sarcasm)*

Let me have it. That will be all. What does the director of France’s greatest theatre want of me now?

*(Tears it open and reads. The light comes up on Perrin.)*

PERRIN

*(in a separate light)*

Mademoiselle Sarah Bernhardt, my respect for your artistry is, as you know, immense!

SARAH

*(in her own spotlight)*

That’s a lie, but why is he writing now, what does he want?

(*Lights go back and forth between Perrin and Sarah*)

*(music fades)*

PERRIN

*(with authority)*

I assign you, as of rehearsal tomorrow morning, the title role in our next production. Our production of Phaedre!

SARAH

*(incredulous)*

Phaedre! The role of my life to learn in three days! He wants me to fail! He wants my public to see me fail. I can never do it, not learn the part in three days. This is his revenge!

PERRIN

*(with authority)*

I have every confidence that your performance will bring glory to the House of Moliere!

SARAH

*(dismayed)*

Or it could be a disaster.

PERRIN

*(commanding/acerbic)*

I expect you at rehearsal today!

*(Lights go out on Perrin)*

SARAH

*(* ***Music to Soliloquy starts to Back up and introduce song )***

(*desparate)*

He wants me to fail, or God forbid, get sick!

I’m terrified. I have stage fright that cripples me,

I can’t face an audience in three days.

Three days to learn Phaedre! How can I do it!

There isn’t enough time! How dare he?

SARAH SINGS

SOLILOQUY

*The challenge of my life to play Phaedre at last, a part I’ve loved so long*

*Do I have the courage to perform such a role*

*Why do I ask?  My fate has been cast!*

*Mama, why aren't you here to help me?*

*I need you more than ever now.*

*All my life I've fought for affection and love, to only have you send me away.*

*Will I ever win your love, mama? Or will you deny me evermore? What must I do?*

*I still love you.*

ENSEMBLE

*(argumentative)*

ACTOR 1

Sarah’s mother, “Julie Van Hard” was a Jewish seamstress!

ACTOR 2

No! A designer of hats!

ACTOR 3

She was Dutch!

ACTOR 4

She was German!

ACTOR 5

A courtesan! (*important line)*

A woman who broke rules. A woman who charmed, played piano, sang, and savored elegant young men who could pay the rent, and forget she was a woman to be courted, not counted on! Certainly not as a mother!

*(Image of a black and white photo of a street in 19th century France projected onto scrim) SARAH (young high-pitched voice of a frantic child)*

YOUNG SARAH

Mama, where are you going?

YOULE

*(urgent)*

Sarah! Not now! My friends are waiting for me.  You are my darling child – give me a hug, be careful of my gown, Sarah! (*Admonishes her*) I have to go Sarah, let me go.  I have to go. (*instructs the nurse)* Take her back inside with you.

YOUNG SARAH

*(frantic)*

Mama, please stay with me!!I love you, please take me home with you.

NURSE

*(company member in hat)*

Come inside Sarah! She'll be back when she gets back. Sarah, come with me.  Come here Sarah!

YOUNG SARAH

Why didn’t Mama take me with her? I want to see my mother

*(starts sobbing)*

NURSE

*(comforts her)*

Sarah don't cry! Everything will be all right. Sarah, come inside!  No arguments!

ENSEMBLE

*(breathless/urgent/get the audience’s attention)*

ACTOR 1

Once in the house Sarah ran up the stairs to the little window that overlooked the street,

jumped, falling to the ground, and breaking her arm! Her mother was forced to notice.

***(music underscore, “mama, why aren’t you here to help me” with intro to Mama, Keep me)***

YOULE

*(distressed)*

I can't leave now! Get her to the carriage. We must find a doctor at once!

ENSEMBLE

*(triumphant)*

Sarah’s mother cut short her holiday. She was a mother...reluctant! *(The actress playing Sarah has changed costume and walks out to sing alone)*

SARAH

*(sings)*

*Mama, keep me, don't send me away again.*

*Mama, hold me, let me stay and you'll begin*

*to love me, mama,*

*I am your child.*

*Mama, keep me, I was lonely where were you?*

*Mama, hold me, here we are it's just us two,*

*love me, Mama,*

*I am your child!*

*We'll have such fun play in parks, go on picnics in the sun,*

*we will dance on the grass!*

*You'll hold my hand, and we'll laugh as we ride*

*the carousel,*

*you and I, no one else!*

*Mama, see me, I'm the child you've never known*

*Mama, see me, I've spent too much time alone*

*Love, me, Mama, I need you so*

*(lights up on Youle)*

*(Image for Julie Van Hard as courtesan can flicker between 19th century images and contemporary images of the Met costume ball. Images need to be bold and provocative)*

YOULE

YOULE’S SADNESS

*(sings)*

*(Appears in a separate spot to tell her story)*

*Mama, you fooled me!*

*Mama, you told me a lie*

*I’m so unhappy, sometimes I wish I could die*

*Damn you, for leaving me!*

*Damn you, for loving me!*

*Damn you, I feel so alone!*

*I wanted a life that was filled with romance.*

*Mademoiselle Youle, the belle of all France*

*Instead, I'm a mother, just like my own, trapped, en famille with a child nearly grown!*

*I did not want her...I never wanted a child!*

*I loved the free life when I was so young and so wild.*

*Why does she cling to me? Why does she sing to me?*

*Why won't she leave me alone?*

*She makes me weary and angers me so!*

*She takes so much from me; I want her to go!*

*I won't have her stay here my life is my own!*

*I must make that clear now; I must make that known!*

*I'm so unhappy, sometimes I wish I could die!*

*(Sarah appears, above. Sarah and Youle both sing: contrast/conflict/emotions) \*\*Visual images inspired by the silhouette images of Beatrice Caron, artist (TED)*

*(Lights go back and forth between Sarah and Youle)*

SARAH

*(sings)*

*We'll have such fun, play in parks, go on picnics in the sun!*

*You'll hold my hand, and we'll laugh as we ride the Carousel*

YOULE

*(sings)*

*I did not want her*

*I never wanted a child*

SARAH

*(sings)*

*Mama, keep me*

*Don't send me away again*

YOULE

*(sings)*

*I did not want her*

*I never wanted a child!*

*(Lights go out) Ensemble Actors –scene transition)*

*\*\*a continuation of the silhouette idea, framing Sarah creating a very small still image onstage\*\*\**

ENSEMBLE

*(excited to tell the story)*

ACTOR 2

Sarah was sent to a famous convent to be educated.

ACTOR 1

To learn how to be a lady with manners!

ACTOR 3

Taught to curtsy!

ACTOR 4

Taught to behave!

ACTOR 5

Sarah was terrified when she arrived at the front door!

ACTOR 1

Mother Superior welcomed her with open arms!

MOTHER SUPERIOR

*(Company member dons nun hat in front of audience and walks to the front of the stage)*

***( convent transition music to underscore)***

I am Mother Saint Sophie. We are delighted to welcome you to our school. Take my hand! Come Sarah let’s meet your new friends!   You are a lovely young woman.   Follow me!

YOULE

*(admonishes Sarah)*

Sarah, you must promise to obey the sisters and not give them any trouble.

If you promise to be good, I will visit you often.

SARAH

*(eager)*

I promise to be good.

Mama, I love you please don’t leave me!

YOULE

*(insistent)*

Go inside with the sisters! Please follow their rules.

This is a wonderful opportunity for you.

A chance to receive an education.

I promise to visit you often!

Go Sarah, go inside and don’t cry!

*\*\*\*CONVENT (19th century stark black and white image)*

*(Company actor dons a nun’s habit while transitioning into this scene. Nun sits down with Sarah. Actor puts a small veil on Sarah’s head, like a communion veil*

NUN

*(smiles at Sarah)*

*Frère Jacques*

*Frère Jacques*

SARAH

*(sings tentatively)*

*Dormez vous?*

*Dormez vous?*

*(Light change silhouette image inspired by images of Beatrice Caron)*

SARAH

*(breathless)*

*(Framed by light Sarah is still wearing the veil)*

***(convent transition music to underscore)***

I was thrilled by the beautiful life of the sisters!

I loved my school, I decided to take my vows!

I wanted to be just like the nuns.

I, Sarah Bernhardt, will take a new name:  I will be... Sister Rosine!

At 13, I was baptized a Catholic.

I had a baptismal certificate, a white dress, a veil, and perfect happiness!

I loved my school, my new friends, and most of all the sisters.

 At 16, I was summoned home to decide my future! I was excited to go home, and thrilled to see my family, especially my little sister Regina.  She and I are very close.

*\*\*(Transition lights and scene from small, closed black and white silhouette to lavish color bold embellished 19th century splendor. Salon of rich courtesan, warm colors gold gilt, rich stark contrast to black and white images of convent)*

ENSEMBLE

*(excited, hysteria, loud proclamations, arguments)*

***(possible royal transitional music to underscore)***

**ACT**OR 1

The most important person in all France! The world!

ACTOR 2

Charles de Morney,

ACTOR 3

A Prince! Rich, powerful, provocative! A Count?

ACTOR 4

No, a Duke! Louis Napoleon’s brother!

The Emperor of all France who loved society and sin,

and Sarah’s mother adored him!

*(Sarah’s mother’s apartment, a lavish Parisian Salon images flash on scrim,*

 ***and the scene opens with laughter and music underscore, lots of raucous laughter, music ends when Sarah speaks)***

SARAH

*(walks into light)*

Mama? Why is everyone here?

YOULE

*(sweet/charming)*

You know why we are here?

​

SARAH

*(curious)*

No, I don't?

CHARLES DE MORNY

*(Company Actor with resplendent costume/coat, he is king/God/prince/powerful/playboy/rich/ laughing as he says)*

You haven't told her?

SARAH

*(frightened)*

Told me what? I don't understand. What's wrong?

CHARLES DE MORNY

*(powerful)*

Don’t look so worried my dear. We think of ourselves as your family!

We want to talk about your future! To present you to society!

A beautiful young lady educated at France’s most famous convent!

Sarah, I think of you as my own daughter.  We have a surprise for you!

YOULE

*(the actress)*

A wonderful surprise

SARAH

*(questioning)*

You are going to let me enter the convent? Let me take vows, become a nun?

YOULE

*(impatient)*

Sarah, what nonsense! You must be rich to enter a convent you haven’t any money, not a sou!

SARAH

*(argues)*

I have the money Papa left me!

YOULE

*(impatient, angry)*

The money is yours only if you agree to marry! Which you have refused! Many times.

SARAH

*(reacts furiously to her mother’s statement)*

You are not married! Why must I marry?

If I marry, I want to marry God!

I want to be known as: Sister Rosine!

I promised the nuns I would return.

I want to go back to the convent!

YOULE

*(responds with furious anger)*

Sarah, they won’t let you take vows, we are Jewish.

SARAH

***(sings)***

*You’ve never asked me,*

 *for I have a dream,*

 *to live in a convent and trust in a being supreme!*

*I prayed to the saints, to show me the way,*

 *and live as a sister serving God!*

YOULE

*(sings)*

*What a thought how absurd,*

*You a Nun?*

*Why the word!*

 *Makes me laugh at the vision of our Sarah in a veil!*

*You’re a child filled with dreams,*

 *You don’t know what living means,*

 *You’re a silly little girl and your future we will decide!*

SARAH

*(sings)*

*Mama, please listen,*

*Hear me with your heart,*

*My love for God is the part of my life that is real,*

*I’ll make you proud,*

*Please give me this chance*

*To live as a sister serving God.*

YOULE

*(sings)*

*I can’t believe you’re such a fool,*

*What did they teach you in that school?*

*Don’t you know how much the convent would demand to train your soul?*

SARAH

*(sings)*

*I have money from Papa,*

*I can spend it as I please*

YOULE

*(sings)*

*It’s a dowry for your marriage when we choose the proper man*

SARAH

*(sings)*

*Mama please listen,*

*You must understand,*

*I’ve found the one I’ll marry!*

YOULE

*(sings)*

*Thank heavens you’re now talking sense!*

*Where did you meet him,*

*Give us his name.*

SARAH

*(sings)*

*Mother, I want to marry GOD!*

CHARLES DE MORNY

(*sings*)

*She’s an actress don’t you see,*

*On the stage she should be,*

*We are going to the theatre,*

*Just you leave it all to me.*

SARAH

*(sings)*

*It’s my life,*

*You don’t care,*

*I hate you all this isn’t fair,*

*There is nothing you can say or do to make me change my mind.*

SARAH

*(argues with her mother/defiant)*

You never listen to me! I want to go back to the convent!

I want to become a nun! I want to marry God! (*SCREAMS AT HER MOTHER*)

CHARLES DE MORNY

*(with great dramatic flourish)*

The girl is a born actress/send her to the Conservatoire!

The House of Moliere! The most famous theatre in France.

I know people there. They know me.  I am a writer of plays.

The brother of a Prince. We will all attend the theatre tonight!

I have a private box everyone off we go! Sarah, you will love the theatre.

ENSEMBLE

*(Twitter verse delighted to make these declarations(insists/shouts)*

ACTOR 1

The Duc loved theatre!

ACTOR 2

He had a royal box and spent his spare time penning his own plays.

ACTOR 3

The Duc was more successful as a playboy!

ACTOR 4

He was a rich playboy!

ACTOR 5

Louis Napoleon’s brother, very rich!

ACTOR 1

When the curtain rose, the entire crowd hushed.

The actors began to speak, and Sarah was

mesmerized.

ACTOR 2

**(start introduction for next song here, Anything can Happen)**

Sarah forgot where she was

ACTOR 3

She didn’t want to leave!

ACTOR 4

Sarah sobbed, Sarah was transported, and carried home! A future star!

SARAH

**(sings, Anything Can Happen)**

*You’ve changed my life,*

*And now I see*

*There is a world that’s just for me*

*Where anything can happen I believe*

*You have shown me something grand*

*A magic place a private land*

*Where anything can happen I believe*

*Enchanted world of make believe*

*Where anything can happen I believe*

CHARLES DE MORNY

*(with all the confidence of someone who rules the world)*

I am right, the girl is a born actress! I immediately secured a place for Sarah to study acting! At the Comedie Francaise,

I am the son of a Queen, the brother of a Prince!

I let it be known to the House of Moliere! ...“Sarah Bernhardt is important to me!”

ENSEMBLE

*(gossip/cynical)*

ACTOR 1

Sarah Bernhardt his lover for sure!Doors to her future were opened!

(*Light transition into bright harsh light! The Acting Conservatoire, company members as students are moving throughout the stage trying to get to class*)

(SARAH *waves to get someone’s attention. Students pay no attention to Sarah)*

SARAH

Please! Pardon! Help me, please help me!

SULLY

*(Company member and actor who plays this part in Act II,*

*very charming in this scene)*

What's the trouble?

SARAH

I need help but no one will stop.

SULLY

I did.

SARAH

Oh. Thank you.

SULLY

How can I help you?

SARAH

I need to find the acting studio, can you show me the way?

SULLY

I'll do more than that.

SARAH

Thank you.

SULLY

I am Jean Mounet-Sully, second year student! Follow me, I will take you into the Lion’s den. Follow me!

SARAH

I don’t want to be late; it is my first day!  My name is Sarah Bernhardt.

SULLY

You are safe with me.  Take my hand, Sarah

*(Claps his hands to get everyone’s attention, all the actors ignore him.*

*Company member steps forward as a teacher and takes Sarah’s arm,*

*Company transforms into new roles as teachers and students)*

*Music: DAMN THEIR IZE*

*(The Speech Instructor crosses to her.)*

SARAH

I'm sorry to be late. It's my first day!

SPEECH TEACHER

Shall we begin?

**(intro to Damn Their IZE)**

SPEECH TEACHER

*(instructs)*

*Sarah, dear, you must organize your time each day.*

SARAH

*(answers)*

*Oui, Madame, as you say.*

DANCE TEACHER

*(instructs)*

*Sarah, dear, you must energize your releve!*

SARAH

*(answers)*

*Oui, Madame, just this way.*

VOICE TEACHER

*(instructs)*

*Sarah dear, you must vocalize a special way*

SARAH

*(answers)*

*Oui, Madame, I'll obey.*

SPEECH TEACHER

*(instructs)*

*Sarah dear*, y*ou must memorize the lines you say.*

SARAH

*(a student at the conservatoire answers)*

*Oui, madame, right away.*

DANCE TEACHER

*(instructs)*

1 - 2 - 3 - 4 --- 1 - 2 - 3 - 4

SPEECH TEACHER

*(instructs)*

*Sarah dear, listen to the way I say each word.*

​​

DANCE TEACHER

*(instructs)*

*Releve---Releve*

SPEECH TEACHER

*(instructs)*

*Stress each vowel, A, E, I, 0 and U.*

DANCE TEACHER

*(instructs)*

*Releve, now plié,*

*1- 2-3 -4-------1 -2-3-4*

VOICE TEACHER

*(instructs)*

*me, me, me, sol, la, ti, do, ti, la sol, sol, sol!*

SARAH

*(answers)*

*Me re do.*

VOICE TEACHER

*(instructs)*

*No, no, no*

SPEECH TEACHER

(*instructs*)

*Round each tone, Oh!*

SARAH

*(questions)*

*Do I have that note, in my throat?*

DANCE TEACHER

*(instructs)*

*1 - 2 - 3 - 4 --- 1-2-3-4*

SPEECH TEACHER

*(instructs)*

*Discipline, you must realize the part it plays.*

SARAH

*(answers)*

*Oui, Madame, as you say.*

​VOICE TEACHER

*(instructs)*

*Don't compromise, you must dedicate your life this way.*

SARAH

*(answers)*

*Oui! Madame, I'll obey. So much to learn, I can't even do a single turn.*

DANCE TEACHER

*(instructs)*

*Exercise. Otherwise.*

SARAH

*(answers)*

*Criticize. No one ever wants to sympathize.*

 ALL

*Organize, energize, vocalize, memorize, agonize, soliloquize, emphasize,*

SARAH

*(in frustration)*

*Damn their "Ize!"*

*(Lights and scene transition)*

ENSEMBLE

ACTOR 1

Charles de Morny, the most powerful man in France, made certain his protégée!

ACTOR 2

Some said lover!

ACTOR 3

Was cast in a leading role!

ACTOR 4

Sarah Bernhardt, a mere student?

ACTOR 5

Cast in a leading role!

ACTOR 1

I should have had that role! I’m a better actress!

*(Transition into rehearsal hall – company actors ready for rehearsal)*

 THIERRY

*(Director in the most important theatre in France)*

*(Company actor, steps forward with confidence and authority)*

May we have places please!

We are ready to begin rehearsals of the classic play, Iphegenie!

I hope you are ready to rehearse!

Lines memorized!

Places everyone!

Let us begin!

*(Company actor as prompter enters and takes up his position)*

THIERRY

*(Company director, confident filled with authority nods to Sarah)*

Ready

SARAH

*(begins her lines tentatively)*

Dear friends, my whole future now lies with you. It's for you to decide whether I shall live or die! Whether I succeed or lose my country, my sister, and my brother.

THIERRY

*(interrupts her)*

Mademoiselle, please! Stop!

SARAH

*(un-nerved.)*

What is wrong?

 THIERRY

*(with authority and derision)*

I cannot understand a word you are saying! You, Mademoiselle have no passion! You dare to recite verse! You dare to open your mouth to recite these sacred lines!

I did not want to cast you, but I was told to cast you!

Once again, everyone, from the beginning!

SARAH

*(is nervous and speaks loudly without feeling)*

Dear friends, my whole future lies with you.

Whether I shall live or die, whether I shall succeed or

lose forever, my country, my sister, and my brother?

THIERRY

*(with sarcasm and dramatic effect to destroy Sarah’s confidence)*

Enough! (*Claps hands to get attention*)

I will say the lines for you. I expect you to say them exactly as I say them!

Do not pause for dramatic effect, you do not know enough to pause for dramatic effect! I am the director! And....again!

SARAH

*(interrupts to defend herself)*

I was not pausing for effect!

THIERRY

*(interrupts with hauteur)*

Am I to assume, you do not know your lines? You dare to correct me?

PROMPTER

*(interrupts by shouting)*

"We are women "

SARAH

*(furious, embarrassed, humiliated)*

I know!

PROMPTER

*(arrogant and inquisitive)*

You dare to interrupt me! Who do you think you are?

SARAH

*(too fast almost sobbing)*

We are women and can be trusted to share secrets and keep them!

To say nothing of what we are doing! Help us make good our escape!

THIERRY

*(interrupts)*

Continue, please! Without stopping! Try to make sense of the speech without murdering the lines! You have no talent you will never be an actress!

SARAH

*(desperate too fast too loud too everything)*

If I live, I will come and fetch you back to Greece to share my good fortune. I ask you; I entreat you, and you good friend, and you! Which of you is with me, which against me in this?

ENSEMBLE

*(critical exaggerated)*

ACTOR 1

Sarah is not doing well!

ACTOR 2

She is too afraid! Too nervous!

ACTOR 3

Sarah is uncomfortable in her costume, so nervous, maybe someone else will be cast!

ACTOR 4

I know the lines!

ACTOR 5

I can play her part! Hush!

SARAH

*(screaming too loud)*

Artemis! In the bay of Aulis, you saved me from my father’s murderous hand: now, once more, save me and save us all!

ENSEMBLE

*(as if reading critical newspaper headlines)*

ACTOR 1

And the critics said: Sarah Bernhardt is too tall, she has a pretty voice, but her body is

ugly, skeletal, too thin! And, she has no stage presence!

Sarah Bernhardt has no personality! Sarah cried to her mother!

YOULE

*(walks into the spotlight)*

See, all the world calls you stupid and all the world knows you are my child! They see through this nonsense: “Sarah Bernhardt! Who is this “Sarah Bernhardt?” Not my child!

*(Scene transitions to the backstage at the House of Moliere,*

*with lots of noise as actors assemble for places in the great ceremony)*

ENSEMBLE

*(headline to the world)*

THIERRY

Silence, please. We are honoring France’s greatest theatre artist. The most important people in France will be attending. Is that understood?

ACTOR 3

Yes!

THIERRY

*(with authority)*

Thank you. You will enter from upstage, place the palm leaf at the base of the pedestal. Sarah, you will place the Laurel wreath upon the head of our beloved Moliere. Do you understand?

SARAH

Yes!

ENSEMBLE

ACTOR 1

Sarah brought her beloved little sister Regina to the most important ceremony in France.

ACTOR 2

Everyone in Paris was in attendance!  The Duc de Morny, Louis Napoleon, and Sarah’s mother.

ACTOR 3

Sarah’s mother, Louis Napoleon! The first families of France, everyone was there to honor the great Moliere!

SARAH

(*Sarah motions to her sister*)

Regina, you must be quiet, you have to stay backstage!  You promised to obey me. Please be good!

REGINA

*(Company actress in child’s dress, skips out from the wings)*

Sarah, can I come onstage with you?

SARAH

No, Regina, you promised to watch, go backstage… Please stay backstage. You must be a good girl.

REGINA

*(pleads)*

Sarah, please.

*(Sarah is approached by an imposing and, monumental, Madame Nathalie.)*

MADAME NATHALIE

*(Company actress with a permanent contract)*

Sarah, you know the rules! Who is this child?  What is she doing here? Who is this creature?

SARAH

*(apologetic)*

Madame Nathalie, I'm so sorry. This is my little sister, Regina.  She just wants to watch from the wings.  She is very excited to be here.

MADAME NATHALIE

*(with stage grandeur)*

 No family members backstage, you know the rules.

You, little girl, are not welcome.  Go away! Be careful of my gown, go away!

I have an important part to play.

This ceremony, and my role are important to all of France.

I will not let anything spoil it. Do you understand?

SARAH

Of course, Madame!

MADAME NATHALIE

Good!

*(She turns to leave. Regina has planted herself on Madame Nathalie's train and, as she steps away, the train rips. Madame Nathalie, enraged,* *turns and SLAPS Regina, who falls against THE BUST of MOLIERE, crashing into the floor breaking in pieces)*

SARAH

*(breathless)*

Regina! What happened?

REGINA

*(crying)*

She slapped me!

SARAH

*(furious)*

How dare you slap my sister?

MADAME NATHALIE

 *(indignant, forceful, with gravitas)*

How dare you speak to me in this manner? Do you know who I am?

You will pay for this. Back to the gutter where you belong!

SARAH

*(vehemently)*

Where you, Madame, can join me!

(*Sarah SLAPS Madame Nathalie, who staggers, falls, is caught by a young actor)*

*(Blackout: Backstage at the Director’s office*)

*(Thierry’s office)*

SARAH

*(uncertain)*

You sent for me?

THIERRY

*(in command)*

Yes.

SARAH

*(defiant)*

I am here.

THIERRY

*(furious)*

I can see that! You will make a public apology to Madame Nathalie for your disgraceful performance yesterday!

SARAH

*(defiant)*

Or?

THIERRY

*(with authority)*

You are dismissed.  You are fired!

It is the end of your contract with the House of Moliere!

SARAH

*(questions)*

Dismissed?  Fired!

THIERRY

*(answers with authority)*

That is what I said.

SARAH

*(defiant)*

I see! I have no choice.

THIERRY

*(supreme authority)*

You, above all, have no choice.

Madame Nathalie is an important company member!

SARAH

*(snaps at him)*

And I am not?

THIERRY

*(declares)*

You are not!

SARAH

*(defiant)*

She slapped my sister, a little child!

THIERRY

*(answers)*

That is not the point, Sarah!

SARAH

*(continues to argue)*

For me, it is!

THIERRY

*(interrupts)*

I will not argue with you. Will you apologize to Madame?

SARAH

*(insistent)*

Yes, if she apologizes to my sister!

 THIERRY

*(incredulous)*

Is this your final answer?

SARAH

*(complete defiance)*

Yes!

THIERRY

You are fired!  It is the end of your career with the House of Moliere. Get out!

ENSEMBLE

*(Delighted excited, thrilled, and agree on nothing)*

***(Traveling music, upbeat)***

ACTOR 1

Sarah packed her trunk and left for Spain!

*(Staging image, Sarah is wrapped in a Spanish Shawl, and the actors unravel her quickly as they say these lines)*

ACTOR 2

It was Belgium!

ACTOR 3

No! It was Greece!

ACTOR 1

No, that was later! It was Spain! Beautiful Spain!*(Sarah takes Shawl with tassels and uses it as a matador faces bull)*

In Madrid, Sarah developed a passion for bull fighting, and a Matador!

Sarah taunted the bulls and all the young men!

ACTOR 3

It was Belgium! Sarah was wild and enchanting! Sarah met her Prince, while dancing,

(Q*uick change for Sarah as the music and lights change into romantic scene.*

*Lights change, (****music plays, light jazz waltz, A ball scene),*** *Sarah is dancing in silhouette*

*with a company member. Henri steps forward resplendent in a royal uniform.)*

HENRI

*(A royal prince, dressed in gorgeous costume, with 19th century elegance)*

*(handsome, commanding)*

I would like to dance with this beautiful lady! I am Henri, Mademoiselle. Prince Henri de Linge! Will you allow me this dance?

*(Actor moves aside and allows Sarah to step forward)*

*eautiful romantic lights and lu****sh music underscore this*** *scene)*

SARAH

*(dressed in stunning beautiful ball gown)*

I am, Mademoiselle Sarah, Sarah Bernhardt.  I would love to dance with you.

HENRI

*(charming, seductive)*

You are the most beautiful woman at this ball, will you allow me the privilege of dancing with you. I can think of only one thing right now, and that’s holding you in my arms. The music is playing. Dance with me Mademoiselle!

SARAH

*(flirtatious)*

Are you a real prince? Or are you just pretending?

HENRI

*(charming)*

I am a real prince.

SARAH

*(with great sweetness)*

I am delighted to meet you, and I would love to dance with you.

**(Music of next song underscores this moment)**

HENRI

*(charming)*

I am a prince, and you are my princess.

I want to dance with you, dine with you, dazzle you!

Princess Sarah be mine for this night*!*

 HENRI

*(Henri sings...shyly, at first.)*

*You are a princess, rescued from distress!*

*I have just saved you from a fate worse than death!*

*And if that boor, there,*

*Had touched but one hair,*

*He would have taken his very last breath.*

*Young, though I may be,*

*I'm angered when I see,*

 *A lady maligned by a rascal, a swine*

*But let us forget him*

 *I don't mean to be grim*

 *If you'll allow me .... I'll ask you to dine.*

SARAH

*(whispers)*

Henri.

HENRI

*(continues singing)*

*I say this with trepidation*

*You've touched my imagination,*

*You’re very different from others I’ve known*

*And now, with hesitation,*

*I make this declaration,*

*Compared to the others,*

*You stand alone*

*The moment I saw you,*

*I felt that I knew you,*

*Beguiled by your beauty...*

*Your innocent glance*

*I want to hold you,*

*touch, and enfold you*

*If you'll allow me…*

*I'll ask you to dance.*

*I'd love to hold you... touch you...*

***(Music continues as Henri speaks)***

HENRI

*(in spot other actors freeze)*

HENRI

*(****music underscores, lush sensual)***

I fell passionately in love with Sarah.

She was exquisite. I wanted to spend the rest of my life with her.

We were madly in love. Each day and night we were more in love.

After what seemed like a moment, I left to attend to business!

Family business, after all I am a prince, and Sarah returned to Paris!

**(Henri music ends here)**

*(Scene transition back to Youle’s lavish apartment)*

*(Sarah enters breathless)*

YOULE

(*pacing frantic*)

Where have you been! No word from you, and you were fired from the theatre.

I have been worried sick about you. Our family searched everywhere. No word!

You have no gratitude.  How dare you?

 You are stubborn and insolent.

Why did you have to take Regina to the theatre and cause such a scene?

The whole world is talking. You need to apologize.  You need to make the theatre take you back. Immediately!

SARAH

*(frightened distressed)*

Mama, I’m sorry, I needed to go away.  I was angry, humiliated! I’ve been in Belgium

(*Youle interrupts)*

YOULE

*(furious)*

I don't know how you can be so selfish, Sarah!

To run away without telling me. Without a word to anyone.

We have been worried about you. How are you going to support yourself?

What are you going to do?

SARAH

*(interrupts)*

Mama, please listen I need to talk to you to tell you something important!

I'm in love.  I’ve met someone...We love each other.

Please listen to me.

YOULE

*(incredulous, questioning)*

You’ve met someone, you are in love, what a foolish idea!

Have you learned nothing from my life.  Love!  What a silly idea.

SARAH

*(with assurance she doesn’t feel)*

I met a Prince! We are in love! His name is Henri, I love him!

YOULE

*(incredulous/indignant)*

A Prince? In love with you, impossible!

SARAH

*(responds with passion)*

He is in love with me! We met in Belgium; we fell in love!

YOULE

*(interrupts)*

Impossible! Look at you! You are not a princess you are not royalty!

No prince would have you! You are a foolish girl. Stubborn, impossible!

SARAH

*(argues vehemently)*

We are in love. I’m going to have his child.  We are going to have a life together.

YOULE

*(furious)*

You are going to have a baby! You are going to have a child by a prince! Will he marry you?

SARAH

*(argues)*

No!

 YOULE

*(furious)*

What do you mean, no? A husband for my daughter, rich, powerful and a Prince?

SARAH

*(exhausted)*

No, mama. I'm not going to marry him.

 YOULE

*(insistent)*

What did you say?

SARAH

*(defiant)*

I am not going to marry him.

 YOULE

*(questioning)*

Have you told him you are going to have his child?

SARAH

No!

YOULE

*(interrupts)*

How dare you? I will not allow you to bring your bastard into this house!

Not in my house!

SARAH

*(defiant)*

That didn't stop you!

YOULE

*(furious/angry/insistent)*

Sarah! How dare you speak to me like this!

SARAH

*(taunts)*

I don't see my father anywhere!

 YOULE

*(interrupts)*

How dare you speak to me in this tone of voice!  How dare you! Shut up!

*(Slaps Sarah just as Regina enters.)*

SARAH

*(Cries out and reacts to slap)*

YOULE

*(insistent and furious)*

Sarah you will be the death of me. I cannot bear it! Get out! Now. You will give birth to a bastard, but it will not be in my house. There will be no bastards in my house!

SARAH

Then we had ALL better go!

YOULE

*(incredulous)*

How dare you? You do not love or respect me.  Get out!

SARAH

*(defiant)*

And what love and respect do you have for us?

YOULE

 *(insistent)*

Get out and take that brat with you!

 (Sarah takes Regina’s hand and exits)

ENSEMBLE

*(telling story with urgency and excitement)*

 ***(music, Dm, JW, with desperation quality)***

ACTOR 1

Sarah left, taking her sister Regina!

ACTOR 2

Sarah found a small apartment!

ACTOR 1

**(change music to major key, mama keep me)**

Sarah had a new baby boy!

ACTOR 3

She was so happy. She named her son Maurice!

ACTOR 4

Maurice was her little prince!

ACTOR 1

She auditioned for every theatre in Paris and found work as an actress!

ACTOR 5

Sarah was determined!

ACTOR 2

​​Sarah was defiant!

ACTOR 1

Sarah was desperate!

*(Knock on door)*

SARAH

Henri!

HENRI

*(urgent/distressed)*

Sarah, I thought I'd never find you. I searched everywhere for you.

SARAH

*(relieved)*

Oh, Henri, I am so happy to see you. I've missed you,

HENRI

*(sweet)*

Sarah, I’ve missed you! Come into my arms!

SARAH

*(in love)*

Oh, Henri, I’m so happy you are here.

HENRI

*(romantic)*

Don’t speak. Let me hold you, my sweet Sarah.

SARAH

*(excited)*

Henri, I have something wonderful to tell you.

  Henri, we have a child.! A son. I named him Maurice.

HENRI

*(thrilled)*

You are my love, and we have a child. I have a son by the most beautiful woman in France. Let’s celebrate with champagne, come into my arms, Sarah. I’ve found you.

I love you!

*(Takes her in his arms)*

SARAH

*(happy)*

Oh, Henri!

*(They embrace, kiss.)*

ENSEMBLE

Sarah found her Prince and Henri found his princess. Life, for both, was wonderful…for a while. Henri’s uncle, a General, came to Paris to find Henri. Henri is a royal prince, who has duties, and responsibilities. He must return immediately.

(*Actor who is going to play the GENERAL walks out, puts on regal coat and hat in front of audience*)

GENERAL

I will bring him home. I will talk sense into him.

*(A knock on the door, Sarah opens it)*

GENERAL

*(company actor in military coat and hat)*

Mademoiselle Sarah Bernhardt?

SARAH

Yes, and you, sir?

GENERAL

I am Henri's uncle.

SARAH

I’m delighted to meet you! Please, come in.

 GENERAL

For a moment only. I haven’t much time and I have something to say to you.

SARAH

Please do.

GENERAL

I understand you have a child!

SARAH

Yes! I would love for you to meet him.

 GENERAL

Henri’s child?

SARAH

Yes, of course! We are in love. I care deeply for your nephew.

GENERAL

Henri cannot marry you. The family will never approve, you a mere actress! A Jewess?

Never!

SARAH

I am an actress and I intend to be a star! A great star on the stage. What does any of this have to do with Henri?

GENERAL

An actress! And a Jewess!! It is impossible! The family will never approve. Henri must return home at once.

SARAH

(*furious*)

I am Jewish by birth and a baptized Catholic.

I am amazed General. I am amazed at your audacity and lack of manners.

GENERAL

It is impossible for Henri to marry you. Impossible! He is a prince, a royal prince. And you Mademoiselle are not royalty. It is over!

SARAH

How dare you talk to me like that?

GENERAL

Do you want to be the cause of his ruin?

 SARAH

Of course not, I love him! We have a child together.

GENERAL

Then we understand one another.

I will see to it that a generous settlement is made to you.

You will not be left penniless!

SARAH

I want nothing from you! I have pride. Along with tact and manners! Good day General!

Get out!

**(some music…strong dramatic chords )**

*(General exits)*

*((Henri returns to the apartment) –*

 *(takes Sarah in his arms and declares his love!)*

*(The light narrows on Sarah as Henri moves back into the scene, with a new heightened sense of urgency, turns away from him and orders him to leave)*

SARAH

Henri, you must leave! I can’t see you again, ever! Please go! You have to leave now! Don’t ask me why...just leave

HENRI

But, why Sarah? Why? We're so happy together, I don't understand.

SARAH

It's because I love you.

(angry song: telling him to go away)

HENRI

***(sings)***

*What are you saying?*

*How can you do this?*

*I love you!*

*How dare you tell me we’re through,*

*I’ve only just found you!*

*Let me convince you,*

*How I adore you!*

*Please hear me!*

*In all the world there is no other woman for me!*

 SARAH

 (*sings*)

*Henri don’t hate me,*

*I love you so,*

*Your world is not my world,*

*And mine is so far away from yours,*

*You are a prince*

*noble and wealthy/Powerful!*

HENRI

(*sings*)

*I’d give it up.*

SARAH

(*sings*)

*No! You will not.*

HENRI

(*sings*)

*God! Help me,*

*Sarah, this is madness.*

*You can’t let this happen.*

*It will kill me if you make me go!*

SARAH

(*sings*)

*Go my love, hurry,*

*it pains me so*

*I’ll love you forever,*

*you’ll Love me forever*

HENRI

(*sings*)

*You say that you love me.*

*Prove it my darling,*

*come with me.*

SARAH

(*sings*)

*Henri, I can’t do that.*

*It is too late now!*

HENRI

(*sings*)

*Sarah, you don’t love me. You are selfish!*

SARAH

(*sings*)

*No! Henri, you are mistaken.*

*please don’t do this to me!*

*If you only knew what I’m going through!*

HENRI

(*sings*)

*You’ve just destroyed the love of my life*

*when you should have been my wife!*

(*Exits with anger*)

SARAH

Henri!

(*Sarah cries softly,* ***music starts*)**

*(Sarah sings to Maurice, quietly with tenderness)*

*I’ll always love you*

*I’ve always wanted a child I’ll never leave you......*

*(****possible F major music box music)***

*(Lights fade)*

(END OF ACT ONE)

**END OF ACT l MUSIC ON PHONE**

ACT II

SARAH

*(The Company of Actors continues the story of Sarah Bernhardt,*

*adapting new character roles as the story evolves.*

*The ensemble tells Sarah’s story with passion,*

*and a heightened sense of urgency as the story changes.*

*We need audacity and bravado from each performer.)*

**(Lively background music to open the scene)**

COMPANY ACTOR

*(steps forward and proclaims)*

ACTOR 5

The actress Sarah Bernhardt needed a job! She applied to a theatre!

ACTOR 3

The Odeon a theatre on the Left Bank, home to delirious students

ACTOR 1

A theatre of ideas, and passion, provoking audiences to shout their love

Or fury, and joy, demanding new plays, demanding...loudly.

ACTOR 4

They stamped their feet and stood on theatre chairs, SHOUTING!!!

SARAH

*(urgent and commanding)*

I am Sarah Bernhardt, actress! I need to work; I have a child!

CHILLY

And I am the director of the Odeon,

I have a theatre to run, seats to fill, people depend on me! I understand you are notorious and difficult, Sarah Bernhardt!

SARAH

*(determined and defiant/ the actress)*

Notorious yes, difficult No!

I am the most lied about person in all France

I need to work; I have a child; I want to work in your theatre.

Sir, I need to work. You will never regret hiring me.

CHILLY

*(director highly theatrical)*

I hired Sarah Bernhardt, her voice, her presence, and her reputation! Notorious is an advantage when you need to sell tickets.

ENSEMBLE

*(Students heckling her are obnoxious)*

*(They are riotous/ loud and laughing)*

ACTOR 5

Sarah, you are beautiful.

ACTOR 4

I love you.

(*fan/girl*) ACTOR 3

You are the one I adore.

ACTOR 5

Sarah – I love you!

ACTOR 4

I want to marry you.

ACTOR 5

I want you tonight/now! You are mine!

ACTOR 4

She’s promised to me.

*(SARAH steps out and quiets the audience.*

*Actors come forward to dress her in the Le Passant costume)*

ACTOR 1

Sarah appears on stage as the young troubadour Zanetto wooing the Beautiful Lady Sylvia who declares to the world she can never love again.

**Music: LE PASSANT**

Sarah:

*I’m a troubadour in search of love,*

Lady Sylvia:

*I’m Lady Sylvia,*

Sarah:

*I have wandered far to find my love,*

Lady Sylvia:

*I have a broken heart,*

Sarah:

*Let me hold you close*

Lady Sylvia:

*I cannot love again*

Sarah:

*I’ll sing a song of love and your heart will sing a song to me*

*White Satin: Pierrot image by Felix Nadar (photograph)*

*(MUSIC LE PASSANT)*

*The story of Zanetto is danced by Sarah and the Lady Sylvia****(Music, Le Passant)*. *T****he lady Sylvia sees a young troubadour (Sarah plays the young troubadour)*. *Sylvia finally feels love but sends the young (travesty) away.*

ENSEMBLE

*(excited)*

*(****Le Passant music ends here)***

ACTOR 2

It is the first time Sarah played a boy...in trousers!

ACTOR 3

The students loved her!

ACTOR 4

They sang and chanted!

ACTOR 5

Sarah! We love you, Sarah!

ACTOR 4

I love you, Sarah!

ACTOR 5

I want you, Sarah!

ACTOR 4

You are mine!

ACTOR 5

I love you best

ENSEMBLE

ENCORE, ENCORE, BRAVO! BRAVA!

*(can be spoken in many languages)*

*(A carriage to be created by physical staging* *to mimic the action and*

*movement of Sarah being pulled through the streets by students with*

*Sarah joyously laughing)*

ENSEMBLE

*(excited and urgent)*

ACTOR 1

Le Passant was performed all summer by popular demand.

ACTOR 2

After Sarah’s big success, war was waged with Prussia.

ACTOR 3

In time, Napoleon relinquished his sword!

ACTOR 4

Sarah converted the Odeon Theatre into a Field Hospital,

ACTOR 2

The role of Savior appealed to her.

ACTOR 3

**(Le Passant music starts again here)**

Sarah organized and tended the wounded

SARAH

*(a single light to illuminate the soldier and Sarah)*

  *(gives him her hand)*

Are you feeling better?

WOUNDED SOLDIER

*(weakly)*

Give me your hand, I am cold.  Is there a blanket? Come closer.  Who are you?

SARAH

*(confident)*

I am the actress, Sarah Bernhardt.  We will help you if we can.  I know it is cold. You need to get well so you can return home to your family.

WOUNDED SOLDIER

*(Soldier pleads*)

Stay beside me, please don’t leave me. I am cold.

SARAH

*(defiant)*

Here is another blanket, let me tuck you in.  You are safe with me.

CHILL​Y

(*the director of the theatre)*

*(urgent)*

Have you heard the news?

SARAH

*(anxious/nervous)*

What news?

CHILLY

*(exultant)*

Peace! The war is over.

SARAH

*(questions)*

The war is over?

CHILLY

*(triumphant)*

Yes!   Did you hear, the war is over, you can return to your homes. We can reopen our theater.

SARAH

*(excited)*

Thank God! My friends, the war is over.  We must celebrate!

You, my brave friends will be able to go to your homes, to your families.

ENSEMBLE

*(lines spoken as if reading newspaper or internet headlines)*

ACTOR 2

The war was, indeed, over.

ACTOR 1

A relief to everyone, in France!

ACTOR 3

With the invasion over, Paris celebrated

ACTOR 4

It was the age of Literary giants

ACTOR 5

There were two great rivals for the hearts of the people of France

ACTOR 1

Victor Hugo and Alexander Dumas. The greatest poet of the century,

Victor Hugo returned to Paris.

ACTOR 2

After 19 years in exile, crowds waited to see him; the people cheered!

ACTOR 3

Victor Hugo was a hero!

ACTOR 1

He wrote Les Misérables in exile.

ACTOR 3

It was published and read by everyone

ACTOR 1

Les Misérables was read and quoted by everyone in Paris

*(a line from Les Misérables)*

ACTOR 2

“To love another person is to see the face of God”

*(spoken in a declamatory style)*

ACTOR 1

French literature was divided into two epochs, before and after Hugo!

**( Tree Tango under Sarah)**

**SAR**AH

*(in discussion with Chilly, her theatre director)*

A play by Victor Hugo. A Spanish Queen who falls in love with a servant. Victor Hugo is brilliant. It is a great role! I’m excited to play the Queen.  You must let me play the Queen.

 CHILLY

*(interrupts and agrees)*

It is a great role!  For the right actress.

SARAH

*(Insistent on being cast in the role of the queen)*

I love this role.  I want to play Victor Hugo’s Queen; it is a magnificent role!

A perfect role for me.  A Queen in love with her servant.  Magnifique!

**(Tree tango music out)**

CHILLY

*(agrees)*

It is a great play with a great role for the right actress.

SARAH

*(insists)*

I am the right actress. I want to play the Queen. The students love me and will pay to see me. Sarah Bernhardt, as Victor Hugo’s tragic queen! A great role, it’s perfect!

CHILLY

*(dismissive with authority)*

I am the director and I prefer Jane Essler. She is very popular with our audiences.

It is my decision.  I will cast Jane Essler. I will discuss this with our playwright, Victor Hugo, and not with you!

*(Company actor steps forward as Victor Hugo)*

VICTOR HUGO

*(a king/a literary lion/supremely charming)*

 Do you want me to consider Sarah Bernhardt? Yes, I have seen her perform! She is good enough!

Not great, by any means, but adequate to play the Queen.

Tell her she has the role.

SARAH

*(excited)*

Good! I have the role.

I know I can play the queen! I must play the Queen!

It is a great role; I know the audience will love me.

ENSEMBLE

*(actor gossip/excited and thrilled)*

ACTOR 1

The first play reading will be at Victor Hugo’s home.

ACTOR 2

I want to see his home!

ACTOR 3

We all want to see Victor Hugo’s home! How exciting, to go to Victor Hugo’s home.

ACTOR 2

To dine with all his famous friends and see his mistress?

ACTOR 1

Please let’s go! Sarah, say yes!

SARAH

*(commanding, nervous, determined)*

The first play reading must be on stage! A play’s first reading is always on stage! How dare he? Bring me some paper! “The Queen has taken a chill and cannot go out. Pity your poor Queen.”

(*commands*)

Take this note to Victor Hugo. The first play reading must be on stage, not at Victor Hugo’s house. How dare he!

VICTOR HUGO

**(some lovely jazz waltz tempo music)**

***(declares)***

Sarah Bernhardt was a bold, captivating woman! Seductive and beautiful!

Very beautiful, Oh Mademoiselle, I am your servant.

(*Takes her hand and kisses her fingers)*

ENSEMBLE

*(excited/twitter verse/chatter)*

ACTOR 2

​The play was read at the Odeon.

ACTOR 1

Victor Hugo decided to direct his own play about a Spanish Queen!

ACTOR 3

Sarah was nervous!

ACTOR 4

Swinging her legs wildly!

ACTOR 1

With her vivacious energy!

ACTOR 3

Jumping high upon a table!

ACTOR 2

Victor Hugo, famous for his 150 thousand verse poems, writes a note to Sarah!

(*Victor Hugo stands in the center of the stage*)

SARAH

*(reads note)*

A note from Victor Hugo!

(*Sarah reads aloud*)

“A queen of Spain, virtuous and able, must never jump upon a table?”

Forgive me. I am but a naughty little girl. Will you forgive me?

You are the master, and I your willing servant.

*(She kisses him on both cheeks)*

ENSEMBLE

*(thrilled/excited)*

ACTOR 3

Sarah was a brilliant success in the play.

ACTOR 4

I was there I saw her perform!

ACTOR 2

The audience went wild!

ACTOR 1

Victor Hugo was thrilled by Sarah’s performance. He came backstage and declared:

VICTOR HUGO

*(with charm and a great sense of theatre)*

“Mademoiselle you were great and charming.

You moved me, the old warrior, I applauded, I wept.

This tear, which you caused me to shed, is yours.

I place it at your feet”

(*Takes Sarah’s hand*)

ENSEMBLE

 *(questions, one voice)*

ACTOR 2

The “tear” was a single perfect diamond drop attached to a delicate gold bracelet.

ACTOR 3

Sarah wore it forever!

ACTOR 1

Victor Hugo had a diary in which he reported his lovers, amours. Every dalliance and only in Spanish!

***(introduce this is my moment underscore)***

ENSEMBLE

*(newspaper headline)*

ACTOR 2

The reviewers said!

ACTOR 3

All her movements are at once noble,

ACTOR 4

Her voice sings a melody only the heart can hear!

ACTOR 1

Each word Sarah speaks is like a lover’s caress!

ACTOR 4

The world was taking notice of Sarah Bernhardt.

ACTOR 3

She was a goddess of the left bank

ACTOR 1

Sarah was becoming a star.

*(Actors are moving Sarah around the stage)*

ENSEMBLE

*(Sarah is moved around the stage through each of these actions)*

ACTOR 4

Sarah was photographed everywhere.

ACTOR 2

She wore beautiful clothes, posed for photographers!

ACTOR 1

​​If they forgot to notice, she made certain they noticed, by posing in a coffin!

ACTOR 4

So often, we called her Madame Gloom!

ACTOR 3

Sarah’s apartment included a studio where she painted and sculpted

ACTOR 2

Sarah wore pants while sketching!

ACTOR 1

Photographers took photos!

*(Sarah poses while several actors try and take photos)*

ACTOR 2

The Newspaper headlines declared: Sarah Bernhardt wears trousers

ACTOR 1

Postcards of Sarah sold like hot cakes in the souvenir shops.

ACTOR 4

Her face made money/gold! Pose for me Sarah!

ACTOR 1

Sarah was exuberant, she worked hard and entertained.

ACTOR 2

She sang and laughed, told stories, and charmed everyone .

SARAH and ENSEMBLE

**Sings This is my Moment**

SARAH

*This is my moment,*

*I feel like a star,*

*Heady as champagne and caviar,*

*This is my moment,*

*Now I know,*

*How it feels to touch a rainbow,*

*Noble and strong,*

*As if you belong,*

*To royalty!*

ENSEMBLE

*This is your moment,*

SARAH

*I feel like a star,*

ENSEMBLE

*Dining on champagne and caviar,*

*Princes will court you,*

*Giving your jewels,*

*Making new headlines,*

*Breaking the rules!*

*Pass the champagne ,*

*More caviar,*

*Soon the whole world*

*Will know who you are!*

*Now it’s your time,*

*A moment sublime!*

*A feeling divine!*

SARAH

*This moment is mine!*

**(music continued under next dialogue)**

ACTOR 1

Sarah defied convention! Sarah is original! Posters… painted and hung all over Paris

ACTOR 2

Sarah wore jewelry designed by Lalique. Sarah is fashion!

*(hyper/hysterical/shrieking fans)*

ACTOR 3

The world shrieked at this new sensation

ACTOR 4

The youth of the new theatrical audience-soon known in Paris As: Our Sarah, My Sarah, I am the New SARAH

ACTOR 2

They copied her style, imitated her walk...her talk, Sarah the goddess of the left bank

adored by delirious/ students! France’s most famous could no longer ignore. *(change of tone: stern)*

**(end “This is my moment music.”)**

ACTOR 3

The House of Moliere, France’s national theatre, wanted Sarah back.

CHILLY

*(company actor)*

Over my dead body!  Never while I am alive. I am the director of the Odeon and I will never allow you **to** break our contract.

ENSEMBLE:

*(headlines)*

ACTOR 5

The National Theatre of France?

ACTOR 1

The House of Moliere?

ACTOR 2

The greatest theatre in all France, the world! Wants Sarah Bernhardt back.

​They never invite anyone back! What will Sarah do?

SARAH

*(confident/defiant)*

The house of Moliere wants me back.

I will do as I think right.

I am a mother; I have a child to support.

I must take the risk.

I will sign the contract.

*(Company Actor assumes new role as the director of the most famous theatre in France)*

PERRIN​

*(commanding)*

As the Director of the House of Moliere I ask that you sign on the bottom line!

SARAH

*(distraught)*

Oh, this pen! Maybe it is not meant to be. Perhaps I am not meant to sign this contract.

PERRIN

*(doesn’t raise an eyebrow)*

Nonsense.

SARAH

*(extremely anxious)*

If the blot turns out to be a butterfly, I will sign! If not...no!*(looks at audience)*

A butterfly*.*It is fate. I will sign.

CHILLY

*(furious)*

You are finished at the Odeon!

You will have no career in France, I will sue you.

How dare you do this?

ENSEMBLE

*(with authority)*

The Odeon Sued!

ACTOR 1

Sarah was once again a member of the Comedy Francaise: the HOUSE OF MOLIERE

*(Entrance into the National Theatre of France with the Grand lobby*

*capturing the ornate* *beauty of The House of Moliere – images to establish the visual grandeur)(Jean Mounet-Sully (matinee idol gorgeous) welcomes Sarah Bernhardt,*

*Sully is the star of the 19th century, hunky/ gorgeous, A god to the audiences.*

**flirty, dramatic music**

SULLY

*(smiles with charm)*

Sarah Bernhardt, welcome back.  You were missed.  All of Paris talks of you.  I am here to personally escort you.  Take my hand. (*Kisses her hand*)  We will enter the lion’s den together.

SARAH

*(questions)*

Jean Mounet Sully, You look so different.

SULLY

*(continues to smile)*

I didn't think you'd recognize me.

 SARAH

*(looks at him, really looks at him)*

I almost didn't. You are a star the newspapers are filled with stories of Jean Mounet-Sully. You are the one everyone is talking about.

The women of Paris adore you. I almost didn’t recognize you.

SULLY

*(responds)*

What do you mean? I haven't changed that much. Do you remember our first day at the Conservatoire, how I introduced you. It is my job again. Come with me Sarah Bernhardt.

SARAH

*(smiles and charms)*

When you are on stage …the world brightens.You seem so sweet, so different. All the women in the world want to be on stage with Jean Mounet Sully. I am enchanted to be sharing the stage with France’s greatest star, I bow to your artistry. (*does a little bow)*

SULLY

*(charming confident)*

You make me laugh, give me your hand so I can kiss it.

You are quite beautiful Mademoiselle Sarah Bernhardt and oh so very famous (*still smiling*) How did you become so famous?

SARAH

*(flirting and laughing)*

Oh Jean, it is your face in every newspaper.  The women of Paris adore you.

You are followed everywhere, by beautiful young women, waiting outside your apartment for a glimpse of you. Were you always so magnetic, so charming?

SULLY

*(answers)*

I believe I was.

SARAH

*(the actress)*

Nonsense! I would have noticed!

 SULLY

 *(flirts)*

Perhaps you, Sarah Bernhardt, didn’t have time to notice?  I see your picture everywhere. Everything you do is noticed and written about. You are truly magnificent, “ma chere” !(*kisses her hand)*

 SARAH

*(smiling a little uncertain)*

Oh Jean, how sweet you are to come and escort me.  I am nervous, very nervous.

Give me your hand. Let us go together into the lion’s den. You make me braver.

SULLY

*(holds out his arm for her)*

Take my hand Sarah.  You are safe with me. Everyone in Paris talks only of Sarah Bernhardt.We will make a grand entrance, together.

SARAH

*(playing to her audience)*

Seeing you again makes me hopeful.

SULLY

*(pulls her close to him)*

Sarah, may I take you to dinner. A special moment for old friends to catch up. Say yes!

SARAH

*(flirts)*

Take me to dinner, you sweet, charming man, but of course. When?

SULLY​​

*(charms)*

Tonight?  I want to see you.

SARAH

*(dramatic/flirtatious)*

We can have dinner tonight.  Come to my apartment and meet my son Maurice.  Tonight at 8.

**(jazz waltz light )**

ENSEMBLE

*(big and bold, actors strutting the red carpet)*

ACTOR 2

The world noticed!

 (*breathless/excited/fangirl*) ACTOR 1

Jean Mount Sully was a god

ACTOR 4

He lived in a world of gods and demigods

ACTOR 2

He was the most Gorgeous, Ravishing/handsome

(*youthful/breathless*) ACTOR 1

He was. Beautiful... I loved him

*(Falls to the ground in a swoon)*

ACTOR 4

All the young women in Paris swooned and Sarah agreed

SARAH'S DRESSING ROOM

*The company are assembled to surprise Sarah.*

*Music begins ...the company surround Sarah to sing.*

*(The song is lighthearted and filled with gossip, they are welcoming*

*Sarah back to the world’s most prestigious theatre)*

ENSEMBLE

*(song)*

*Open up the door!*

*Open up the door!*

*Is she here yet?*

*Yes, she is*

*Put them over there*

*Pierre, turn up the light*

*All right, all right, all right*

*Pour the wine*

*There is no time*

*To make mistakes tonight*

*Have you seen her yet?*

*Has she a lover?*

*Once she loved a prince*

*No one has seen him since*

*There is a child you know*

*Who is the father?*

*Some say it's Canrobert?*

*But Sarah would never say*

*Open up the door*

*She's on the second floor*

*Here she comes*

*Get out of sight*

*Pierre, turn do*wn the light

*Pierre, turn up the light*

*Make your mind up, dim or bright*

*Pierre!*

*All right, all right!*

*(Sarah and Sully enter.)*

SULLY

Welcome to your new home.

SARAH

If Madame Nathalie's dressing room is far away, it will be heaven.

ALL

*Surprise, surprise, surprise!*

SARAH

*Sophie, Jean, Renee, Andre? What a grand surprise!*

GILES

*Have some wine, my dear*

*You're going to need it*

SARAH

*Is she still alive?*

SOPHIE

*That old bitch will never die*

*When you slapped her face*​

*We all applauded*

*Even the great Moliere,*

*nearly fell off his chair*

SULLY

Silence in the room

ENSEMBLE

*(sings)*

*A gift for Madame Gloom*

*You sleep so often in a coffin*

*Here's one for your room*

*(Photograph of Sarah in her coffin - it is one of the most successful images to capture the imagination of all France)*

***(Music continues under the rest of the scene.)***

SOPHIE *(questions)*

*(excited and happy)*

Sarah! You're back?

SARAH

*(kisses her on both cheeks)*

Yes. And it's wonderful to see you. I’ve missed you

SOPHIE

We have so much to catch up on.

So many stories you are the toast of Paris! (laughs)

SARAH

*(excited)*

Oh Sophie, I’ve missed you. It is so good to be back. This is my real home. My first theatre family, I’m thrilled.

*(Company Actress, performer who played Madame Natalie in Act I)*

MADAME NATHALIE

*(imperious sweeping/grand)*

You! Do not talk to me. That is all I have to say to you. Good day!

*(JEAN MOUNET-SULLY walks to the front of the stage with fans following him, touching him, screaming, trying to touch him)*

ENSEMBLE

*(hyper/hysterical/fans)*

ACTOR 1

Young women followed Jean Mounet-Sully everywhere!

ACTOR 4

They slept in front of his apartment, screamed when he walked by.

ACTOR 2

Waited by his door to touch his hair

ACTOR 1

A tangled chestnut mane, leonine/long with his sculpted body he was a god.

*(Girls faint as he walks by,* *Sully stops at a flower stall to purchase*

*a bouquet of flowers, flirts with the flower girl)*

SULLY

*Let me have roses, 12 yellow roses*

*Roses for friendship and roses for love*

FLOWER GIRL

*Roses I have sir and if you love her*

*These are a message from heaven above*

SULLY

*Yes I do want her and I adore her*

*Yet at the same time I find you quite dear*

*You are a sweet one, pretty and lissome*

*What are you doing when you finish here*

FLOWER GIRL

*Sir you are very forward I will not hear one more word*

*It’s getting late and it’s time to go home*

SULLY

*I’ll see you to your home, sweet*

*I’m happy that we did meet*

*Were you my lady I never would roam*

FLOWER GIRL

*Sir you are mistaken, for I am taken*

*And I’m in love with a wonderful man*

SULLY

*What does it matter, all this is chatter*

*We could be sharing the very same bed*

FLOWER GIRL

*Here are your roses, twelve yellow roses*

***(music fades out)***

*(Sully holds flowers and enters Sarah’s apartment)*

SARAH

Jean, you've come.

SULLY

*(answers)*

Of course, I counted the hours.

*(shyly, playing a scene)*

Sarah, you are enchanting (*gives her roses*)

Do you remember?

SARAH

How could I forget? When I was fired, you brought me roses...it is a long time ago..

*\*\*****\*(BRING ME SOME ROSES) underscores this***

SULLY

*(insistent)*

Sarah, I saw you in every performance of Le Passant. I was at the theatre each night; I was unable to take my eyes from the stage. You were magnificent. An exquisite jewel.

SARAH

*(questions)*

Every performance?  Oh Jean, why didn’t you come backstage?  Of course, I would have been more nervous if I’d known you were in the audience. I would have loved to see you.

SULLY

*(looks into her eyes and declares)*

I could not take my eyes from the stage, you were wonderful!   You captured my heart with your beauty, your artistry.

SARAH

Jean, you sweet and charming man, if only I’d known, Why didn’t you let me know?

SULLY

*(always the actor giving his best performance)*

I couldn't. You were magnificent. I wept. You captured my heart. I am yours to command.

SARAH

*(the actress answers)*

You attended the theatre every night?  What a delicious thought. And here you are with roses. They are beautiful.

SULLY

*(looks at the audience and declares)*

Come close my sweet.  (*Kisses her*)

ENSEMBLE

*(change in tone/urgent/big and bold)*

ACTOR 3

The public noticed.... and hungered to know about Sarah Bernhardt’s new romance.

ACTOR 2

Love letters were exchanged and read in the press, passionate embraces, soaring hot kisses, everywhere! Kisses backstage, in between scenes, onstage, as only lovers can do!

(*Sarah and Sully passionately kiss).*

SARAH

*(distracted by all his kisses)*

Jean, one last kiss my darling...you know I must get back home, to my son Maurice

He misses his Mama! What a thrilling moment, to be in your arms. I love you, Jean;

I have never loved anyone more than I love you.

SULLY

*(hurt/demigod/matinee idol)*

Sarah, you took possession of my soul, my lover, kiss me again! I adore you.

SARAH

*(the actress)*

My lord and master.  We will be together forever.  My darling, my love. Only in your arms do I live.

SULLY

*(the great actor proclaims)*

Kisses yes, but I have no life without you. You are a goddess come close to me.

(*Sweeps her into his arms)*

SARAH

*(insists to all who will hear)*

 One more kiss and I must go home.

SULLY

 I don’t want to spend a moment away from you. Come close to me Sarah.

SARAH

*(takes command of the scene)*

You are the husband of my heart I will love you forever!

**(music out here)**

ENSEMBLE

*(insistent)*

ACTOR 2

The trade of celebrity had been invented the public wanted it all

ACTOR 3

And at the House of Moliere, new plays were rehearsed

ACTOR 4

Sarah competed for the best roles.

ACTOR 1

Rivalry between the actress Sophie Croizette and Sarah heated up!

ACTOR 3

Onstage during rehearsal, the play’s director, Monsieur Perrin, Sophie’s lover,

lost his temper and refused to light Sarah!

*(Company actor continues in the role of Perrin they are in a rehearsal hall)*

PERRIN

*(the director declares)*

One Moon is enough

SARAH

*(interrupts with fury)*

Excuse me! Monsieur Perrin? You have no right to take my moon away! The stage directions specify: “I am pale, I am convulsed”, *(demands)* I want my moon!

PERRIN

*(the great director FURIOUS declares)*

Give her the damned moon!

*(commanding)*

Please remember, you are not at the Odeon any longer!

SARAH

*(responds with more fury)*

No, at the Oden, I would have said: Go to Hell!

SULLY

*(reprimands)*

Sarah...don’t!

SARAH

*(furious, intense)*

Why are you defending him, I can’t stand it any longer. He gives all the best roles to Sophie.  Say something! Speak up, defend me!

SULLY

*(exasperated)*

She is his mistress, she has a huge following, she sells tickets!

Why must you complain?  You know I adore you.  It’s a business. He is the director.

SARAH

(*proclaims)*

Why do you agree with him?

He refuses to light me, I hate him!

Why did I ever leave the Odeon?

He wants me to sell tickets, I will show him!

ENSEMBLE

*(with confidence)*

*(Possible image of Sarah’s book about Hot Air Balloon)*

ACTOR 5

And she did, she took a hot air balloon, up, up, up in the sky.

ACTOR 1

Soaring high above Paris, even Perrin was forced to take notice!

 *(Actor grabs Perrin and points above)*

ACTOR 2

“Look there is your star...a SHOOTING star...high above us”

*(excited/descriptive)*

ACTOR 4

She came back to earth, exhilarated by her flight!

ACTOR 6

`Sarah wrote and published a book about soaring high in the sky in a balloon with stunning illustrations! Sarah Bernhardt writes a best seller!

*(Actor puts large flower jewel around Sarah’s neck)*

  PERRIN

*(beyond fury)*

I will fire her; this is it the end!  She has gone too far.

ENSEMBLE

*(delighted with the news)*

ACTOR 2

The story spread about what Sarah did high in the skies!

ACTOR 1

In a balloon flying above Paris, a shooting star!

ACTOR 4

A boon to the box office!

ACTOR 3

The theatre was forced to take notice and gave Sarah notice!

*(Sarah hurries into an office where Perrin stands)*

PERRIN

*(commanding with authority)*

You, Mademoiselle Sarah Bernhardt, have 3 days to learn the part of Phaedre.

Three days, Go learn your part.  We open in three days.

SARAH

*(replies)*

3 days to learn the part of Phaedre?

The role of a lifetime, he wants me to fail

I will show him!

*(****Sarah sing****s)*:

*The challenge of my life to play Phaedre at last,*

*a part I’ve loved so long.*

*Do I have the courage to perform such a role,*

*why do I ask,*

*my fate has been cast.*

I am miserable with stage fright; I will not fail.

I will succeed.

*(Actors move Sarah into place as Phaedre)*

**(Music on phone, Phaedra dying scene)**

SARAH

*(onstage as Phaedre)*

*(Dramatic/intense/powerful)*

Each moment is precious to me, Theseus, listen.

It was I who cast my eyes, profane, incestuous, on that son of yours,

I wish to die slowly...don’t interfere....*(Drops to her knees during speech)*

I have taken a poison, already the venom flows towards my heart, and death, from my eyes, stealing the clarity.

(*Sarah sinks to the floor dying*, Sully carries her off stage)

ENSEMBLE

ACTOR 1

The audience screamed and roared and said bravo/ Sarah, Sarah is divine!

ACTOR 2

The critics declared Sarah sublime in the role of the incestuous mother

Otherwise known as Phaedre.

SULLY

*(dramatic/playing to the audience)*

Sarah received standing ovations; the critics were stunned.

I carried Sarah to her dressing room, unconscious!

I held her tenderly, embracing her with love.

I loved Sarah I adored Sarah..Sarah was mine.

*(Sully can carry Sarah offstage)*

ENSEMBLE

*(thrilled to say each line)*

ACTOR 1

The brilliance of Sarah Bernhardt’s performance is rarely witnessed in a theatre

ACTOR 4

Sarah moves like a panther!

ACTOR 3

With a voice that tears your heart out!

ACTOR 2

Sarah recites verse the way nightingales sing, the way the wind sighs

(*passionate/sincere*)

ACTOR 5

Bravo Sarah! My Sarah! I will die for you Sarah

*(change of tone/dramatic/factual)*

ACTOR 6

There was intense controversy over her performance

ACTOR 5

​​Sarah and Sully were the hottest ticket in Paris. I was the first in line I waited overnight!

ACTOR 1

They prowled and pranced onstage

ACTOR 2

Together they were magnificent!

ACTOR 4

Two tigers grooming themselves, before the entire world

*(urgent/fast/headlines breaking young voice)*

ACTOR 1

Sarah was the Muse of news and newspapers

ACTOR 4

The public devoured Sarah Bernhardt.

ACTOR 2

If there is anything more remarkable than watching Sarah act?

ACTOR 1

It is watching her live!

ACTOR 4

My husband is Sarah’s lover (screams). Take MY photograph!

*(change of tone, conspiratorial)*

ACTOR 3

Paris loved Sarah and Sully

ACTOR 1

And Sully loved Sarah.

ACTOR 4

He wrote to her every hour he wasn’t onstage

ACTOR 2

Letters, numbered, dated, SAVED in a silver box by him.

SULLY

*(passionate operatic/over the top)*

Sarah  my heart is yours!! I want to marry you. I want you for my wife.  Please say yes!

You are my adored Sarah. I cannot bear to be away from you.

SARAH

*(the actress quoting lines for an audience)*

***(underscore/ROSES/music***

Oh Jean, you bring me flowers and tenderness.  Such a sweet man. I will always love you.

SULLY

*(almost sobbing)*

Sarah, our love ravages my soul.  I dare not breathe when we are apart. Why do you make me wait to see you?

SARAH

*(answers sobbing equally hard)*

Until I am in your arms again – my lover my friend

SULLY

*(pleading)*

Sarah, why can’t I see you sooner?

SARAH

*(answers)*

Jean, my darling, your love is the fire in my soul

*(Incredulous, change of tone, pragmatic, to audience)*

He writes to me every hour, with dates, and times?

(to Jean) Oh Jean, I do love you, but I have a child, friends... family…my career, my audience..

My sweet darling, we have to say goodbye. My heart is in pieces, this is final. We must say goodby.

SULLY

*(on his knees sobbing with bravura)*

Sarah...You are mine!!You have caused me great suffering, but I love you so!

SARAH

*(pragmatic addresses the audience)*

I love you Jean, and the world knows how much I love you,  We must say goodbye to each other. You are in my heart forever,

I say Adieu, goodbye...Goodbye my darling!

*(SARAH rips up his letters)*

SULLY

*(serious and heartbreaking truth)*

My heart is on the ground dried and crumbled the slightest breath can turn it into dust.

***(Music for lies begins)***

SULLY

*(with great truth and hurt)*

Our days together were like pages of immortality Sarah, I thought you were someone I could trust. It is a great misfortune not to be loved when you love! Sarah loved me no longer.

SULLY

*(sings)*

*(with heartbreaking sincerity)*

*Lies, she told me lies, and I believed.*

 *No! never again.!!*

*Words, words just empty words*

*No longer my lover my friend*

*Fool, I was a fool, I should have known*

*What more could I see?*

*Love, love, I wanted love*

*My love did not want me*

*So now I am back on my own again*

*Alone I will make my own way*

*I ‘ll learn to forgive and forget and then,*

*I'll live and I’ll laugh come what may*

*Gone, the love is gone, but not the pain.*

*Why did she pretend?*

*Word, words, just empty words*

*She was my lover my friend*

***(Music ends)***

BACKSTAGE

*(backstage at the theatre)*

PERRIN

*(the director imperious)*

The theatre needs repairs! We are booked in London for two months.

Our company will leave for England immediately.  Let everyone know….We are leaving for London.  Everyone pack.

The House of Moliere is going to London.  The theatre needs repairs!

ENSEMBLE

*(answers)*

ACTOR 2

The actors staged a revolt led by Sarah Bernhardt.

SARAH

*(defiant and stubborn)*

London, I will not go to London unless I am voted a company member!

I want a future, and a pension! I am a mother. I Sarah Bernhardt will not go to London unless I am a company member.

PERRIN

*(reading from the cables/telegrams)*

In London all the performances with the actress Sarah Bernhardt are sold out!

(*incredulous*)Only the performances with Sarah Bernhardt are sold out?

(*Questioning*)Without Sarah Bernhardt there will be no London season??????

PERRIN

*(continues unable to believe what he is reading)*

Without Sarah our season is cancelled!

What does this mean?

What do I tell the press and the public?

ENSEMBLE

*(arguing as actors in the House of Moliere)*

ACTOR 3

Let her stay home!

ACTOR 4

I’m packed and ready to go.

ACTOR 3

Let Sarah stay home.

ACTOR 5

Wait!

ACTOR 2

Without Sarah there are no bookings!

ACTOR 3

Without Sarah no one will buy a ticket...

ACTOR 2

Without Sarah we can’t leave for London, we have no season, no tickets to sell

*(everyone chaotically yelling)*

ALL

ACTOR 1

I vote for Sarah Bernhardt to become a company member!!!

ACTOR 5

For life!

ACTOR 3

Sarah was made a company member for life, with a pension!

PERRIN

*(commanding)*

Send a telegram to London! The House of Moliere will arrive on Monday to perform with the actress Sarah Bernhardt! Our company will perform its repertoire with Sarah Bernhardt.

SARAH

I went home and packed, prepared to leave for England.  To sail with the House of Moliere. I had to say goodby to my darling son Maurice.

ENSEMBLE

*(headlines/urgent/breathless)*

ACTOR 2

No one in France realized Sarah was a star, not even Sarah!

ACTOR 1

When the company arrived in England, they were greeted by cheering crowds!

ACTOR 6

When Sarah walked off the ship, thousands of people chanted and cheered!

*(Company actor walks out to greet Sarah dressed as Oscar Wilde)*

ACTOR 4

Oscar Wilde greeted Sarah with a kiss on both cheeks

*(More headlines enjoy telling the tabloid tales)*

ACTOR 2

The Prince of Wales, the future King of England, adored Sarah!

ACTOR 1

The prince, played a corpse to be on stage with Sarah,

ACTOR 4

The prince engaged a box for each of Sarah Bernhardt’s performances.

ACTOR 1

Mr. Edward Jarrett, impresario – an American who spoke French was waiting with London bookings.

*(Company actor as Edward Jarrett steps forward, American Impresario,*

 *rich, confident, brash, very 19th century American)*

EDWARD JARRETT

*(questions)*

Sarah Bernhardt, my name is Edward Jarrett.

Mr. Edward Jarrett, Impresario,

I am a manager of Artists.

I will make you rich! if you will sign this contract!

SARAH

*(thrilled, excited)*

We were in London and Jarrett inspired me with confidence. I adored him, I signed!

ENSEMBLE

*(loud/obnoxious)*

ACTOR 2

Edward Jarrett made an announcement in the London newspapers:

ACTOR 5

THE ACTRESS, SARAH BERNHARDT, for a certain sum of money, WILL ACT her repertoire: Plays and Proverbs, for bookings. Please contact: Mr. EDWARD JARRETT

PERRIN

*(imperious)*

How dare she appear professionally anywhere but with our company?

She will pay for her insubordination.  I will fire her.

*(Jarrett takes Sarah by the arm and moves her on stage with command)*

EDWARD JARRETT

*(urgent)*

The press is waiting, 20 journalists are at the door!

*(whispers to Sarah)*

You need to see each! Individually!

SARAH

*(responds)*

Each journalist, alone?  No, please Mr. Jarrett.

Stay with me. I will only do this with you by my side

I am afraid.  Help me.

EDWARD JARRETT

*(answers)*

I am here.  Remember to smile.

SARAH

(*She meets each reporter, smiles but does not answer any of the questions*)

ENSEMBLE

*(Reporters/loud/rude/obnoxious, lines overlapping each other)*

ACTOR 4

How do you like London?

ACTOR 1

Is it true you sleep in a coffin?

ACTOR 2

Sarah, are you going to dance Salome with all 7 veils?

ACTOR 3

Did you bring your 4 children with you and isn’t one by the Pope?

Sarah fascinated the world!

**(some music here, maybe Lies)**

SARAH

*(nervous, impatient)*

Three times I put rouge on my cheeks and shadow on my eyes.

Three times. I took it all off with a sponge!

I was crippled by stage fright, terrified!

If only the public could see me as I really am

To know how frightened, I am. Terrified to perform. Crippled with fear.

SULLY

*(declares)*

Sarah and I were sensational, especially our love scenes. The audience demanded more.

My heart will never mend, but I loved Sarah.  I shall love her forever.

*(Sully kisses Sarah onstage)*

SARAH

*(tells the audience)*

I acted with my heart, and my soul.

The audience was silent. and then more curtain calls.

I collapsed after each performance; Sully carried me to my dressing room.

We are lovers forever.

OSCAR WILDE

It was not until I heard Sarah Bernhardt that I realized the music of Racine.

Sarah’s voice enthralled, enchanted and the audience adored Sarah!

ENSEMBLE

ACTOR 6

Every seat at the theatre was booked when Sarah Bernhardt appeared.

ACTOR 5

Each ticket sold for 100 times the original ticket price

ACTOR 7

Sarah Bernhardt conquered London

ACTOR 2

The press devoured Sarah and spun tales so far-fetched:

ACTOR 1

For one hundred dollars, see Sarah Bernhardt dressed as a man

ACTOR 4

For two hundred dollars watch Sarah Bernhardt box!

ACTOR 1

For three hundred dollars you can own a SARAH /CHEETAH!!!!!

ACTOR 2

London made Sarah understand the willingness by the public to pay to see.... Sarah the divine.

EDWARD JARRETT

*(Jarrett steps out takes Sarah’s arm)*

I can make your fortune if you come to America

SARAH

*(answers)*

I could never leave the house of Moliere; how could I leave? I have a contract.

I have my son and friends; I could never leave.

EDWARD JARRETT

*(urgent, intense, a salesman)*

America will love you, our country is new and young, and I can make you rich!

SARAH

*(pleading looking back and forth)*

I have a contract with the house of Moliere and our plays are in French. I don’t speak a word of English! A star, in America? I can’t leave France!

ENSEMBLE

*(reading headlines)*

ACTOR 4

At home Sarah had creditors, a son, family, debts,

ACTOR 1

She was being sued by her creditors.

ACTOR 2

Every piece of furniture, the furs she wore on stage,

ACTOR 1

The jewels she owned, everything was going to be seized, taken away!

ACTOR 3

Sarah liked to spend money. Sarah had a son, family, and debts.  What should she do?`

SARAH

*(looks at Jarrett)*

To be offered my own theatre company. To choose the plays, to hire the actors... never again to have to beg anyone for work??.... for a job?.....to be the mistress of my own fate.  I signed.

EDWARD JARRETT

*(calm and controlled)*

I went to work immediately to book Sarah Bernhardt’s first American theatre tour.

SARAH

*(a lifetime of defiance)*

I resigned from the House of Moliere, again!  They were furious.  All of Paris was furious. I did not care, I was free. To have my own theatre company, to direct and choose the plays to perform. I am the actress Sarah Bernhardt.  I am going to America.

**Possible underscore with this is my moment**

EDWARD JARRETT

*(looks directly at the audience)*

Sarah signed a contract, and I ordered a private Pullman railroad car. I agreed to pay Sarah Bernhardt one thousand dollars a performance, plus expenses with a private dining car and chef!

*(headlines/read all about it:  like a carnival barker)*

The press was notified: SARAH BERNHARDT, THE ACTRESS IS COMING TO AMERICA FOR HER ONLY…TOUR! You have one chance to see the DIVINE SARAH BERNHARDT! Buy your Tickets today!

SARAH

*(Looking at audience while projections of original newspaper*

*headlines and caricatures are projected on scrim) (telling a story to her friends)*

In Paris, the newspapers published hateful cartoons portraying me as a boa constrictor eating gold coins, it was terrible! but as I told Mr. Jarrett: “nothing kills but death?”

EDWARD JARRETT

*(looks at audience)*

During Sarah’s first tour in 1880! New York tickets sold for $40.00 I was rather pleased!

SARAH

*(defiant)*

I sketched and designed my wardrobe. I ordered silks woven in Lyon. Velvet imported from Italy, Furs from Russia, and prepared to leave for America.  My own theatre company. The Sarah Bernhardt theatre company. I hired the actors, chose the plays and began rehearsals.

*(Reading headlines)*

ENSEMBLE

ACTOR 2

The company rehearsed in French and set sail for America in 1880. Sarah the Jewess, a practicing Catholic, a vegetarian with an iron will, sailed for America where thousands awaited her ship, and her arrival! America held its breath! Edward Jarrett met her at the ship, Edward Jarrett escorted Sarah to a hotel room where she napped, keeping the press waiting. Everyone waited to get a glimpse of Mademoiselle Sarah Bernhardt.

**This is my moment music out here**

*(Addressing Reporters)*

EDWARD JARRETT

*(grandiose pronouncement)*

Gentlemen, may I present to you the 8th wonder of the world!

Mademoiselle Sarah Bernhardt, who during her great theatrical career,

has been referred to as the greatest personality in France since Joan of Arc.

You may ask your questions now. I will translate them for Mademoiselle Bernhardt.

Who’s first?

*(Sarah steps forward)*

One at a time! Please, one at a time, No crowding! No crowding!!!

*(photographers step forward)*ENSEMBLE

ACTOR 1

Printing a picture of Sarah Bernhardt meant, stores could not stock enough Sarah

Bernhardt soap, stockings, cigars, face powder, glasses, perfume, gloves, dresses

ACTOR 2

Sarah went to the Brooklyn Bridge! Sarah loved New York.

The clergy preached against seeing a sinful woman ACT!

You will go to hell if you see Sarah Bernhardt Act!

You are sinners, she is a sinner! Sarah sins... do not buy tickets to see her perform!

Do you hear me, do not buy tickets!

EDWARD JARRETTI

*(Tells audience)*

In Chicago, I sent a check with a note to the Priest!

‘Sir, I spend $500 on publicity but since you have done the job for me,

I am sending you $500 for your parish!”

(*Heightened pace with urgency)*

ENSEMBLE

ACTOR 1

The Press reported: the Sarah Bernhardt train is a traveling palace, with Turkish carpets, zebra rugs... Sarah Bernhardt and her acting company, rehearsed plays to perform in America, in French ...With translations provided. Sometimes the wrong translation!

*(Projection of image of Sarah Bernhardt advertisement for translation)*

SARAH

*(super-fast/breathless)*

We traveled under the threat of high jacking and collapsing bridges, arriving in a different city each night!  No one will ever know how frightened I was.  I rehearsed in my private car. Sometimes we arrived with barely enough time to get to the theatre.  I was determined.  I was thrilled.

ENSEMBLE

*(Brash/exaggerated American accent)*

JENNIE JUNE/Reporter

ACTOR 3

“No woman could work with such passion and retain purity of voice, if she were a bad or immoral woman! “Go and see Sarah act – you will not go to hell”

*(informative/excited)*

ENSEMBLE

ACTOR 4

Technology in the 19th century, the age of paper, meant liberation of the press

ACTOR 2

Cheap books mean  LITERACY

ACTOR 1

People could read, and they did

*(each line needs to be competitive, one up each actor)*

ACTOR 3

Photo- journalism was invented

*(reporter interviewing Sarah)*

*(new voice)*

ACTOR 5

Will you go over NIAGRA FALLS alone?

ACTOR 6

Have you really played 25 roles as a young man?

ACTOR 7

Are you a young man?

ACTOR 1

Shock and Awe of Sarah in Kansas City, hundreds of women forced their way into the theatre to get a glimpse of “THE BERNHARDT!”

ACTOR 2

New translations of plays in French were given to American audiences, most of the time it was the wrong play, the public didn’t care.

EDWARD JARRETT

Wheeler Opera House in Toledo Ohio,100 men arrived to free the snow-bound train of Sarah Bernhardt.

SARAH

*(exhilarated)*

I threw them a thousand kisses, onward to the next town.  I performed in French to an adoring American public.  I was terrified.No one noticed.

*(Posing for photograph)*

I use this face powder every day, shouldn’t you?

ENSEMBLE

*(heighted sense of urgency)*

ACTOR 4

In Omaha the audience clapped and cheered at the end of the third act,

And after the fourth and fifth...Sarah is divine!

EDWARD JARRETT

*(announcement to Newspapers very grand)*

And you see before you today, Sarah the Divine

" THE BERNHARDT " 157 performances in 51 cities across America!

ENSEMBLE

*(thrilled/descriptive).*

ACTOR 6

The women’s pages were filled with sketches of Sarah’s gowns,

the story of her life.  Her opinions on everything from makeup to Moliere.

Americans fell in love with Sarah.

SARAH

I adored this country where women reign.

ENSEMBLE

*(lines said in Texas accent)*

ACTOR 2

Sarah reigned supreme, playing Camille in a huge tent in Texas. At one stop, a cowboy rode up and asked for a seat. None was available, until he pulled his six shooters, entering the tent, he drawled: “By the way, what does this gal do anyway, sing or dance?”

SARAH

*``` (triumphant)*

I returned home to France, to my beloved son Maurice, to greet my adoring public with a new sense of POSSIBILITY!  I was thrilled to go home in triumph.

ENSEMBLE

*(slow down pace)*

ACTOR 4

Sarah returned home to France with a million dollars in gold coins.

(**Music showing public’s outrage, possibly le passante)**

ACTOR 1

The public was outraged with Sarah’s success

*(with fury and outrage)*

ACTOR 3

To leave France!

ACTOR 2

Go to America!

ACTOR 4

Perform in ice-skating rinks and circus tents, how dare she?

ACTOR 5

A million dollars in gold coins!!!

*(conspiratorial)*

ACTOR 6

The public turned on her and roared with vicious comments and newspaper headlines!!!

ACTOR 1

The French press had done its work too well, anonymous letters threatened.

(*menacing*) ACTOR 4

My poor Skelton you will not show up to the Opening Ceremony!

ACTOR 2

You should not make an appearance you are too thin, too Jewish!

ACTOR 1

Your celebrity is not welcome here”

SARAH

*(disdainful/angry)*

I refused to run and hide.

ENSEMBLE

*(frenzied/angry)*

ACTOR 1

Editors denounced her; the public was infuriated but fascinated.

ACTOR 4

The Scandal sheets/leapt like lightening, across countries!

ACTOR 3

How dare she perform in America and return to France? Rich?

The Catholic Jewess sleeps with gold coins, and all her leading men!

SARAH

*(each word is said with confidence)*

I had tasted success! No one could ever own me again. I was my own master! Never again would I be forced to work for anyone else. I am Sarah Bernhardt! I came home to my country and my family to celebrate.

 ENSEMBLE

​​The newspapers printed vile images of Sarah devouring her gold coins.  Hateful antisemitic, sneering at her success.

*(Newspaper image of Sarah devouring her gold coins)*

SARAH

I told Mr. Jarrett, that nothing kills but death. They created images of me that would scar the soul.  I vowed I would never allow anyone to shatter me.  I am Sarah Bernhardt, take your images and burn them in hell....or I will. To the press, I said I will spend every one of those gold pieces, and when they are gone, I will go on another tour, a new world tour! I am Sarah Bernhardt actress, the darling of Sovereigns and Czars.

*(Image of Alexander III of Russia, bowing to Sarah)*

***Possible C minor/ A flat chords before Russia scene***

ENSEMBLE CHARACTER

*(conspiratorial)*

It was winter in Russia. Rabid antisemitism! Special trains ran from Moscow.

The public lined up for days to buy tickets to see Sarah act.

Everyone waited in line to see Sarah perform.

Twice she was invited to the winter palace.

When the Czar stepped forward to meet Sarah, she started to bow

*(company actor as Czar Alexander)*

ALEXANDER III,

*(Czar of all Russia)*

No, Mademoiselle, it is I who must bow to you.

ENSEMBLE

ACTOR 3

And he did before his entire court

SARAH

The press and the public were forever hungry. When I appeared, without uttering a single word, the audience leapt to its feet giving me a standing ovation

shouting “Sarah, Sarah, Sarah, “ and at the end… my end… I told my beloved son Maurice,

Let them wait.

*(SARAH walks downstage into spotlight)*

I had a dream for myself. I am Sarah Bernhardt actress.

*(sings:  Quand Meme)*

*I told them by the Gods I’d do it.*

*In spite of all the odds I’d do it*

*Here I am, and now, by damn*

*I’ll live life as I please*

*When they laughed*

*I swore I’d show them*

*There is nothing more I owe them*

*Here I am*

*And now, by damn*

 *I’ve no one to appease*

*I’ve done it now*

*I’ve made it on my own*

*This moment’s mine alone,*

*the best I’ve ever known*

*I feel so free and so alive*

*It’s time to live, not just survive*

*Here I am*

*And now, by damn*

*I’ll live my life for me*

*(End of Act II)*