

THE MADRIGAL DINNER

A MUSICAL COMEDY IN ONE ACT

Book, Music and Lyrics by Kevin Kelleher

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By Kevin Kelleher

SYNOPSIS: Join the royal court of King Henry CMXLII for a night of frolic and fancy you won't soon forget! A host of wacky characters spreads the fun around thickly as your audience, playing the part of esteemed Renaissance dinner guests, experience non-stop mirth and music in this laugh-out-loud comedy for all ages. Sight gags, slapstick, and mind-wrenching word humor will have you choking on your Boar's Head. This incredibly versatile show includes original songs as well as arrangements of standards written for keyboard and/or brass quartet. It is also written for SATB with many opportunities for soloists and every part in the show can be played either a male or female, giving you unprecedented casting flexibility!

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(9 EITHER, 8 EXTRAS)

JESTER Master of Ceremonies
(27 lines)

KING HENRY/QUEEN ISABELLE Host of Dinner (47 lines)

THE BARD OF GALWAY Royal Storyteller (24 lines)

LORD /LADY FUMBLEMORE Royal Word-Smith (8 lines)

FRIAR LAWRENCE XAVIER/
SISTER ROSEMARY ELIZABETH Monk or Nun (8 lines)

LORD WILLIAM WILLIAMS/
LADY MARGARET PEGGY Redundant Royal Aid (6 lines)

LORD/LADY CANTERBURY Noble (6 lines)

QUEEN ISABELLE/KING HENRY Spouse of KING/QUEEN
(3 lines)

PRINCE(SS) ARTEMISSon of the King and Queen
(1 line)

LADY FALLOWMORE Noble

LORD/LADY HERRINGBONE Noble

LADY PENNYWHISTLE Noble

SIR GEORGE Noble

LADY GRETCHEN..... Noble

SIR EARL..... Baron of Duke

LORD DUKE..... Earl of Barrin

SIR BYRONDuke of Earl

NOTE: Number of lines is only a guide; some lines are much longer than others. Additionally, the lead and principle roles should be prepared to improvise – especially when dealing with the audience.

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THE MADRIGAL DINNER

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

SCENE 1 – WELCOME

SCENE 2 – POEM READING

SCENE 3 – GRAND ENTRANCE OF NOBILITY

SCENE 4 – KING’S TOAST

SCENE 5 – FRIAR’S BLESSING AND FIRST COURSE

SCENE 6 – DINING RULES

SCENE 7 – MAIN COURSE

SCENE 8 – DINNER BANTER

SCENE 9 – DESSERT

SCENE 10 – MADRIGAL

SCENE 11– THE STORYTELLING

SCENE 12– ENTERTAINMENT

SCENE 13 – FAREWELL

MUSICAL NUMBERS

SONG 1: PRAISE BE TO GOD

SONG 2: ROYAL FANFARE AND PROCESSIONAL

SONG 3: WASSAIL CAROL*

SONG 4: PRAISE BE TO GOD FIRST REPRISE

SONG 5: PRAISE BE TO GOD SECOND REPRISE

SONG 6: BOAR’S HEAD CAROL

SONG 7: PRAISE BE TO GOD THIRD REPRISE

SONG 8: MAKE HASTE!

SONG 9: MINE LOVE IS A SWEETLY MEDIOCRE MAIDEN

SONG 10: PRAISE BE TO GOD FOURTH REPRISE

SONG 11: RECESSIONAL

**Optional verses to “Wassail Carol” are at the end of the script.*

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The author has written this show with versatility in mind. Every character can be played by either male or female actors and scenes are listed alphabetically to allow for easy manipulation and re-organization should the script be altered. Feel free to add or cut whatever is necessary in order to show off your theatrical group's strengths. For example, all of the sung musical selections can be cut or performed like a choral reading if musicality is not desired, or more songs could be added to create a themed choir concert. It is entirely up to you.

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SCENE 1

AT RISE:

Lights are dim, JESTER enters. He/she speaks with an unnecessarily-whimsical English accent.

JESTER: Good eve to all and welcome! May the blessings of the Lord be with you all on this very hallowed night...and may the woes and pains, sorrows and grievances, anguishes and torments, despairs and miseries, wretches, cruelties and agonies...and all those other general little nastinesses of life be parted from you this night. I am the jester of the court of King Henry (*KING HENRY may be substituted with QUEEN ISABELLE, if female, or lines may be divided between the two.*) the nine-hundred and forty-second-thdt...(JESTER accidentally spits on him/herself.) and tonight I shall be your master of ceremonies! (*Bows.*) It is whenceupon this very morrow's eve that your taste-buds shall be delighted and your ear-holes enchanted. Let it be known that a marvelous feast awaits prepared for you all, and its delicious succulence is so ridiculously magnificent it can be rivaled only by biblical manna delivered directly from the hand of our heavenly Father, God Almighty!! It is, of course, prepared by our most humble chefs with the utmost humility and reverence for the Lord.

**SONG 1: PRAISE BE TO GOD
(JESTER and ALL)**

JESTER:
PRAISE BE TO GOD,

ALL:
FROM WHOM ALL BLESSINGS FLOW.

SCENE 2

JESTER: And now comes the much anticipated entrance into our night of frolic and fancy – it is time for a few verses of rhyming whimsy, as scribed by our very own poetic word-smith, Lord Fumbleton! (*Lord Fumbleton can be replaced with Lady Fumblemore, if female.*)

Lord Fumbleton/Lady Fumblemore stumbles onstage with a piece of parchment paper. He/she is unkempt and dumpy and speaks with a whiny Cockney accent.

FUMBLETON/FUMBLEMORE: ‘Ello, all. I wrote this me-self. (*Clears throat, reads from PARCHMENT.*)

Welcome all ye who have come from afar,
Braving highwaymen to dine with us.
Most of you probably came here in a car –
If not, maybe a train or plane or bus.

Smiles dumbly with pride, chuckles a little

It is my honor to read you this poem;
We plan on tickling your funny bone.
Tonight you won’t soon forget, I do believe,
You’re about to have a wonderful eve...ning.

Furrows brow in confusion; looks more closely at parchment paper. Reads on.

With song and verse, with rhyme and wit,
Let us entertain you for a bit.
We’ll try not to keep you past your curfews,
But we’re eager to share our beautiful mus...ic.

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Shuffles uncomfortably; chuckles awkwardly at audience. Glares very closely at parchment and reads on.

Um...I could rhyme all night if I wanted to be a prig,
because my vocabulary is extremely.....big.

(Smugly.)

But I would not be a servant who is loyal
If I didn't introduce our much-loved royal...ty.

Becomes enraged with parchment and tears it up. Forces a big smile at audience.

Lords and Ladies! May I introduce to you, the royal Court of King Henry! *(Throws parchment bits into the air.)*

SCENE 3

**SONG 2: ROYAL FANFARE AND PROCESSIONAL
(INSTRUMENTAL)**

NOBILITY enters during PROCESSIONAL. They process in couples, KING and QUEEN first. As the NOBILITY arrives at the head table they remain standing. Other EXTRAS can file in with the procession or from any other location to take their places for the dinner.

JESTER: *(Introducing the NOBILITY as they become visible.)* King Henry the nine-hundred and forty-secondthdt and Queen Isabelle! His Majesty's son, Prince Artemis and Lady Fallowmore!

PRINCE: Please, just call me Artemis. I don't need that title.

JESTER: All right... the "Artemis" formerly known as "Prince," and Lady Fallowmore! Lord Canterbury and Lady Herringbone! Friar Lawrence Xavier and Lady Elizabeth Rosemary! The Bard of Galway and Lady Pennywhistle! Sir George the Valiant and Lady Gretchen! Lord William Williams the Redundant and Lady Margaret

Peggy! Sir Earl, the Baron of Duke, Lord Duke, the Earl of Barrin and Sir Byron, the Duke of Earl! All rise and hear your lord, the gracious King Henry!

AUDIENCE rises.

SCENE 4

KING: Lords and Ladies, serfs and nobles, *(To two nearby AUDIENCE MEMBERS.)* And you two, whoever you are. *(To AUDIENCE.)* Welcome to my very big castle! In this hall tonight we shall make merry and feast together, but first, it is ceremonious and proper that I offer a toast. Please raise your goblets. *(AUDIENE does.)* Since I am a man of very few words, I shall call upon the translational skills of one of my royal aids, Lord William Williams, the Redundant. Lord William, are you here?

WILLIAM/MARGARET: Yes, milord, I am present and here.

KING: Good. You will help me offer a toast to our esteemed guests.

WILLIAM/MARGARET: I would be honored and venerated, sire. *(Bows. To AUDIENCE.)* His majesty hereby elevates his goblet, proffered in allegorical accolade, to those of you in receipt of the following well wishes, and bids you gesture similarly as insignia of your equal measure of faith... *(Looks to KING/QUEEN to continue.)*

KING opens his mouth to speak but pauses, dumbfounded by the translation. He turns to his spouse, QUEEN for clarification.

QUEEN: *(Explains to KING.)* 'Please raise your goblets.'

KING: Ah! Please raise your goblets.

ALL raise goblets.

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WILLIAM/MARGARET: *(Raises goblet, to AUDIENCE.)* May your karma include assurance endowing a lifespan of an unnaturally elongated nature,

KING is again baffled and, after a pause of thought, turns to QUEEN for help.

QUEEN: *(To KING.)* 'May you live long.'

KING: *(To AUDIENCE.)* May you live long!

WILLIAM/MARGARET: May your aforementioned fate also include an element of physical vigor and, aside from longevity, a general state of well-being perpetuating through the previously said (and correspondingly desired for) duration of survival.

KING is really confused after this one and looks right to his spouse for another translation.

QUEEN: *(To KING/QUEEN, now unsure herself.)* 'May you be healthy...?'

KING: *(Mimicking his spouse's uncertainty, to AUDIENCE.)* May you be healthy...!?

WILLIAM/MARGARET: May the precursory two entreaties be supplemented by a third and ultimate hope that your destiny will include any or all of the following facets: Article one-A, may you --

KING: *(Interrupting.)* --Thank you very much, Lord William, your redundancy has been most appreciated.

WILLIAM/MARGARET: Yes, of course, your highness. *(Bows.)*

KING: *(To AUDIENCE.)* Let us toast to one another! Wassail!

ALL raise GOBLETS and drink.

SONG 3: WASSAIL CAROL

(ALL)

ALL:

WASSAIL, WASSAIL ALL OVER THE TOWN
OUR TOAST IT IS WHITE AND OUR ALE IS BROWN

OUR BOWL IT IS MADE OF THE WHITE MAPLE TREE
WITH THE WASSAIL BOWL WE'LL DRINK UNTO THEE

COME, BUTLER, COME FILL US A BOWL OF THE BEST
THEN WE HOPE THAT YOUR SOUL IN HEAVEN MAY REST
BUT IF YOU DO DRAW US A BOWL OF THE SMALL
THEN DOWN SHALL GO BUTLER, SMALL BOWL AND ALL

WASSAIL, WASSAIL ALL OVER THE TOWN
OUR TOAST IT IS WHITE AND OUR ALE IS BROWN
OUR BOWL IT IS MADE OF THE WHITE MAPLE TREE WITH THE WASSAIL BOWL
WE'LL DRINK UNTO THEE

SCENE 5

The FIRST COURSE is served.

JESTER: Lords and Ladies, please be seated. (*ALL sit.*) Before we may dine, let us offer a blessing to our gracious Lord God for our tremendous feast this eve. (*To FRIAR/SISTER.*) Friar Lawrence Xavier (*FRIAR LAWRENCE XAVIER can be substituted for SISTER ELIZABETH ROSEMARY, if female.*) would you grace us with a prayer?

FRIAR/SISTER: (*Stands.*) It would be my most humble honor. Please bow your heads. (*ALL bow heads.*) Gracious and most reverent Lord God, we humble ourselves before thee on this day to give you thanks for all the many blessings you have bestowed upon us in your unending generosity. And we beg forgiveness for the glutinous behavior we are about to display as we gorge ourselves on the fatted calf. And may you grant us mercy when we suckle the fruits of our servant's labor, for they have seasoned this meal with the salt of their brow...in some cases, literally...In your most holy name we pray.

SONG 4: PRAISE BE TO GOD FIRST REPRISE (FRIAR/SISTER and ALL)

FRIAR/SISTER:
PRAISE BE TO GOD,

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ALL:

FROM WHOM ALL BLESSING FLOW.

FRIAR/SISTER: Amen. Let the feast begin! Enjoy! (*Sits.*)

Pause here to serve the first course and eat. About 8-12 minutes.

SCENE 6

JESTER: Lords and Ladies! May I have your attention, please. The King is now ready for the main course! Before we may serve it, however, we must remind you of proper dining etiquette. For His Majesty will not have knaves nor vagabonds nor scallywags dining in his presence. (*To two AUDIENCE MEMBERS.*) You two must leave now. Go. (*STAGEHANDS arrive to relocate the two chosen AUDIENCE MEMBERS, seating them elsewhere, or simply removing them until the Main Course is served. They may be planted or not.*) Lord Canterbury, would you be so kind....

CANTERBURY: Of course... (*Stands.*)

KING: Lord Canterbury...say, how did you come across that name?

CANTERBURY: Well, it's funny you ask, actually. I once tried to inter a dead horse on the land of an inhospitable lord.

KING: Well... what happened?

CANTERBURY: He said, 'Sir, I'm afraid you *cant-er-bury* him here.'

ALL groan painfully.

KING: Please, Lord Canterbury, do go on with the Dining Rules.

CANTERBURY: As you wish, milord. (*Produces a piece of parchment to read from.*) Lords and Ladies, I hereby proclaim the royal Rules of Dining, as set forth by his highness, King Henry. One! Guests shall utilize the silverware set out upon the table in place of their fingers. Two! Sloppy eating, drooling or raucous behavior is...strongly discouraged. Three! Belching or flatulence in the presence of His Majesty, the King, will result in execution!

KING: (*Interjecting.*) Ah, ah, ah...!

CANTERBURY: (*Rolling eyes.*) ...unless His Majesty is engaged in contest. Four! Cursing, swearing or any foreign language is not allowed...especially *French*. (*ALL murmur scornfully at the mention of "French."*) And five! If any guests feel the need to relieve themselves, they may use the royal "throne room" down the hall instead of going on His Majesty's expensive tapestries. (*Aside to FUMBLETON.*) I'm talking to you, Lord Fumbleton (*If Lord Fumbleton is female, another male character can be substituted here.* *CANTERBURY sits.*)

SCENE 7

JESTER: Yes, of course, thank you good sir. And now, Lords and Ladies, may I present to you tonight's main course! (*Calls offstage.*) Bring forth the Boar's Head!

FRIAR/SISTER: (*Stands.*) Wait, wait! Not so fast!

JESTER: What?

FRIAR/SISTER: Before we bring forth the main course, humble Jester, let us join hands once more in reverent prayer. For without the grace and love of God we are nothing but sinful tyrants.

JESTER: I suppose so. All right then, all bow your heads.

ALL bow heads.

FRIAR/SISTER: Gracious and most reverent Lord God, hear our prayer. In our gratitude we bow our heads with humility before this feast...Beneath your grace we feel the deep, painful throb of guilt each day as we live lives of putrid sin...In constant fear of an eternity of fiery torment, we pray to you, oh Lord, to castrate us in your mercy, to bludgeon us in your compassion, and to donkey-kick us with your love...In your most holy name we pray,

SONG 5: PRAISE BE TO GOD" SECOND REPRISE (FRIAR/SISTER and ALL)

FRIAR/SISTER:
PRAISE BE TO GOD,

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ALL:

FROM WHOM ALL BLESSING FLOW.

FRIAR/SISTER: Amen. (*Sits.*)

SONG 6: BOAR'S HEAD CAROL
(SOLOIST and ALL)

A SOLOIST enters carrying the HEAD OF A BOAR on a large platter.
SOLOIST delivers the boar to the head table.

SOLOIST:

THE BOAR'S HEAD IN HAND BEAR I,
BEDECKED WITH BAYS AND ROSEMARY.
AND I PRAY YOU, MY MASTERS, BE MERRY,
QUOT ESTIS IN CONVIVIO.

CHOIR:

CAPUT APRI DEFERO, REDDENS LAUDES DOMINO.

SOLOIST:

THE BOAR'S HEAD, AS I UNDERSTAND,
IS THE RAREST DISH IN ALL THE LAND,
WHICH THUS BEDECKED WITH A GAY GARLAND,
LET US *SERVIRE CANTICO.*

CHOIR:

CAPUT APRI DEFERO, REDDENS LAUDES DOMINO

SOLOIST:

OUR STEWARD HATH PROVIDED THIS,
IN HONOR OF THE KING OF BLISS.
WHICH ON THIS DAY TO BE SERVED IS,
IN REGINENSI ATRIO.

CHOIR:

CAPUT APRI DEFERO, REDDENS LAUDES DOMINO.

JESTER: (*To KING.*) Your majesty, I'm afraid I must apologize for your dinner...

KING: Why, what's wrong with it?

JESTER: It's just that it's not very interesting, that's all.

KING: Not interesting? (*Baffled, looks to BOAR'S HEAD.*)

JESTER: No, you see, I'm afraid this food is ...something of a *boar*.

KING: (*Laughing.*) Oh my! You certainly are a *ham*!

JESTER: Thank you, sire, but I shall not *hog* the attention any longer.

KING: Very well. (*To AUDIENCE.*) Now dine well, my guests, and *pig-out* to your heart's desiring.

Pause here to serve and eat the Main Course. Allow 10-15 minutes.

SCENE 8

KING: Oh, Jester?

JESTER: (*Rises.*) Yes, my liege?

KING: Summon a wordsmith to delight us with clever wit, would you?

JESTER: Certainly, sire. I call upon Lord Fumbleton.

FUMBLETON/FUMBLEMORE stands.

KING: I see...So tell us, Lord Fumbleton, what will you do tonight to delight us?

FUMBLETON/FUMBLEMORE walks to stage area.

FUMBLETON/FUMBLEMORE: If your majesty permits, I have a joke for ye.

KING: By all means...

FUMBLETON/FUMBLEMORE: Is your majesty familiar with the land to the south known as "Gaul"?

ALL murmur scornfully at the mention of "Gaul."

KING: Yes, of course.

FUMBLETON/FUMBLEMORE: A land where barbarians speak in harsh tongues...like *French*!

Murmuring crescendos.

KING: What of it?

FUMBLETON/FUMBLEMORE: Then your majesty knows also that no one likes the people from the land of Gaul. But do ye know why?

KING: Because they are nothing more than godless nomads and boorish rogues.

FUMBLETON/FUMBLEMORE: Aye, you speak sooth. But are ye aware that the nomads of Gaul perform their pagan ceremonies amidst a circle of large boulders? And they gather about these boulders and dance around them in ritual; passing from one stone to the other.

CANTERBURY: And that is why no one likes them?

FUMBLETON/FUMBLEMORE: Well, you see, not everyone enjoys *passing Gaul stones...*

ALL laugh.

KING: Oh, Lord Fumbleton! You have quite a sharp wit.

FUMBLETON/FUMBLEMORE: Thank you, milord. (*Bows, returns to seat.*)

BARD: (*Stands, speaking in a leprechaun-like Irish accent.*) My sovereign, methinks that perhaps he is not the only one....

BARD rises and hobbles to stage area on a STAFF. He/she is a crotchety wizard-type who is too old to try appearing mysterious anymore.

KING: Ah yes! The famous Bard of Galway...tell me, oh Bard, where exactly is "Galway"?

BARD: Why, it's *gall-the-way* over in Ireland! If you would wish it, I would be honored to demonstrate your majesty's own cunning wit in the form of a game.

KING: A game?

BARD: Yes, your majesty, a game of riddles. For it is widely known that the King of this realm is so wise and knowing that he can solve any riddle.

KING: (*Ego inflating.*) Well, yes, that is true...

BARD: Very well, then! For my first riddle...what is black and white and read all over?

JESTER produces a newspaper and reads it as obviously as possible.

KING: Let's see...black and white...

JESTER coughs, gets KING'S attention.

KING: Ah, yes! Of course! "And 'red' all over!" That's too simple, you must do better.

BARD: Then your majesty has it?

KING: Of course. It's a cow dipped in red paint.

BARD: (*Stunned and, for a moment, unsure of how to proceed.*) Yes...indeed it is. (*ALL applaud loudly.*) I see your majesty's wit requires a riddle worthy of your superior skill...very well, here is another: I have a hundred legs, but cannot stand or walk. I have a long sturdy neck, but no head atop. I cannot see, but I'm neat and tidy as can be. What am I?

JESTER begins to sweep with a broom in front of the head table.

KING: Let's see...a hundred legs...sturdy neck... (*JESTER swings broom in air to show off its bristles.*) ...neat and tidy... (*JESTER thwacks table with broom, pretends it was a silly accident. KING's eyes widen at JESTER.*) Ah yes! Of course!

BARD: You have it, your lordship?

KING: Yes, I do.

BARD: Are you absolutely sure, your highness?

KING: Of course I am. It is a mythical riddle.

BARD: It is?

KING: Yes. You see, you depict the ancient decapitated beast of Babylon with the body of a centipede and the neck of a giraffe who was doomed to forever prune those ancient gardens. Am I right?

BARD: (*Pauses, mouth agape in disbelief.*) Yes...of course you are.

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ALL applaud loudly once more, cheering on KING.

KING: Please, Bard, please! You simply must do better!

BARD: All right. I've got one that shall surely stump you.

KING: By all means...

BARD: But I must warn you, your highness. This riddle has stumped men for centuries and the mention of it has driven some to insanity. And it is rumored that this very riddle so perplexed the most brilliant minds of the world that it has accounted for the crumbling of kingdoms and empires alike...dost thou still wish it?

KING: Yes, of course!

BARD: *(Pauses for effect.)* Very well then.... When is a door... not a door?

KING: Well then....

JESTER: *(Produces a large tray of various jars.)* Jars, anyone! I've got a lot of jars here!

KING: *(In deep thought.)* A door .. not being a door....

JESTER: Look, I have all these JARS! Would anybody like A... JAR?

KING: *(Still thinking.)* Hmmm....

JESTER: *(Brandishes a jar in front of KING.)* I found... AJAR... you see. AJAR!

KING: This is quite a peculiar one, isn't it...?

JESTER: *(To KING, through gritted teeth.)* Your majesty, would you like...AJAR!? Please, take...AJAR! You can keep almost anything in...AJAR!

KING: Not now, thank you, I'm trying to... *(Sees JAR and realizes something.)*...oh, yes, yes! It is so simple! I can't believe I didn't see that right away.

JESTER and QUEEN nod to each other in excited agreement, perhaps exchanging a victorious high five. JESTER begins to take the TRAY OF JARS back offstage, satisfied that KING finally got the clue.

BARD: So your majesty has contrived it?

KING: I have.

BARD: And so when is a door not a door?

KING: (*Confidently.*) A door...is no longer a door...when it is...a breadbox.

JESTER, now offstage, produces the loud noise of much shattering glass.

BARD: (*Dumbfounded.*) ...I'm sorry - a what?

KING: A breadbox.

BARD: A breadbox?

KING: Yes, a breadbox! The door cannot be both a door AND a breadbox, now can it?

BARD: (*Numbly.*) Certainly not...

KING: So it must be either one at any given time. And if that is true, then we know that the door cannot be a breadbox while it is still being a door.

BARD: (*Giving up, bowing.*) Your majesty's brilliance amazes even me.

ALL applaud loudly again. BARD exits stage area. JESTER reappears, looking haggard.

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