

The Show Must... is a humorous adventure for any number of characters with almost any sort of skills. At least one person in the party should have some combat experience with a sword, and it might help (but be less amusing) if a few have decent Fellowship scores or the Performer (Actor) skill. The tale centres on the characters being forced by circumstance to appear in the premiere performance of a brand new operetta, a splendid and fantastical work called *Porcolina!* As such, there is little emphasis on combat and the adventure will work best if your players are keen to “ham things up” when their characters are on stage. If your players are agreeable to such things, *The Show Must...* makes an excellent adventure to break up the flow of job-hunting in a large town or city, so that not every job on the wall is either a dead-end or an obvious continuation of the campaign.

Much of the fun of the adventure comes from the PCs being dropped in the middle of a dramatic work they do not know but which everyone else around them knows intimately. To help communicate this feeling, GMs should study the programme for *Porcolina!* in detail, until they become very familiar with its complicated plot twists, over-the-top characters and ridiculous songs.

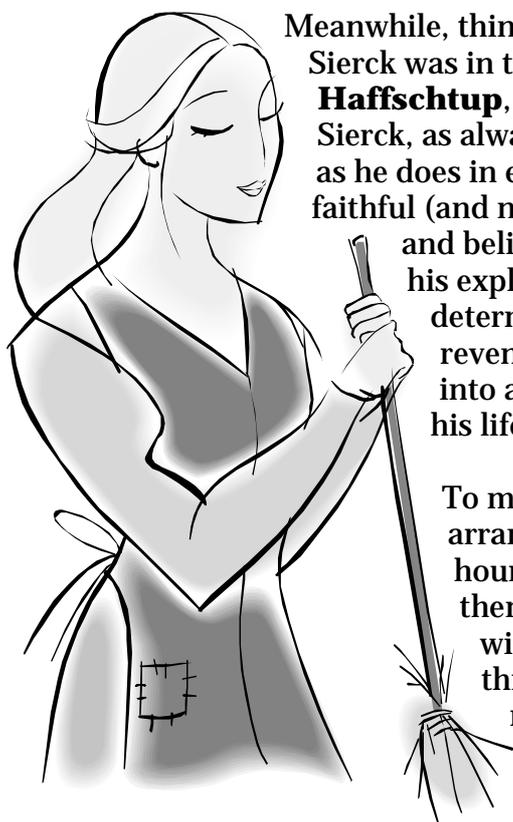
The adventure assumes that the action takes place in Nuln, but any large town with a theatre scene will do equally well. For more details on Nuln, see *Forges of Nuln*. For more on Entertainers, consult the Career Pamphlet here: <http://www.blackindustries.com/pdf/careers/entertainers.pdf>



Background

The Countess Emmanuelle of Nuln is always keen to support exciting new talent, and was pleased to sponsor the latest output of the *World's Edge Theatre*. This year, this is the comic operetta *Porcolina!* by the exciting new writing team of Silbert and Gullavane, and – in a box-office coup – they have arranged for the legendary actor Detlef Sierck to play a major role. With Detlef in the cast and the Countess in the audience, there is a lot of pressure for the production to be a smash hit. If things don't go smoothly, Detlef may leave, and the Countess may withdraw her funding and the backers who provided the rest of the capital will go broke, which might lead to the removal of fingers. Alternatively, if the Countess is really unimpressed, she may have the entire cast executed for ruining her evening and her reputation – as she did when last season's *The Black Duck of Morr* proved to be 'as long, dull and pointless as one of Esmer's morning blessings'.

High theatre has never been more deadly.



Meanwhile, things are not going smoothly backstage. The last time Sierck was in town, he dallied with the beautiful alto, **Elena Haffschtop**, promising to take her to Altdorf and make her a star. Sierck, as always, was making false promises to bed the pretty girl, as he does in every production he is in. Elena however was a faithful (and naïve) young girl with a fanatic Sigmarite upbringing and believed his promises to be binding. Enraged to hear of his exploits with a new paramour in Altdorf, Elena is determined that upon Sierck's return she will have her revenge against the faithless philanderer who turned her into a whore. By stabbing him on stage she hopes to claim his life and destroy his reputation.

To make sure that nobody interferes with her plan, she has arranged to go drinking with her male co-stars a few hours before the play opens. There she intends to poison them, knowing that any understudy who replaces them will not know the fight scenes well enough to realise her thrusts are not in the script, or that her blade is very real.

Plot Summary

The PCs are hired by stage manager **Pillory Bigfeast** to do what looks like a ridiculously easy job – teach a trio of noble-born layabouts how to sword fight in a vaguely believable manner. However, on the day of the show they find their pupils have vanished and their stage manager begging them to help him find them. Investigation leads to **The Crownéd Cat**, an extremely snooty gentleman's club, which will take some getting into. Once inside, they find the actors very dead. Upon reporting this back to the theatre, Pillory will do everything he can to cajole the PCs to go on in their students' stead, putting

them front and centre during the lovers' altercation. Can they save Dierck – and the show – and themselves - from dying on stage?

Act One - The Deutz Elm

Everyone looking for work in Nuln goes to the Deutz Elm in the centre of town. That morning, the PCs arrive to see a brand new note pinned to the tree (as seen in Handout 1, see Appendix 2), its parchment still light compared to the rain-coloured ones behind. It sounds too good to be true, but it's probably worth checking out. If the PCs are hemming and hawing, have a few other adventurers turn up and try to read the note. Smart PCs will take it down as soon as they read it. Less smart PCs may have to make Agility tests to beat any other applicants to the stage door.

(Note: If the PCs try to follow up on any of the other advertisements, you're on your own. Most of them are decidedly unattractive, however, and have been on the Elm for days or even weeks, but some PCs are hard to deter. By some miracle, the new ad will still be there later if they spend the morning chasing down other possibilities.)

Blacksot Way is not the street most people associate with the World's Edge Theatre – it's a short alley just wide enough to get a cart through. Here, away from the polished stone stairs and gilded doors of the theatre's front entrance, is a simple black door, with a sign on it reading. "Knocke Once, then Wait."

Pillory Bigfeast

Pillory Bigfeast was one of the elder children in his family of thirteen and, at a young age, got used to his parents despairing about each new calamity they faced making a living on the streets of Nuln. As a result he grew up to be a consummate pessimist, always convinced that disaster, betrayal or cruel luck are but moments away. This actually makes him an excellent stage manager as he is always double-checking to ensure none of the millions of things he is convinced will go wrong have not yet eventuated. He is often momentarily relieved when something finally does go wrong, as it always does in the theatrical world, because then he can relax. Pillory is also always convinced that people are going to interrupt him, so he talks constantly to prevent them from doing so. Despite his nervous tics, his cast inevitably like him because he cares about them and wants them to do and be their best. Pillory's stats, if you need them, are at the end of this document.

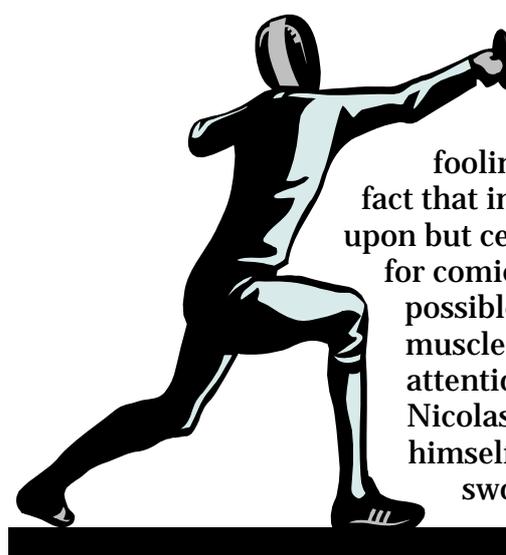
Quote: *They're going to take my thumbs, I know it, oh merciful Esmerelda, my poor little thumbs!*

The stage door of the World's Edge is manned by Hildegard Keinenaugen, aka Old Hilda. Hilda is as deaf as a post (although she constantly assures people she is not) and it will in fact require an extremely loud series of knocks to raise her attention, followed by a long, shouting conversation to communicate the PC's purpose. She will then go and give a garbled report of it to Pillory. Pillory will ask about their qualifications, then explain the situation in his usual fashion:

"Well, well, you can handle a sword that's all well and good but my brave young boys wouldn't know a pinion from a pommel, and I don't mean figuratively in this particular case, although as always, my eyes are closed to such things but the point is, the word is that now the Countess Emmanuelle, oh how she vexes me, has found something new for me to worry about because rumour at the court is that Lord Hellborg is visiting and – no, later

Eloise – and Lord Hellborg intends to escort her to the play and we ALL know what that means, it means she’s going to ask his opinion and that always means trouble, when that woman asks for an opinion you know she’s only after blood, I tell you, and here’s me with enough blood on my hands already, not literally of course – ELOISE, NOT NOW, PLEASE! – three days to go, can you believe it, three days to go and now they drop this on me, and if those boys are going to hold a sword and make it look anything like a real fight they need proper training, with actual swords and so forth, I expect. That’s what I need, fellows, a couple of stout young lads who know their way around a blade and can teach the terrible trio – hem hem hem if only they were less terrible I wouldn’t be having the ague all day long, would I? No, and I’d have all my hair too I warrant - how not to look like mooncalves or shiners under the lights on Konistag. What do you say then, are you my men?”

When they understand what was just said, Pillory will outline their duties more clearly: teaching Hansel, Lorenz and Nicolas the basic principles of swordplay so they look experienced on stage. This will involve daily lessons of a few hours each, for the three days leading up to the show. Today is Backertag: there’ll be a lesson today, tomorrow and in the morning of Konistag before the last dress rehearsal; the show opens that night. For this, they will be paid 10 shillings a day, and be given free board at the *Over The Edge*, the inn next door which hosts the theatre’s floating cast at such times. Pillory is desperate and has given up trying to stay on any kind of budget so will be happily bargained up to 2 crowns a day. Once that is settled, he’ll take them to meet their students, who are lounging about in the taproom of the *Over*. He’ll also hand them a programme of the performance, which explains further the characters and plot (Handout 2).



Hansel and Lorenz are both high-born, over-educated under-achieving fops, who think it’s jolly funny that they’re doing so well in the biz, as they say, and that they get to read real-no-fooling honest-to-goodness warriors. Hansel also enjoys the fact that in these circles his nascent homosexuality is not frowned upon but celebrated. Lorenz isn’t so inclined but will play the game for comic effect and will turn anything into a *double entendre* if possible. They will latch onto any PCs who are particularly muscled and flirt with them constantly. If they get any special attention from any male PCs they will rub it in their rival’s face. Nicolas is equally obnoxious but more stupid and considers himself above this education – he claims to already know swordplay and can’t understand why he was relegated to such a minor part in favour of the talentless buffoons he has the misfortune to call his co-stars. He’ll try to seem clever by guessing what his trainers were going to say, and if corrected, pretend he was thinking of something else.

After this meeting, the PCs may wish to renegotiate with Pillory. He’ll add another crown if they promise to stay all three days.

The Teaching Begins

Both Pillory and the trio are keen to get started, and would prefer to train in the morning. You can role-play through these scenes as fast or as slowly as you like, but here are some mechanics to simulate it.

For each session, up to four people may teach. Each session, each trainer may make up to three Weapon Skill Tests, maximum, and a session is only completed once four Tests have been made (so at least two people have to teach). Once all the rolls are made (four per day for three days, a total of 12), count up the number of successes and consult the chart below:

# of Successes	Outcome
0-2	The students are surly, hostile, and learn nothing. Their performances will suffer and they will have their fathers call in some Large Men to beat up the PCs for their insolence (see Appendix 1 for stats). These paid goons will appear at any moment when it would most annoy the PCs.
3-5	The students learn grudgingly but gain enough skill to be believable with a sword. No bonus or penalty.
6-8	The students end up respecting their teachers, and learning fast as a result. Their performances excel in rehearsals, and Pillory will give the PCs a slap-up dinner as a reward.
9+	Lorenz finds deep respect and admiration for the PCs. He asks if he might journey with them when the show closes. Meanwhile, the three actors fight like they were born holding a sword. The stage combats will be breath-taking. Pillory doubles the PCs' pay.



Act Two - Actors Absent

After training on Konistag, the PCs will be approached by Pillory who will comment on their performance (based on their roles above) and offer them free tickets to the show that evening. At the same time, Dierck will call all the actors to the stage for final rehearsal. Pillory suggests the PCs watch, or just

go home; if they return at sunset he will be able to pay them from the preliminary ticket sales. This may be a good opportunity to direct your players back to the Deutz Elm or to otherwise begin following plots of other adventures. It may also provide an opportune moment for the aforementioned Large Men to attack. If the PCs have nothing else to do, Pillory will offer them another half-crown to sell tickets at the Elm.

Two hours later, the actors rejoin to the *Over the Edge*, with some of the richer ones deciding that in preparation for the show they should go somewhere a bit more prestigious. At this point, Elena will suggest to Hansel, Lorenz and Nicolas that it would be hilarious for her to disguise herself as a man and slip into The Crownéd Cat. The three lads instantly agree, do a quick make up job and set off. Two hours after that is sundown, when all the actors are due to return to the theatre. A quarter of an hour later, Hansel, Lorenz and Nicolas are nowhere to be found. If the PCs have not yet returned, Pillory sends runners into the streets to find them, otherwise he begs them for a favour when they come to collect their wages.

“Ah, my fine bladesmen, ah, ah, tis always the way with the theatre, calamity and calumny fall upon our heads or rather my head for whom else is going to pick up the pieces when things fall apart, certainly not these young sparrows and peacocks, not by Sigmar's Sausage! To speak with clarity for time is growing ever shorter, my leads, my good fellows, my leads are gone – Hansel, Lorenz, young Nicolas that blushing fool, my leads the heart of my play, the tenors, the broad beams upon which it all rests! A gold crown to you – to anyone! - who finds them and brings them back! Try the pubs, my stout fellows, go to the pubs, you know the dramatical muse and the fruits of Taal, was ever the way ever the way, just as actors are late and us poor cursed-by-the-Gods-stage managers – stage managers! - must go mad!”

If pressed for details, Pillory will collapse into tears soon after, then wave his handkerchief and run back to the umpteen other disasters going on (Eloise's new experimental skin cream is causing her skin to blister, the barn set keeps catching fire from the smoke effects and Dierk is drunk as a lord, to name three). Roleplaying or Gossip Tests can winkle out the following information from the rest of the (increasingly nervous) crowd:

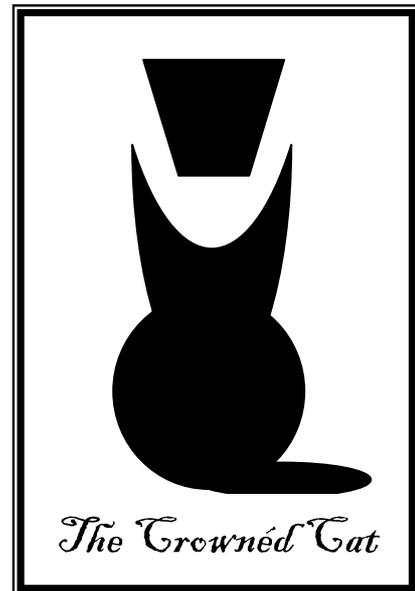
- Three or four people (nobody is sure how many) went off for a celebratory pre-show drink at some upper-class tavern.
- If Hansel's with them, they've probably gone to The Crownéd Cat, which is in Handelbezirk. Hansel's a member, and only members and their friends can get in.
- Some people saw Lorenz and some others laughing themselves silly over something, probably a prank or something.
- The show starts in forty five minutes. If the leads aren't back by then, the Countess will probably have half the cast executed. (At this news, most of the sopranos break into tears, then realise their tears will ruin their voices,

so cry harder. Outlandish PCs may like to make sweeping promises to get the girls to stop.)

The Crownéd Cat

The Crownéd Cat is a highly exclusive club with entry typically only restricted to members and their friends, and membership restricted only to the most noble citizens of Nuln. Although it is close to the theatre, finding its unmarked red door isn't easy: it takes ten minutes plus or minus two minutes for each degree of success or failure on a Gossip Test. Then comes the question of getting in.

The foyer of the Crownéd Cat contains one triple-chinned clerk behind a desk and four very Large Men. The clerk is there to decide who can and cannot enter the prestigious premises, and the four men are there to enforce his will. The Cat prides itself on security and privacy for its members, as well as preserving the right kind of clientele. Since the PCs will likely not be members, they will have to pass themselves off as either visiting nobles, keen for a tour, or friends of a member (the Countess Emmanuelle is not a believable contact for almost any PC) or as messengers. Even pretending to be messengers may require some use of the Charm, Blather or Intimidate skill, with modifiers, as the clerk has heard many a tragic tale of lost seals and papers by young students trying to get in on a dare (it's a regular part of Twerps Week at the Nuln College of Medicine). The Disguise skill might also be important, as the club has several ancient and unbreakable rules about people allowed even into the foyer. These include:



- No females
- No dwarfs
- No halflings, excepting personal servants of members
- No one under the age of twenty, unless accompanied by a member
- No weapons or armour, including ceremonial weapons
- All present must wear tights or stockings that reach the feet, polished shoes, a buttoned doublet and a ruff. Gloves are optional but encouraged.
- No ostentatious or overly large scarves, capes, kerchiefs, buttonholes or other breast-adornment. The clerk decides what constitutes 'overly large'.
- No excessive giggling or mirth. Again, the clerk decides what is 'excessive'
- No excessive moustaches or facial hair. You see the pattern.
- No riff-raff (just a general guideline)

You may use these and any other obscure rules you invent to annoy your players for as long as you judge appropriate. Eventually, the players will resort to a couple of strategies:

- Ask the clerk or someone else to take a message to one of the actors. The clerk will do so for a gratuity (at least 1 *gc*) and will return in five minutes to tell them that he delivered the message, and there was no reply.
- Bribe the clerk or someone else for information. Pretty much anyone in the building knows the following information: four young lads came in, and ordered brandy and cigars for an upstairs room. One of them later left, the others are presumably well in their cups and haven't called for the servants for a while. However, the Crownéd Cat prides itself on absolute discretion for its members and getting this information from any staff will not be cheap at all. Each nugget of information will cost $d10/2 * 10$ crowns(!) - an enormous amount but reflective of how much work the bribed staff member will have to do to ensure his indiscretion is untraceable, and that he can find another job if it is not. Actual members of the club will be more forthcoming, but are typically slow-witted and don't remember quite so well; nor do they respond well to urgency. The Crownéd Cat is a place to relax, after all.
- Talk/lie/whine/bully their way in. This works, if the disguises are good enough and the lies slick enough (two halflings in a coat and won't do it). However the clerk will probably be suspicious and may follow them around. Any shifty business from the PCs will have them all thrown out by the aforementioned large men.
- Fight their way in. The large men are pretty tough (see Appendix One for their stats) and not stupid, and as soon as a fight breaks out, the clerk will send for the Watch. In short, this is really only a temporary solution and an incredibly risky one with dire consequences (the clerk has seen all their faces) – but it will work for tonight.
- Sneak in. This works surprisingly well. The Cat pays the local organised criminals very well to make sure it is not robbed; indeed, a few local crime lords are long-standing members. As a result its physical defences are lacking. The upper storey windows can be reached with a few Scale Sheer Surface rolls, and are not locked. These lead to a variety of small smoking rooms and parlours that aren't occupied, or only hold a few old men very drunk on sherry or deeply focussed on a game of backgammon. Again, however, this is a short-term and risky



solution, as passing staff will investigate noises and scream if the wrong sort of people are discovered where they shouldn't be. Disguising themselves as servants will only work on customers unless the disguise is phenomenally good: all the staff know each other by sight.

- **Something else.** Players are a clever bunch and The Crownéd Cat incident is supposed to be amusingly annoying not frustrating, so be ready to let anything entertaining have a good chance of succeeding. Magic will be inordinately helpful, particularly Shadow magic, but there are other options. Distractions, such as setting the building on fire, should not be discouraged.

No map of The Crownéd Cat is included herein, but the map of the Yellow Boot on the Black Industries website will do perfectly. The murder scene is on the second floor. You can find the map here:

<http://www.blackindustries.com/images/maps/yellow-boot.jpg>

The Mountain Comes to Mohammed

If the PCs are having trouble coming up with a way to get into the Crownéd Cat (or coming up with a way they think will succeed) you can help them out by having the information come to them. Eventually, the staff will discover the dead youths and send one of the large men into the street to seek assistance. Unless the PCs are hiding, he will likely even seek out them. Whomever he rounds up will be paid a crown each to move the bodies a few doors down to a wine cellar until their parents can be alerted, thus preventing the families and the Cat from any embarrassment or misunderstanding. The crown of course comes with the assumption of Seeing Nothing and not telling anyone about what they Didn't See. PCs roped in will get to see the scene in detail and hear more from the large man who hires them; failing this the impromptu porters who exit carrying the Suspiciously Large Laundry Sacks will break their promise of silence for d10/2 crowns.

The Grisly Tableau

Whether they see it first hand or hear about it, the information will be the same. The four youths headed up to a private salon with a fine bottle of Bretonnian brandy and four glasses. Three of them – definitely Hansel, Lorenz and Nicolas - are found lying on couches, stone dead, their spilled glasses on the floor beside them, and their tongues stained green. A fourth, full glass stands on the sideboard. Examining the brandy in either the bottle or glass indicates (with a successful Academic Knowledge (Alchemy) Test) a hint of nightshade.

Nothing was taken from the bodies. In fact, it looks like the killer tidied up somewhat before they left. The staff of the Cat are payed handsomely to not remember anyone who enters their door but if encouraged to break that rule,

they (or a helpful customer) will describe the fourth member of the group as being much like the other three: theatrical in manner and in dress, giggling about something, and only distinct in being perhaps the youngest and slimmest of the four.

Note that if the PCs discover the murder, they will have a trump card to use against the Cat. The club cannot let the slightest hint of such an event destroy their reputation and as such can be coerced into forgetting about anything *improper* that the PCs may have done previously, such as breaking in or

damaging some of the large men, as long as the PCs promise to keep their mouth shut. Both sides may have to concoct a story for the Watch about a 'terrible misunderstanding' but that should not prove difficult (the Watch in Nuln are notoriously corrupt, for starters).

With the loose ends tied up but a mystery unsolved, the PCs will have little recourse but to rejoin to the *World's Edge* to report their sad tidings.



Act Three – A Change in Tonight's Programme

In the time the PCs have been gone, panic has spread through the cast. Long before they return, Pillory has already made his decision. There is only one understudy for the men's parts, and he's currently nursing a shattered face after he suggested that he could take over for the rather drunk Detlef. The only people vaguely qualified to fill the shoes of the leads are the people who have spent the last three days running over their lines to time with the sword thrusts. The moment the PCs appear at the stage door, therefore, he smiles wanly while costumiers step behind the three most suitable individuals and push them into doublets. Pillory explains in his usual style:

"Nothing for it, my lovelies, my dears, no, no need to say a word, not a one, I read it in your faces, and I feel as if, deep down, I already knew, we hadn't had a really first class disaster at the Edge for five years now, but fortune favours the brave and the show must go on, and you'll be fine, you look just perfect, you were born for it, really, I mean, as I say, deep down, I think I always knew, something was calling you, perhaps? The stage never makes a mistake they say. Just remember, it's like falling off a log, it's all in there, you'll get it out, Elena and Eloise will help you, of course, and Detlef works best with a blank slate, we'll just skip the songs where we can, explain later that your voices were weak and give everyone a refund for a renewed and invigorated performance on the morrow, if we all live so long, Esmerelda and Sweet Duncan, if we all should live so long!"

The dressers who jump the PCs may look like old women but they've spent a lifetime getting recalcitrant young people into ridiculous doublets and miniscule corsets and it will require a successful Strength or Agility Test to escape their clutches. If the characters verbally protest, Pillory will explain that the only thing more likely to ensure they are all executed by the Countess than a bad show is no show at all, and that all theatre is already a bluff so the audience won't notice. If they continue to protest, Pillory starts sniffing, deconstructing the set and penning a letter to his parents out loud along the following lines:

“Dearest Mama and Papa. I know you and I both hoped and dreamed that I your favourite son would grow up to make you both proud upon the stage and with my meagre earnings support our family in your dotage but alas it is not to be for tomorrow I shall die in agony with a spike up my bottom...please dry the tears of little Thrincent; tell Holdfast I wish I could have taught him how to fish in the summer; be sure to not sell the little ones into slavery until the winters are at their most terrible, I am sure that somehow, you will find a way to feed them all, perhaps you could sell Portymead's feet to the reve...etc etc etc”

The PCs can flee. Nobody in the cast is strong or fast enough to stop them. If they do so, Pillory puts on an impromptu collection of dances and songs from *Porcolina!* and other works. As a result, he and his cast are thrown in a debtor's prison for however long it takes to die slowly of Scurvy Madness. The Countess turns the *World's Edge* into a equestrian centre, while Gullivane and Silbert flee to Tilea, their reputation in ruins. Deltef is spared prison due to his connections, but hangs himself in shame. This eventually reaches the ears of the Vampire Genevieve, and she will come looking for the PCs with vengeance in mind.

If the PCs do stay, of course, then there are general huzzahs at such bravery and heroism from the whole cast – just the stuff theatre is made of! Within three minutes the newly formed actors are primed and powdered and waiting in the wings. And now the fun really starts...

An Actor's Life For Me

First of all, the PCs need to choose who will be playing Lysanter and Salacio, and who will take the much smaller role of the Butcher, who is only really needed for a duel scene at the end of each Act. Lysanter and Salacio have five main scenes before the climax of the first act, and they are as follows:

Scene Four: The two gentlemen come to the farm, announcing their intents with the song “Ah, A-Wooing We Do Go”.

Scene Five: The gentlemen spy their adored Dulcina (Eloise), and urge her to come away from her father and sister to sit with them by the stream. There, each pledges their love to her to be as the perfect things of nature, although all the while, poor Dulcina is annoyed by the very things they describe. The song here is “As the Lightest Springtime Breezes” and involves some complex wordplay, but it cannot be omitted. The scene ends with Lysanter and Salacio challenging each other to a duel.

Scene Six: Lysanter and Salacio return with swords ready, eager to fight the duel. They sing “Upon My



Honour, Sir” as they describe how insulted they are by the other, but don't actually fight.

Scene Eight: Lysenter and Salacio sing about how each of them promised Dulcina they would not fight – but how they assuredly would if another suitor was to steal their lady. This is another comic argument.

Scene Nine: This is the big duel scene, as Lysenter and Salacio discover the Butcher with their love (Eloise in a pig costume) in his arms. A great and fantastic duel occurs, while Bastando (Detlef), the angry father, also sneaks on stage. Spying the lads he blames for all his troubles, he announces he will kill them also, and a four-way duel begins. Soon enough, Bastando tires but declares *“If I cannot stop these fools from their matrimony-making / I can at least make some delicious eggs and bacon!”* and moves to kill his porcine daughter while the others fight on. At the last moment, Dulcetta (Elena) rushes on and stays his hand. However, in this version, Ducletta intends to stab Detlef in the stomach, thus ruining the scene and killing her faithless lover.

Pillory has already made some edits due to the situation. Scene six has been cut, it's not necessary and the dialogue is too complicated. Scene eight can be shortened to run straight into Scene Nine. Scenes four and five however are vital to the plot and involve lots of characters talking to Lysenter and Salacio. It is up to whomever takes those parts to carry the play through those scenes.

The mechanics for this are as follows:

Each actor must choose if they are going to rely on how well they remember the lines (and thus use their Intelligence characteristic) or how well they think they can bluff (and thus use Fellowship). If they are using memory, they may add +5% to their Intelligence if they possess the Acute Hearing Talent or the Academic Knowledge (Arts) Skill (+10% if they have both). If they are using Fellowship, they may add +5% if they have the Public Speaking Talent or the Performer (Actor) Skill (+10% if they have both). Regardless of which ability they use, they may add +5% for each lesson of swordplay they gave to the actors, to represent what they picked up through osmosis during those sessions – and another +5% if they watched the final dress rehearsal.

This final total is the skill the two acting PCs will use to get through the scenes. This works just like the swordfighting training above: each PC must make three rolls per scene for the two difficult scenes, for a total of twelve rolls. The results are as follows:

of Successes

0-2

Outcome

The audience begins booing and walking out. The Countess is visibly displeased, and is seen whispering to her Chief Executioner in the stalls. At this point, a Fate point might save the show at the last second (a little doggie runs on from nowhere and does a dance).

If the PCs angered the Watch or some Large Men in previous scenes, you could even have said people turn up backstage, with a desire to arrest or injure the brave souls on stage. While the actors save the show with stage fighting, their compatriots may be fighting for real to keep them on stage!



Act Four - Stage Blood

Once they get past the acting, the PCs still have to do the fight scenes. The characters playing Lysanter, Salacio and the Butcher have to fight each other, and then Detlef will join in as Bastando. Run a standard combat for six rounds before Bastando appears, then another four with him. For once, however, the players are trying to miss, not hit! To simulate this, the players are considered to have not hit their opponent if they roll within two degrees of success **or** failure on their Weapon Skill. If they roll more than two degrees of success, their military training kicks in and they hit their opponents squarely. If they roll more than two degrees over their skill, they incompetently blunder into their opponents flesh. Thankfully the swords are wooden and only count as Improvised Weapons (SB-4).

Detlef is too damn professional to hit anyone, or to give any sign if he is wounded by anyone (until he gets off stage, at which point he will be hellishly furious and fire the offending PC on the spot). Assuming nobody actually dies on stage, Dulcetta (Elena) will enter on cue, with a blade hidden in her sleeve. Anyone specifically watching her may make a Perception Test to notice this; even if they fail they will notice she is visibly nervous and coated in sweat – very strange for a professional like Elena.

Everyone on stage and in the wings will see her stab Detlef; the question then remains what do they do about it. Run the combat as normal; Elena will do everything she can to direct all her attacks onto Detlef, only attacking others if she has no other possible choice. She fights to the death, becoming more and more hysterical with rage as she does so, screaming about faithless, evil men and the wages of sin. Demand regular rolls on Fellowship for acting PCs to try and cover this up. Elena's stats are in Appendix 1, Detlef's can be found on page five of the Entertainer Career Pamphlet, here: (<http://www.blackindustries.com/pdf/careers/entertainers.pdf>)

After five rounds, the curtain drops suddenly, and people will come and try to help the PCs stop Elena (assuming they haven't come already). She may be restrainable with successful grapples and Disarms, but it will become obvious that she is completely insane in her need for bloody vengeance. No matter what is done with her, there will be at least one person who will not be coming back after interval. Unless Detlef lost a limb, he will insist on returning: he would act on his deathbed if need be to keep the show going. Detlef will also apologetically explain Elena's motives, although in his eyes, he did nothing

more than whisper a bit of pillow talk over a bottle of wine. He is saddened for the girl, but does not consider himself truly culpable for such an disproportionate action.

Last Minute Re-Write

So the show will go on. The problem is that the plot now makes no sense. The audience clearly saw Dulcetta acting with insane rage, trying to kill her father, screaming to the crowd that he was faithless and cruel, and a scourge upon all womankind. Now she's absent (and has no understudy) and the chance of a happy ending is somewhat lost – but a tragic ending won't fit a comic operetta. During the interval, it is up to the PCs to write a new ending that makes as much sense as possible. This, not the combat, is the true climax of the adventure, and the one that will determine the success of the play. Let the players read through the synopsis in the programme again, then set them a time limit of fifteen minutes, by which time the interval will be over. Anything not yet sorted out will have to be hashed out on stage.

There is of course no right or wrong answer here. It is simply a device to get your players engaging in some quick-fire creativity. Those players who thrive on this should be encouraged to come up with new song titles as well, explaining in great detail how they weave the strangled plot back towards a happy ending, or as close as they can get.

For players who don't like this exercise, you can instead use mechanics. Give them fifteen seconds to make as many Intelligence rolls as they can. If anyone rolls six successes or more, they come up with an idea. If nobody does, or if the PCs cannot think of a good idea using the method above, Pillory closes the show on account of a sudden death. All tickets are refunded, causing Pillory to go broke (see *Further Adventures*). but the tragic circumstances cause the Countess to spare him and his cast any further punishment.

But if the PCs do come up with something plausible, and, most importantly, entertaining, you should let them keep the show going on. Act Two plays out to whatever end they manage to get to, the curtain falls and the audience, strangely enough, applauds. Soon after, Silbert and Gullavane come backstage and say they much prefer the new ending, and demand the cast never reveal their original, lesser script. They rewrite the new ending with better dialogue and Pillory finds real actors to replace his momentary stars, but the new version of *Porcolina!* turns out to be a hit – a hit that no-one will ever know that the PCs really wrote.

Every player should get 75 XP for completing this adventure, with an extra 50 XP handed out for truly fantastic ideas for concluding the opera or new song titles.

Further Adventures

The Countess only funded the show in part; the rest of the money came from several investors, including Pillory himself. The money he invested came from a Tilean gangster known only as “The Big D”. He was desperately hoping that

the play would flop because then he would have Pillory in his pocket, and be able to coerce the Halfling into helping him expand his criminal empire. If the play fails, Pillory will seek out the PCs to help him out of this predicament. If the play is a success, Pillory will ask for protection in case D is more enraged by Pillory paying his debts than by him not paying them. All sorts of intrigue are possible on the streets of Nuln.

If things went really bad, Pillory might even want to skip town. He has a brother who works in Praag, thousands of miles to the north (see *Realm of the Ice Queen* for more). This could be a great way to start an adventure in the Empty Quarter.

If things go well, the PCs may have new careers in the acting trade. Travelling with a touring show is a great way to move characters through various cities, which could allow them to follow the events of *Paths of the Damned* or the *Enemy Within*. New characters may also join the fold: Maldivri, though cast as the fool is nothing of the sort, and he seeks to live the adventures he performs. Eloise's family is extremely theatrical and quite wealthy to boot, and always looking for stout young men to seek out lost family heirlooms, scout out new talent and everything in between. If Detlef owes them his life, he may introduce them or direct them towards his once-lover, Genevieve, who may have some problems specific to her particular purview. He can also introduce them to high society, which could lead to yet another type of campaign. On stage, as in the ancient arena, a simple rat catcher can become a God, and one moment of triumph may open a thousand new doors, to a thousand new careers, new lives and new stories.

But those are stories for another day.



Appendix One: Statistics

Pillory Bigfeast, A Manic Manager

Pillory had an inauspicious beginning to his life, turning to grave-robbing to escape abject poverty. How he clawed his way into becoming a burgher is a story he tells no-one, and fears every day will be exposed. Pillory is paranoid, not least because sometimes his premonitions come true due to his Sixth Sense. However, his paranoia makes him a gifted stage manager. The job suits him like a glove and he'll do anything to stay in the role, and protect his players and productions.

Career: Artisan (ex-Tradesman, ex-Burgher, ex-Grave Robber)

Race: Halfling

Main Profile

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	WP	Fel
33	46	18	24	52	34	40	51

Secondary Profile

A	W	SB	TB	M	Mag	IP	FP
1	13	1	2	4	0	2	2

Skills: Academic Knowledge (Genealogy/Heraldry), Common Knowledge (Empire, Halflings), Drive, Evaluate, Gossip, Haggle, Perception, Read/Write, Scale Sheer Surface, Search, Secret Signs (Thief), Silent Move, Speak Language (Guild Tongue, Halfling, Kislev, Reikspiel), Trade (Artist, Calligrapher, Cook, Merchant)

Talents: Artistic, Dealmaker, Etiquette, Flee!, Night Vision, Resistance to Chaos, Resistance to Disease, Sixth Sense, Specialist Weapon Group (Sling), Streetwise, Suave*

Armour: None

Armour Points: Head 0, Arms 0, Body 0, Legs 0

Weapons: Damp Kerchief (SB-10)

Trappings: Stylus, clipboard, worried expression

Elena Haffschtup, A Woman Scorned

Elena was raised in a strictly religious household, where the only word was the word of Sigmar and the only entertainment allowed was singing hymns of praise. She risked everything to follow her dream to the theatre, and surviving that change took a lot out of her, so that her rosy cheeks are now slightly sullen, and her brow furrows under her blonde hair. Although a talented actress and singer, she carried with her to her new life her father's certainty that the stage is nothing but the work of whores and sinners, and when Detlef betrayed her, she was as enraged at herself as she was him. Her attack is as much suicide as it is murder.

Career: Zealot (ex-Entertainer, ex-Student)

Race: Human

Main Profile

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	WP	Fel
43	23	31	41	45	41	35	52

Secondary Profile

A	W	SB	TB	M	Mag	IP	FP
1	14	3	4	4	0	2	2

Skills: Academic Knowledge (Arts, Theology), Animal Care, Charm, Common Knowledge (Empire), Gossip +10, Perception, Performer (Actor) +10, Read/Write, Search, Sleight of Hand, Speak Language (Classical, Reikspiel +10)

Talents: Etiquette, Lightning Reflexes*, Mimic, Public Speaking, Resistance to Magic, Specialist Weapon Group (Throwing), Suave*, Super Numerate, Very Resilient*

Armour: None

Armour Points: Head 0, Arms 0, Body 0, Legs 0

Weapons: Short sword (SB+0)

Trappings: Several costumes, short-hair wig, silver hammer necklace

Large Men, A Few Looming Goons

These are the statistics for the bouncers who work at the Crownéd Cat, but they may be useful elsewhere. The men at the Cat are all terribly polite but can't help but chuckling mockingly at anyone who tries to put one over them. They'll keep chuckling in a fight too, as they like nothing more than a good bit of violence. If they need names, choose from the following: Blauch, Gelber, Grunner, Russ, Schwartz and Viessman. Adjust their numbers and strategies to suit the toughness of your PCs.

Career: Valet (ex-Bodyguard, ex-Thug)

Race: Human

Main Profile

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	WP	Fel
41	31	44	45	42	29	47	30

Secondary Profile

A	W	SB	TB	M	Mag	IP	FP
2	16	4	4	4	0	1	2

Skills: Common Knowledge (Empire), Consume Alcohol, Dodge Blow +10, Gamble, Gossip, Heal, Intimidate +10, Perception, Search, Secret Language (Thieves' Tongue), Speak Language (Reikspiel)

Talents: Coolheaded*, Disarm, Etiquette, Excellent Vision, Lightning Reflexes*, Quickdraw, Specialist Weapon Group (Parrying), Streetfighting, Strike to Stun, Very Strong*, Very Resilient*, Wrestling

Armour: Medium Armour (Leather Jack, Chain Shirt)

Armour Points: Head 0, Arms 1, Body 3, Legs 0

Weapons: Hand Weapon (Cudgels and Coshes)

Trappings: Terribly polite demeanour, most of their teeth

*Due to the Infinite Benevolence of the Countess Emanuelle of Nuln
and*

*By Arrangement with the Brueghel Theatre of Altdorf
and the World's Edge Theatre of Nuln*

*the Gunnery School Theatrical Playerf are Extremely Proud to Prefent
their latest production of*

Porcolina!

or "The Goodly Wife"

*A ftunning New Operatical Achievement
From*

Herr S.W. Silbert

and

Alturo Gallavane, Esq.

Acclaimed Minftrels of the Court

*By Appointment of the Countess
and Famed Throughout the Known Worlde*

Featuring

the One and Only

Playwright, Hero of the Ages and Legend of the Stage

Deltef Sierck

By Arrangement with the Vargr Breughel Theatre

*Tickets on sale from 4th of Mitterfruhl
Boxes 1gc, Stalls 10/6, Gallery 2-, Floor 10p*

No weapons, animals or vegetables to be brought inside the theatre

The Cast

<i>Dulcina (Soprano)</i>	...	<i>Eloise von Stafhen</i>
<i>Dulcetta (Alto)</i>	...	<i>Elena Haffschitup</i>
<i>Lysenter (Tenor)</i>	...	<i>Hansel Burrelkjint</i>
<i>Salacio (Tenor)</i>	...	<i>Lorenz Drecker</i>
<i>Bastando (Bass)</i>	...	<i>Detlef Sierck,</i>
<i>Cellano, the Village Idiot (Tenor)</i>	...	<i>Maldivri Verscitanno</i>
<i>Mother Rhyra (Alto)</i>	...	<i>R. Grossner</i>
<i>Taal/The Old Priest (Baritone)</i>	...	<i>Breckner von Haasel</i>
<i>Porcalina (Soprano)</i>	...	<i>Danna von Unscht</i>
<i>Butcher (Bass)</i>	...	<i>Nicolas Parensch</i>
<i>Farmhands (Chorus)</i>	...	<i>Mikael Rechtler, Japp Mumper, Stephano Pilschner, Jacobus Nutt</i>
<i>Village Girls/Piglets (Chorus)</i>	...	<i>Janna Mannschlinger, Belladonna von Hoefschlag, Elsa von Stafhen, Sigismunda Duschen, Gilda Bruckner, Ludmilla Lurklow, Ebekah von Ulrichsen</i>



The Crew

<i>Director</i>	...	<i>Detlef Sierck,</i>
<i>Stage Manager</i>	...	<i>Pillory Bigfeast</i>
<i>Assistant Stage Manager</i>	...	<i>Hercule Mannschlinger</i>
<i>Design</i>	...	<i>Etelka von Stafhen</i>
<i>Crew</i>	...	<i>Ludmilla Lurklow, Yudit Mannschlinger, Jacobus Nutt, Garrick, Mackelwaite, Hildegard Keinenaugen, Happenstance Bigfeast, Zindea Whitemoon, Ug the Strange</i>

Songs

Act One: The Farm

<i>"Now Our Brow with Sweat A-Gleaming"</i> ...	Chorus
<i>"A Daughter's Doting Duty"</i> ...	Dulcina, Dulcetta, Bastando
<i>"Comes Two Dashing Gentlemen"</i> ...	Dulcina, Dulcetta, Chorus
<i>"Ah, A Wooing We Do Go"</i> ...	Lysenter, Salacio, Cellano, Bastando
<i>"As the Lightest Springtime Breeze"</i> ...	Dulcina, Lysenter, Salacio
<i>"When Mother Rhya Painted Faces"</i> ...	Dulcetta
<i>"By My Honour, Sir!"</i> ...	Lysenter and Salacio
<i>"If I Could Wish For Just One Thing"</i> ...	Dulcetta and Rhya
<i>"The Forest Creeps Upon A Pace"</i> ...	Rhya and Taal
<i>"If I Had Not Pledged All Peacefulness"</i> ...	Lysenter and Salacio
<i>"My Love Returned"</i> ...	Lysenter, Salacio, Dulcina, Bastando
<i>"By My Honour, Sir!" (reprise)</i> ...	Lysenter, Salacio, Bastando, Priest
<i>"Fill the Cup with Joyous Wine"</i> ...	Omnes

Act Two: The Forest Nearby

<i>"A Groom is Ever Restless"</i> ...	Lysenter, Salacio
<i>"My Sister Dear is Wed Today"</i> ...	Dulcetta and Dulcina
<i>"A Twist Untwisted, This I Seek"</i> ...	Dulcetta, Rhya, Taal
<i>"My Love Returned!" (reprise)</i> ...	Lysenter, Salacio, Dulcetta
<i>"What Must A Sister Do?"</i> ...	Dulcetta
<i>"Faithless, Faithless"</i> ...	Bastando
<i>"Surrounded, Yet Alone"</i> ...	Dulcina
<i>"And Now I Shall Seize Upon the Time"</i> ...	Bastando, Dulcina, Dulcetta
<i>"My Love is Found!"</i> ...	Salacio, Dulcetta
<i>"While Not A One to Cause a Fuss"</i> ...	Lysenter, Omnes
<i>"A Bitter Pill It Is To Take"</i> ...	Bastando
<i>"When A Man Makes to Marry"</i> ...	Priest, Rhya, Omnes
<i>"Fill the Cup with Joyous Wine" (reprise)</i> ...	Omnes

Synopsis

Dulcina and Dulcetta are two sisters who live in the small hamlet of Schweinberg under the yoke of their domineering and evil father, Bastando. Bastando forbids his daughters to marry so they may continue to look after him in his old age. Dulcina is the fairer of the two and is pursued by two local youths, Lysenter and Salacio. Dulcetta, her plain and plumper sister is in love with Salacio, and curses her sister for preventing her affections from being realised.

Taking pity on the girl, the Goddess Rhya offers the girl a single wish, and Dulcetta asks for her sister to be turned into a pig. However, when granting the wish, Rhya is distracted by her lover Taal, and the spell goes awry: Dulcina does indeed become a pig, but this does nothing to deter Lysenter and Salacio's amour. They are enraged to find her in the hands of the Butcher, and rescue her. In the climax of Act One, Lysenter and Salacio fight a duel over 'Dulcina', allowing Bastando to appear and try to kill the pig he does not know is his daughter. At the last moment, Dulcetta stops the blow, but her explanations do not stop the two men loving the same pig. However, the Old Priest of Sigmar arrives and announces that while a woman may have only one man as his wife, there is no such rule for pigs. Overjoyed, Lysenter and Salacio plan for a double wedding, despite Bastando's rage at such events.

Act Two begins with the wedding preparations. Dulcetta, distraught, prays to Rhya to end the situation. Rhya agrees but once again is distracted by Taal and disenchants the men but forgets to turn Dulcina back into a girl. Moments later, the pig herd is gathered by the Butcher once again. Dulcetta begs Lysenter and Salacio to go after Dulcina but they do not believe a pig could be their beautiful love. Dulcetta goes after Dulcina alone, and seeing her sister alone and afraid, softens her heart. The two escape only to run into Bastando, who has come to kill Dulcina for abandoning him, knowing that killing a pig is no crime at all. Dulcetta protects her sister, and just as the blow is falling, the men arrive and Salacio leaps to save her.

Bastando is defeated, and Salacio realises he loved Dulcetta all along. Lysenter however, is still stuck marrying a pig, and now also wishes to wed Dulcetta. Salacio and the cast remind Lysenter that a pig can still make a good wife. Bastando too sings of the virtue of a good wife, saying that the lack of one is why he sought to keep his daughters to himself, since his wife died so young. Seeing such humility, Rhya relents and turns all of the pig herd into women. Lysenter marries Dulcina, Salacio marries Dulcetta and Bastando marries the very alluring Porcalina. As the rest of the male cast also find brides, they sing of the joy of their wedding day.