

ישראל אלירז

יוסף

ISRAEL ELIRAZ

JOSEF

LIBRETTO

← IMI 6970 ↑  
(LE)



Israel Eliraz

JOSEPH

(Libretto)

Music: Joseph Tal

Commissioned by the New Israeli Opera, Tel Aviv

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The works of Israel Eliraz and Joseph Tal

Operas:

- Ashmedai -- Hamburg, directed by Leopold Lindberg conducted by  
Gari Bertini, premiere 1971
- Masada 967 -- Israel Festival, Leonard Sach, Gary Bertini, 1973
- The Trail -- Munich, Gotz Friedrich, Gari Bertini, 1976
- The Garden -- Hamburg, Peter Löscher, Irmgard Schleier, 1988

\*\*

- Elze--Homage --(Song Cycle), Israel Festival, Mendi Rodan, 1976
- The Hand (monodrama) -- Katherin Gayer, the Van Leer Jerusalem  
Institute, 1990
- The Wars Passed Through Here (song) -- Israel Festival, 1992
- Bitter Line (song) -- The Van Leer Jerusalem Institute, 1992

"One morning, as Gregor Samsa woke up from his mad dreams ..."  
(Franz Kafka, **Metamorphoses**)

"Shh, now we want to look into the soul"  
(Thomas Mann from his story **Ein Gluck** which Kafka enjoyed remembering).

## Dramatic Personae

The Herman Family: The Father, Jacob (age 65)  
The Mother (his age)  
The son, Joseph (Age 30)  
The daughter, Frieda (Age 22, with child)  
Her husband, Rubi (her age)

The woman, Lena (age 30)

The doctor (age 60)

Police officer (age 55)

The credit director at the Bank, Max (Age 30)

Two customers

Two jailers

Two murderers

Two male mental hospital nurses

A newspaper boy

The gate keeper

A waitress

Street cleaner

Strolling musicians

Citizens, clerks, immigrants (Chorus)

Mice (chorus-ballet)

## The Stage

The stage rises towards its inside. It comprises several acting levels on different heights, looks like a sort of a topographical map.

The various scenes take place on the various levels of the stage. At times these scenes take place simultaneously.

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The opera is divided into scenes which have to emerge one from the other without any pause.

\*\*

The curtain is up as the audience enters the theatre.

A C T I

I: THE GATE DREAM

(Joseph, the gate keeper)

(Empty stage.)

Joseph, in long underwear, enters holding a chair in his hand.  
He sits down and looks at the audience)

Joseph:           ... A gate descends in front of me  
                  (A gate descends)  
                  and in front of the gate stands the gate keeper  
                  (the gate keeper enters and stands erect in front of  
                  the gate)  
                  and the keeper, of whom I am afraid, bows and says:  
                  "Sir, the gate is yours"

Gate keeper:   (bowing) "Sir, the gate is yours"

Joseph:           He opens the gate before me  
                  (the keeper opens the gate)  
                  and I am looking at the gate's reliefs  
                  and the time passes by and the gate  
                  becomes heavy and dark  
                  (the gate becomes darker)  
                  Why didn't I enter through my gate?  
                  (The keeper exits with the gate. Joseph cries out  
                  as if of a bad dream. He kneels on the chair,  
                  wrapped up within himself. Lights dim)



II: THE CISTERN DREAM

(Two jailers, officer, Joseph)

(Two jailers, with clubs, walk back and forth in front of a lattice which they bring in.

Officer enters)

Officer:           ... Down there, in the cistern, in the darkness,  
                    at the level of the underground water,  
                    a young man lies on a narrow bar.  
                    The water almost reach his body ...

(Joseph's cry echoes back.

Two jailers exit with the lattice, officer  
marches them off:)

One-Two ... One-Two ... One-Two ...

(exits)

III: THE ASSASSINS

(Two assassins, Joseph)

(Joseph rises to run away and is confronted by two assassins. He passes them but they manage to trip him with their legs and arms. Joseph falls. They stand above him, passing a big knife from one to the other. They stop, they lift the knife in order to stab Joseph with it.

Joseph wakes up shouting.

The assassins vanish in the darkness.

Light out on Joseph, light on dining room)

IV: THE DINING ROOM

(Father, mother, sister Frieda and Rubi)

(The family, about to conclude breakfast, is sitting around the table.)

Mother moves between kitchen and dining room.

Father eats and reads the newspaper in front of him.

Joseph is missing)

Father: (to mother) Where is your son, mom?

(He looks at his pocket watch)

He will be late for work. They'll fire him.

In these days nothing is certain.

Mother: You will be proud of him, dad.

Father: And you spoil him, mom.

Mother: He is a good boy. He was never late for breakfast.

Father: (Rises, slowly), the hat. (Mother gives him the hat)

(To Rubi) to the shop, my boy.

(Rubi kisses Frieda, touches her big belly)

Rubi: Take care of him and don't worry. I want him without worries. It'll be ok, Frieda.

Frieda: I love you, Rubi.

(Kisses him. Rubi exits. Frieda begins to clear the table. Mother stops father by the door, arranges his tie)

Mother: Don't be harsh with the boy.

Father: The boy, mom, is thirty and he does not know what to do with THIS.

Mother: He'll get out of it.

Father: He is dreaming.

Mother: Give him time.

Father: Time? Who has Time? Just not time ...

Mother: Take care of yourself, dad. Take care of us.

(The tower bell rings. Father checks his pocket watch)

Father: Oh, my God, It's eight already. Let's go. We cannot let our customers wait.

(Kisses Frieda lightly and exits.

Light on kitchen where mother is still busy. One light on Joseph sitting in his room, listening to Frieda's words that are addressed to the audience. As she finishes the light on Joseph is out as well.)

Frieda: ... on the first morning of June 1914, his thirtieth birthday, Joseph refuses to get out of bed and come to the table. I do not understand if and how much serious it is. I believe that more serious things will happen aside of coming or not coming to the table.

So they say.

It's not up to me to put things in order. It's not through me that things become a story. I am in my eighth month. I love Rubi. I listen. I observe. A great June. Just that it will continue like this ...

(exits)

V: THE SHOP

(Father, Rubi, officer, two customers)

(Father and Rubi serve two customers.

Father leads one woman, with a parcel in her hand, to the door)

Father: Thank you Miss, and see you ...

(Woman exits.

Rubi concludes tieing the parcel for second woman who pays the bill to father, who is ringing it on the loud till)

Father: Thank you Mrs. and good by ...

(Rubi exits with woman, parcel in his hand.

Father alone, takes a bottle out of his pocket and swallows one or two pills from it.

Rubi comes back and puts empty boxes back on shelves)

Father: ... and where did you see, my lad, so many buttons, shoulder pads, buckles, pins, cufflinks, hooks and belts? ...

"Herman Buttons", they are the best.

Rubi: "Herman Buttons", they are the best.

Father: And I say, to live is to live just as white is white and don't let anyone tell me stories. Do you understand, Rubi?

Rubi: White is white -- that's true.

Father: Life belongs to those who use it ...

Rubi: And let no one tell you stories ... (they laugh)

(The door bell rings. A police officer enters)

Officer: Good morning, Jacob Herman. Good morning, Rubi.

Father/Rubi: Good morning officer.

Officer: (To Rubi) How is Frieda, Rubi?

Rubi: Frieda is expecting in ...

Officer: A month.

Rubi: You know everything.

Officer: That's what they pay me for.

(They laugh)

Officer: Herman, do you have, by chance, one of those royal buttons that I have lost ...

(Father approaches, changes his spectacles, observes the buttons of the police coat, to Rubi)

Father: Shelf 3, box 72.

(Rubi climbs a ladder and brings the box.

Father matches button to the officer)

Father: Ha? On the house.

Rubi: "Herman Buttons," they are the best!

Officer: In these days we cannot detest anything, even buttons.

My regards to Mrs. Herman.

Father: Will do that, thank you.

Officer: The taste of her apple pie is still in my mouth.

Father: There is always a piece of pie in our kitchen.

Officer: Thanks for the invitation, Herman.

**(The tower bell rings noon.**

**Officer and father check their pocket watches. They nod to each other and return the watches to their pockets)**

Officer: And Joseph?

Father: And Joseph?

Officer: Where is Joseph?

**(Father and Rubi exchange glances)**

Officer: This is what I was told to look into.

Rubi: At the bank.

Father: Is about to be promoted today to DEPUTY DIRECTOR of the credit department.

**(Officer lights a cigarette)**

Officer: He is not.

Rubi: He is not?

Father: What do you mean, he is not?

Officer: I just came from the bank. From Max. He's NOT there.

**(Father takes watch and looks at it again. Rubi does the same.**

**Darkness)**



VI: THE BANK

(Max, Lena, typists, clerks)

(On various levels of the stage clerks are typing.

A huge and varied noise fills the bank.

Unseen doors open and shut and rows of clerks go up and down, with folders and papers in their hands. This labyrinth like bureaucracy ballet continues for a while and then disappears behind shut doors. After a while the light focuses on Max's office. He is walking back and forth, angry. He dictates a letter to Lena, which she types on a big typewriter)

Max: (dictating) "... and what will be now with the business trip you undertook? ..."

(bursts out) to give up, after ten years, a position ... security ... a good salary for your entire life -- he's crazy ...

Lena: (continues typing) "business trip you undertook ..."

Max: "... you would not want, Mr., that the bank manager will sue you for sums neither you nor your family will be able to pay back for years ..."

Lena: "will sue you for sums ... will be able to pay back .."

Max: (bursts out) Does he think we will let him scorn the ingenious system of our bank? ... Stupid! ...

"...The insurance company, with my recommendation, and with clemency, will allow you three weeks of sick leave, after which you will be considered ..."

Lena: "... after which you will be considered ..."

(pause)

You will be considered what?

Max: (Breathes heavily) "As resigned ..."

Lena: "Resi ... " Max, are you sure?

(Silence. He wipes his forehead)

"as resigned ..."

Max: "Full stop" ...

Lena: "Full stop" ...

Max: Yours, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera.

(Lena types)

Max: Send it registered and by special delivery ...

(He takes his hat and cane and exits quickly.)

She takes the letter out of the typewriter.

Lights off office and stage)

VII: THE KITCHEN

(Mother, Joseph, Frieda)

(Mother enters with letter)

Mother: For you.

(Joseph opens envelope, reads)

Mother: Is it important?

Joseph: It's from Max.

(He sets the letter on fire with a lighter.

Frieda rushes towards him, takes the burning letter from him and throws it on the floor, putting the fire off with her foot.

Joseph takes the letter from her, lights it, and holds it until it turns into ashes)

Frieda: It's not funny, Joseph.

(Leaves him and helps mother to prepare meal)

Mother: I will buy plums to make jam ...

Frieda: I'll help you mom.

Mother: (to Joseph) Your soup gets cold. Be a good boy, don't say no to mother.

(Silence)

Mother: Isn't it tasty Joseph?

Joseph: It's excellent.

Mother: You always liked mother's soup.

Joseph: The best soup in the world.

Mother: More salt?

Joseph: The best soup in the world lacks nothing ...

Frieda: So what do you want, prince?

**(Joseph turns the soup plate upside down on the table)**

Frieda: **(Shouting)** Joseph!

**(Cleans quickly)**

Mother: Do you want more soup?

**(Joseph smashes plate on the floor)**

Frieda: Clean yourself, damn you!

**(Throws the cloth on him and exits)**

Mother: You frighten Frieda. It's not good for her to be frighten now ...

Joseph: You don't understand, mother ...

Mother: You don't feel well. A glass of cognac, a little honey, a good sleep and tomorrow like a tiger you'll go to work.

Joseph: I won't.

**(About to exit)**

Mother: Are you going to Lena?

Joseph: **(Surprised)** Lena?

Mother: Will you propose to her shortly?

Joseph: No.

Mother: She loves you, I am sure.

We will be most happy if there will be a wedding soon ...

**(Joseph exits kitchen to backyard.**

**He lights a cigarette, smokes)**

Mother: I don't understand a thing ...

**(Light dims slowly on kitchen.**

**A single light on Joseph who listens to his mother talk)**

Mother: ... Understand? ... I understand soups and apple pies.

Not much more than that ... Joseph says that he is searching for a way to change his life but the way is always disappearing. He is so stubborn. He is right, I don't understand this ...

**(Darkness)**

VIII: THE GARDEN and later on THE BRIDGE ON THE RIVER

(Officer, Lena, Joseph, citizens, immigrants, Max)

(Noon.

Passersby on the bridge.

In the garden there are immigrants: men, women and children. Their clothes suggest that they are foreign and different from the local passersby on the bridge. The immigrants are surrounded by parcels and suitcases. A fight starts. People hit each other. It is very tense. As the officer enters they run towards him and surround him. Illegible voices and noise. The officer sends them off disgustingly, cleans his uniform.

He notices Lena who leans against the bridge's railing at a distance. He approaches)

Officer: ... If the ship will not arrive soon ...

Lena: (turns towards him) What?

Officer: ... There will be a plague ... (salutes), Miss.

Lena: Mr. officer knows everything.

Officer: That's what they pay me for.

(Laughs, coughs, stands erect)

We had a perfectly clean city, -- now it's dirt -- stink ... they await the ship from America -- weeks ... like mice ...

Lena: To America?

Officer: The huge garbage can, America ... Money ...

(He looks at her now, for the first time, attentively)

Officer: I hope you have no intentions of doing something foolish, Miss.

Lena: Me?

(He points at the river)

Lena: Oh, no. Not me, Mr. Officer.

Officer: You look perfectly all right, Miss.

Lena: I am all right as much as "all right" is perfectly alright.

Officer: So why are you here alone when everything is so perfectly all right?

Lena: If you will be able to answer this for me I'll kiss you.

Officer: It's a deal -- first a kiss then an answer.

Lena: No deal, pity.

Officer: It's a great June.

(Stops, laughs)

If it wasn't for the mice ... the garbage ...

Lena: America, you said?

Officer: The ship will arrive only at the end of the month ...

(Lena kisses his cheeks lightly, he salutes and laughs. She exits and he lights a cigarette. Joseph enters running. He passes, not that easily, through the many immigrants. Some try to cling to him,

search his pockets. They tear his watch from him and remove his hat. He reaches the officer, breathing heavily. Officer stops him)

Officer: If you are looking for someone who looks for you, it's over there.

(He points at the direction in which Lena left.

Joseph is about to exit but officer trips him. Joseph falls)

Officer: You don't watch ...

(Officer laughs. Offers him his hand and lifts him)

Officer: Kid, don't let her look for you too long.

If I were you, Joseph Herman, I would have pinned my peg and built a house for her.

Haven't you got a fish in your pants?

(Laughs rudely.

Joseph about to hit him.

Officer stops him easily and firmly)

Officer: You look bad.

You hide something.

Join the army. Stand straight. Beware the creeping animals ...

(points at the immigrants)

A knife in each pocket ...

Peeling off anything that can be peeled ...

Joseph: What are you talking about?

Officer: You tell me.



Joseph: Do you accuse them?

Officer: Yes. I just don't know of what yet. What time is it?

(Joseph looks at his hand and does not find the watch.

Officer laughs, satisfied with this immediate proof)

Officer: Why don't you move your ass and run after her, stupid.

(Joseph about to exit but officer trips him again and

Joseph falls. Officer offers him a hand and lifts him,

laughs)

Officer: Be careful. Open your eyes. You don't watch ...

(He point's at the direction through which Lena left.

Joseph starts moving away to the side.

Max enters. Searching. Approaching officer and whispers something in his ear.

Officer replies with a whisper pointing at the opposite direction to the one through which Joseph left.

Max exits.

Officer lights a cigarette.

Darkness)

IX: LENA'S ROOM

(Joseph, Lena)

(A small coffee table on wheels with a coffee set and a birthday cake with thirty lit candles on it. On the side, on a shelf, a big gramophone. A waltz record. Joseph and Lena dance. On her hands thin gloves.

Occasionally he whispers something at her ear and she laughs.

The dance continues for a while)

Joseph: Do you still love me Lena?

Lena: Yes, Joseph.

Joseph: With all the power of love?

Lena: Yes, Joseph.

Joseph: Less than that it's not worth it.

Lena: I know.

(They dance)

And you?

(They dance)

I wish you would have loved me with all the power of love, less than that it's not worth it.

(They dance until they reach the cake, they stop, laugh.

Joseph blows the thirty candles as Lena applauds.

Darkness.

Lights up immediately.

Some time passes.

**Lena sits, a cup of coffee in her hand, drinks.**

**Joseph smokes, at a distance. Silence)**

Lena: Your coffee is cold. Shall I boil some more?

Joseph: No, Lena. (Silence)

Joseph: We will not meet again. It's all over between us.

**(Lena bursts into a big laughter. He does not join her.**

**Lena stops)**

Lena: For seven years now we meet each Tuesday, five p.m.  
... and I hoped that one day, maybe today, especially  
today -- on your thirtieth birthday -- you will come with  
a bouquet and say: "I love you. I want you. Will you  
marry me?"

**(Silence)**

Lena: "When I look at you I see flames." This is what you said.  
Did you?

Joseph: I did.

Lena: Where else will you find, my silly goose, another one  
like me? Wake up darling, what are we waiting for?

**(She laughs again. He looks at her in pain)**

Lena: Kiss me and come to bed.

Let's forget everything. Let's not waste our Tuesday,  
Joseph ...

**(Joseph doesn't move. Lena approaches him and strokes his  
cheek)**

You stopped shaving?

**(Darkness)**

X: THE COFFEE HOUSE

(Joseph, doctor, waitress, officer)

(Joseph and doctor sit by a table, on the pavement, not far from the fishermen's wharf. Workers with nets, ropes and boxes occasionally pass by. The street cleaner sweeps)

Doctor: ... We have a beautiful country and fresh air ...  
(breathes) Nowhere in the world is there such air!

Joseph: Who knows how long it will last ...

Doctor: And the sea ... Nowhere in the world is there such blue ...

(Waitress enters)

Doctor: Mineral water. (To Joseph) And for you? (To waitress) Two mineral water ...

(Waitress exits.)

Doctor examines Joseph's eyes)

Listen to the advice of the Herman family friend ...

(Takes Joseph's pulse)

There is nothing healthier than being healthy ...

(Checks neck's gland)

We have a beautiful country. The people need healthy young men -- and you decide to destroy yourself ... What are you trying to prove? ... To whom? ...

(Examines his ears)

If you don't eat -- you die.

(Checks his shoulders and back of neck)

And as much as it depends on us, we won't let you die.

(Doctor checks the reflexes of the knees.)

Waitress enters with two glasses of mineral water, puts them on table and exits.

Doctor raises his glass towards the light)

Doctor: Where is there such blue? ... (Drinks all his water)

... Nowhere in the world ...

(Takes a bottle of pills from his pocket and puts it in front of Joseph)

One red pill, before the meal, three times a day.

You can't be healthier than being Deputy Manager of the credit department ...

(Takes another bottle and places in front of him)

And one green pill before you go to bed.

And then go and become the Director of the credit bank

(Breathes heavily)

Joseph: What are you talking about, Doctor?

Doctor: About health ... about order ... everything is so simple!

(Joseph, with one stroke of his arm, throws all the bottles and exits.)

The street cleaner sweeps the scattered bottles.

Doctor wipes his forehead with concern.

Suddenly the officer stands beside him)

Doctor: Did you see that?

Officer: Everything.

Doctor: Did you hear?

Officer: We have to put an eye on the lad ... and on the harbor...

(Doctor puts his hat on firmly)

Doctor: Did you read the papers this morning?

Officer: Doctors do not recommend reading papers in the morning

...

(Laughs aloud.)

Doctor looks at the sky and then at the sea)

Doctor: NOWHERE IN THE WORLD IS THERE SUCH BLUE! ...

(Exit doctor.)

Light dims on coffee house)

XI: JOSEPH'S ROOM

(Joseph, Frieda)

(Evening. Frieda enters with a tray of food which she puts on table. A little light on kitchen where mother prepares, with a lot of detail, the pie.)

Joseph, dressed, lies in bed)

Joseph: ... Take away this trash, it brings flies and mice ...

Frieda: (Sits on the bed, beside him) You are sick. You look terrible. You destroy yourself. Go see a doctor.

Joseph: I saw him. He said that I am sick, I look terrible, I destroy myself. (Kisses her on her cheek) He understands nothing.

Frieda: Who understands? Not one of us understands.

What do you want? ... To die? ...

(She goes to the tray, pouring, preparing a piece of bread)

Joseph: With you everything is simple ...

Frieda: But everything is simple ...

Joseph: That's what the doctor says and I don't understand ...  
I envy you ... I envy Rubi who loves you ... I wake up in the morning and ...

It seems to me that all is lost ... There is no place for me ...

Again and again the dreams return

And destroy my brain ... Come Frieda, sit here beside me.

(She sits beside him, he hugs her and tells her)

Joseph: Yesterday I dreamt that people who are close to me attacked me -- stripped off my clothes -- dipped them in blood so that dad will think a beast ate me ...

Frieda: You know that is not your dream ... When we were kids dad read to us the holy legends ...

Joseph: Then they threw me in a cistern and there was no one to get me out ... (points at his chest) a hole ... there is a hole here ... do you understand me?

Frieda: No.

(Joseph is lost. He rises and takes the knife from the tray and almost stabs his own chest)

Joseph: You want to see this hole? ... (Frieda screams) The best place to stab a knife is between the neck and the chin, into the tight muscles ...

(He drops the knife. Hugs her warmly, almost crying)

Joseph: The underground water flood my brain ...

(Holds his head in his hands) voices ... voices ... (bent with pain, encouraged)

Enough! Enough! ... Forgive me ...

I love you Frieda ... It doesn't matter what will happen to me, I will always love you ...

(Frieda exits with tray.

As the door slams the light shifts to the nightmare scene)



XII: NIGHTMARE SCENE

(A few mice enter the stage.

In the beginning it seems as if they are playing with each other and with Joseph like children having fun.

Very quickly Joseph realizes that they chase him and are a danger to him.

He tries to get away from them.

Wherever he turns, in order to escape -- a mouse trap opens in front of him.

Once or twice he manages not to get caught.

Eventually he is caught in a big trap. He is in and they are out.

The mice dance happily. Joseph knocks.

Darkness)

XIII: JOSEPH'S ROOM (and later SHOP and KITCHEN)

(Joseph, father, mother, Frieda)

(Joseph alone, wonders, as if he just woke from a dream. Looks around.

He takes a mouse out of his pocket and frees him.

After a short pause the door slams and father enters, with the same tray of food.

Joseph and father look at each other. Father is drunk)

Joseph: You? ... What are you doing here?

Father: I came to see ...

Joseph: If a beast ate me? ...

(Father puts down the tray. Takes a bottle from his pocket and offers Joseph who refuses. Father drinks, belches)

Father: Where did we go wrong? ... For the first time in my life Joseph, I am really afraid ...

(pause) My father's father came to this town and began a small business ... my father continued and made himself a good name and I continued and added Herman Buttons ... I am proud of all this -- and you? ... (pause)

I am sixty five. All my life I worked very hard and honestly ... time passes. For whom did I prepare all that I have?

Joseph: For you, father. For you. For you you have prepared all that you have. This is the life YOU CHOSE! MONEY! BUTTONS! MONEY! ... I owe you nothing!

Father: Where are you going? ...

**(throws the bottle and breaks it. Joseph stops)**

You will stay here and listen to what I have to tell you, son. Don't you see, if you continue in this way, ALL IS LOST!? ...

Saying "no" to the entire world is ok ... But, sure, it's not enough ... And after you said "no" -- what, YES? ...

**(Light on shop. Rubi ties parcels. Light on kitchen as well. Mother sits by the table and combs her hair lengthily. Frieda enters and hugs mother from behind)**

Frieda: Cinnamon, mom?

Mother: Yes, cinnamon ... in an hour we will have a great pie ...

Father: **(to Joseph)** The shop will go to someone out of the family ...

Mother: **(to Frieda)** I am not sure that my soups are what they used to be ...

Father: **(to Joseph)** Rubi steals your inheritance ...

Frieda: **(to mother)** Tomorrow everything will look different

Mother: **(to Frieda)** Lena is an excellent girl -- you'll see, Joseph will surprise us all ...

**(Father shakes Joseph and suddenly Joseph shakes father. The two roll over each other, exhaling.)**

**Frieda braids her mother's hair to a lock. Light dims on kitchen. Light dims on shop.**

**Father rises, takes his belt out and lifts his arm to hit Joseph. Darkness. ACT I ends. No curtain)**



A C T II

IV: LENA'S ROOM

(Lena, Joseph)

(Stage is dark. From the darkness, in a distance, emerges, as if in a dream, -- a beautiful ship on all its colors, banners and lights. Slowly lights on Lena's room.

On the floor are two packed suitcases and two handbags.

It is a room from which someone is about to travel afar.

Another open suitcase is on the bed, about to be packed.

Lena, dressed but without shoes, puts last items into the open suitcase. The woman is perpetually moving in a circle.

Joseph enters, breathing heavily)

Joseph: ... Yes, she's beautiful ...

Lena: (Surprised) Joseph!

Joseph: Huge - beautiful - five chimneys ...

Two green and black stripes on each chimney ...

Lena: Now you too know how it looks ...

Joseph: Like a general ... Like Pharaoh ... What a ship! ...

Lena: (Hoots like a ship) Hoooooo! Hoooo!  
(Laughs.  
Joseph does not join her laughter.  
Lena stops packing and looks at Joseph who is looking at her)

Lena: What is it darling?

Joseph: You are very beautiful ... Lena ...  
(He wants to hug her, she avoids him)

Lena: Be careful, Joseph ... I have my makeup on ...

Joseph: You are beautiful and seductive ...

Lena: (avoiding him) Joseph ... Joseph ...

Joseph: ... Like Potiphar's wife. Do you want a drink?

Lena: You are cute.  
(Joseph goes to the bar and fixes a drink.  
Lena continues packing.  
He brings her the drink)

Joseph: Cheers!

Lena: Cheers!  
(She drinks. Joseph gulps the wine in one sip)  
Yes, you did stop shaving ... you look like ...

Joseph: (Puts his finger on her lips) Shh ... Shh ...  
(Lena sits and stretches one foot. He puts a shoe on it)

Lena: Say to me: "Don't board the ship. Don't go."  
(Drinks. Stretches second foot and he puts the other shoe on it)

Say to me: "I'm leaving home.

We will build our own little house.

Don't run away."

**(Sits by her feet. His head on her knees)**

Say to me: "I love you and I want you to stay with me  
... "

We had a great love dream.

I waited for you seven years.

Don't you love me any longer?

All right. As you wish. I'm leaving.

Nothing touches your heart anymore ...

**(Joseph wants to kiss her on her lips.**

**She stops him and puts a finger on his lips)**

No, there. Everything there. Only there, in America.

Don't forget me ... prince ... write to me ...

Joseph: I already did.

**(Takes out a letter from a pocket by his bosom)**

Lena: I will write to you as soon as I have an address.

**(Joseph gives her the letter)**

Joseph: Open it when you are on deck ... Don't write to me any  
more ...

**(Lena touches his unshaved cheeks, kisses him lightly on  
his lips, and gives him a parcel)**



Lena: All the love letters you wrote to me. No one ever wrote to me prettier letters.

(Reads)

"I'll love you forever, including your left shoulder ..."

(they laugh)

(gives him the letter) this is what you wrote, poet.

(Joseph kisses letter, they laugh.

Their laugh stops.

Lena looks at him most tenderly)

Joseph: This morning I woke up from hysteric dreams and I was someone ELSE ...

And I am trying, in great pain, to understand WHO IS this someone ...

(His laugh is strange.

Darkness)

XV: BACKYARD and from the side KITCHEN

(Father, mother, doctor, officer, Frieda, Rubi, two male mental hospital nurses)

(Late at night.

Father, mother doctor and officer sit and play in the backyard at a small card table. From the side, with little light, in the kitchen, Rubi and Frieda sit by table. Frieda cuts cloth and sews. Rubi reads the large account books of the shop.

Father, smoking a pipe, looks very weary. At one moment he cannot hold himself any longer and bursts into a deep sobbing which he cannot stop. The three look at him stunned.

Doctor slaps father. Sobbing stops.

Mother hugs him.

Light increases on backyard)

Doctor: (decided) We need to do something, Jacob Herman. We need to do, and at once!

So that we will not be too late ... Something is getting totally lost here ...

(He takes from his bag a straitjacket, spreads it in front of them on the table - it's a striped straitjacket. Mother snatches straitjacket.

Father grabs mother and almost wrestles with her. He hugs her for a moment)

Mother: You won't hurt Joseph. Right, dad?

Doctor: What ARE you thinking of, Mrs. Herman?

Father: No, mom. We want to help him. Right, doctor?

Officer: If you need force to control him ...

(Two male nurses now seen standing beyond the fence)

Father: I don't think we'll need them ... Right, mom?

(Father gives mother the straitjacket tenderly.  
Mother holds straitjacket close to her heart.  
The doctor signals the nurses to leave.  
Doctor tries to change the depressing mood)

Doctor: Did you read the evening papers, Mr. officer?

Officer: (tipsy) Doctors do not recommend reading evening newspapers in the evening ...

(Laughs. Stops. Coughs)

Doctor: (To mother) Good night, Mrs. Herman.

(He pulls his hat firmly on his forehead. He strikes father's shoulder friendly and exits to the rear of the stage, where he will take his hat off)

Mother: Maybe we could close the business for a few days and rest ... It will do us all good ...

Father: The clients are not waiting for us ...

Mother: (Gives him a handkerchief) Wipe your eyes, dad.

Father: (Refuses) It's nothing. (Sadly) We have an entire summer still in front of us ...

(He is about to go out)

Mother: Don't forget your medicine ...

(Father exits)

Officer: Don't forget to lock the doors on bolts ... like mice ...

(He staggers and exits.

In his way he picks a piece of pie.

Lights off backyard.)

Father: (From outside) Mom, are you coming? ...

(Silence)

Mother: Coming, I'm coming ...

(Doesn't move.

Darkness)

XVI: KITCHEN

(Frieda, Rubi)

(Lights on kitchen.)

Frieda continues to sew the cloth.

Rubi looks at account books)

Rubi: Bad! ... Business is in bad shape. The shop owes money. The bank gives us no more credit. Let's sell everything! Let's begin from the beginning.

Frieda: Talk with father, Rubi.

Rubi: Father doesn't know anything any more. Let's throw all the buttons and open a butcher shop.

Frieda: What are you talking about, my god!

Rubi: (Hits the books) We are approaching bankruptcy! ... A butcher shop, I say. People always eat meat. Every day immigrants cross the border searching for meat. Talk with father, Frieda ...

Frieda: Father is not what he used to be ...

(Light decreases but is not entirely off during the next scene)

XVII: ROOM and later KITCHEN

(Mother, Joseph, Frieda, Rubi)

(Mother undresses Joseph completely.

She will dress him, slowly, with the striped straitjacket)

Joseph: ... Sometimes, at night, someone hits me inside and I  
cry,

"Father, mother, come and take my life. It is yours.

I couldn't

do anything with them ... I wanted to change them - but,

now I want peace ... "

Is god peace, mother?

Mother: Yes, god is peace, son.

Joseph: I'm losing my powers and I need them so much today  
like I need god ... is god power, mother?

Mother: Yes, god is power, son.

Joseph: Slowly I'm losing control over my thought - over my  
body ...

At night everything falls apart ... I search the mistake  
I made ...

Voices blow up my head ...

(A lengthy and loud telephone ring)

This terrible noise! ...

(Covers his ears with his hands)

Joseph: ... Don't tell me, that god can try  
me in this way too ... (shouts) this horrendous noise ...  
voices ... voices ...  
(Ring stops only now)  
Where does all this lead to? ...  
(Dressed with the striped straitjacket, kneels.  
Mother sings quietly)

Mother: "Shh, now we want to look into the soul ... "  
(Lights off room and increase on kitchen.  
Rubi continues looking at the account books with growing  
anger)

Rubi: ... Let's throw all the buttons and open a butcher shop  
...  
(to Frieda) What time is it ?  
(Frieda does not answer)  
Meat, I say ... Butcher shop, I say ...  
I can get out of my mind ...  
(to Frieda, shouting) WHAT TIME IS IT?  
(He stabs the knife, which is in front of him, in the  
table.  
Darkness)

XVIII: CLOSED ROOM

(Joseph, chorus, Frieda, doctor)

(Illusive light, nightmare.)

Rat like figures (chorus) run around.

Joseph staggers between them. He has a great fever, in a trance)

Chorus: In the cistern, in the darkness, on a narrow bar,  
the flowing water touching his body,  
ascending, reaching his neck  
crazy are the wild suer rats  
the snakes ... the scorpions ...

(They disappear.)

Weak light on the almost empty room. Table, chair, bed.  
Barred window. Joseph sits. Frieda beside him, wipes his  
sweaty face with a wet cloth.

Doctor enters, takes his pulse, checks his eyes, etc.)

Joseph: Am I still alive? ...

Doctor: We won't allow you to die, child ... (goes away from  
him, lights a cigarette, to Frieda)

Apart of Mrs. Herman's apple pie, nothing will remain  
the same ...

(Squeezes cigarette) I'm sorry, Frieda ... (exits. Iron  
door slams)

Joseph: I'm alive ... I'm alive ...

Frieda: You're alive. You will live, only because they decided  
that you will not die.

Joseph: (Panics) Take away the mouse that is eating my nose ...



Frieda: **(Continues to wipe his face)** Last night they broke the shop's window ...

Joseph: I am looking at the mouse and it multiplies ...

Frieda: If not for Rubi, they would have set the shop on fire.

Joseph: **(Shouting)** It multiplies! ... It multiplies ...

Frieda: How long would you be able to go on like this?

Joseph: ... It multiplies ...

Frieda: There, outside, there is a world ...

Joseph: Plies ... plies ...

Frieda: **(Stops, rises)** I'm not sure you are my brother any longer. You stink.

Joseph: A knife ... bring me a knife ...

Frieda: As far as I'm concerned, go hang yourself.

**(Exits.**

**Mental hospital nurses disappear.**

**Light changes and Joseph is in delirium. Chorus returns)**

Joseph: Pharaoh says:

Chorus: Everything needs to be in order ...

Joseph: Pharaoh says:

Chorus: The river is overflowing, the valley is flowering ...

Joseph: Pharaoh says:

Chorus: The bug sun moves westward ...

Joseph: And I say: not in order to return in the morning to the east ...

**(Iron door slams.**

**Darkness)**

XIX: STREET

(Frieda, mother, father)

(Frieda meets mother and father who is holding a basket. At a street corner, on a different level of the stage, street musicians perform: "Shh, now we want to look into the soul."

Passersby stop, throw a coin to musicians and continue)

Frieda: ... I don't recognize him any longer.

Mother: I brought him a piece of pie and the soup he likes ...

Frieda: (Angrily) As if nothing happens to him!

Mother: It's important he knows we didn't give up on him ...

Frieda: Mom, Joseph is gone. A beast ate him.

Mother: ... That we don't turn our back on him ...

Frieda: ... Tear him from our memory ...

Father: ... He is still alive Frieda ...

Frieda: WE have to begin to live ...

Mother: ... He will marry Lena ...

Frieda: Lena went to America ...

Father: A good girl ... from the bank ...

Frieda: (With growing anger) So everything is as it was!

Mother: The pie, the soup ...

Frieda: Damn the pie and the soup!

Father: Frieda ...

Mother: When our Joseph returns home he'll find everything in place ...

Frieda: He will not return, mother. And nothing is in place ...

Mother: Even new plum jam ...

Frieda: (Does not understand) WHAT?

Mother: You promised to help me this year. I already bought plums, Frieda ...

Frieda: (Stunned) Come, father, Let's go. It's late.

(Exits.

Father gives basket to mother)

Mother: Maybe you'll invite Lena and Max and a few other young people from the bank ...

We'll have a little party ... It used to be happier here ... remember, Herman?

(Father exits quickly.

Mother approaches street musicians and joins their singing.

Lights off)

XX: THE CLOSED ROOM

(Joseph, mental hospital male nurse, two assassins)

(Joseph sits on a chair. Nurse concludes shaving his face and head. He empties half a pail of water over Joseph, throws a towel on him and exits. Iron door slams. Joseph dries up slowly.

From the outside, in the distance, we hear the song "Shh, now we want to look into the soul."

Suddenly Joseph thinks he hears someone in the room.

A small child IS NOT in the room but Joseph, simply, addresses him)

Joseph: Where you here all the time?

How did you get in?

I like you.

What do you want handsome boy?

A crown?

Why do you need a crown?

All right, let it be a crown.

(Joseph makes a royal turban from the towel, and fixes it on child's head)

It's yours, my king.

My name is Joseph. Yours, Pharaoh.

Sit quietly king as if within a dream.

(Joseph puts "crown" on chair)

Look at me and don't understand. I'm lost.

I have no more power. I need no powers any longer ...  
I will not shout, only look at them ... Life has almost  
passed away ...

Like each morning, this morning too, mother prepares an  
apple pie and puts it in the oven ...

**(breathes heavily)** raisins ... cinnamon ... always the  
same sweetness ...

When did I last tell her, I love you? ...

Oh, mother ... Oh, Lena ...

**(The two assassins have already entered, one from the  
right the other from the left. They approach Joseph,  
Lights dim. The two fold their arms around his head and  
break his neck. The two put Joseph on the chair and exit.  
Iron door slams.**

**Lights on iron door, Frieda comes through it.**

**Frieda clad in black, a black hat on her head)**

Frieda: ... On the first morning of June, 1914, his thirtieth  
birthday, Joseph refused coming to breakfast. I didn't  
understand how serious it was, I don't understand this  
today as well. Sunday, June 29. It's not up to me to put  
things in order. **(Touches her belly, breathes heavily as  
if listening)** a great July awaits us all ...

**(Darkness. At once ...)**

XXI: CITY SQUARE

(Citizens - chorus, Joseph, officer, doctor and more)

(... A loud, stunning gunshot is heard. More shots follow.

Bright day light.

A boy rushes into the square with a pile of newspapers under his arm. Shouts:

"Murder! The Archduke has been murdered! ... Murder on the bridge ... Murder ... Murder ... in Sarajevo ... "

From all sides of the stage citizens hurry in and buy newspapers. They disappear on various levels of the stage, open the newspapers and read. Among them - the officer, doctor, Rubi and other characters we are familiar with. Father looks more derelict than ever. Chorus voices emerge from various directions)

Chorus: Murder - mur - mur - der - der ...

Who was murdered? ... Who was murdered? der - der ...

Who? ... Who? ... Who? ... der ... der ...

The Archduke - duke - duke - murdered -

de de de - r r r - r r - de de ...

(slowly the paper readers begin marching like soldiers, led by officer)

Officer: One

Chorus: One - One ...

Officer: Two

Chorus: One - two

Officer: Three

Chorus: One - two - three ...

Officer: Four

Chorus: One - two - three - four ...

Officer: One - two - three - four ...

Chorus: One - two - three - four - five ...

Officer: Five

Chorus: Five - four - three - two - one ...

Officer: One

Chorus: One - two ...

(Meanwhile Joseph enters, in an army uniform, with soldier's equipment, steel helmet, rifle etc.

He joins the soldiers' march.

Among the soldiers Rubi and Max are most prominent.

Slowly the soldier chorus exits. We hear the marching voices from the distance. We will hear the march until the beginning of scene XXII.

Joseph alone, marches towards the audience, begins smiling until his face becomes spasmodic.

As he marches scene XXII takes place)

XXII: THE GATE

(Joseph, gate keeper)

Joseph: ... A gate descends in front of me

(A gate descends)

And in front of the gate stands the gate keeper

(Gate keeper with all his gear, not as he was in scene I,  
enters)

And the keeper stands erect and says:

Sir, the gate is yours

Gate keeper: (Presents his weapon) "Sir, the gate is yours"

Joseph: He opens the gate in front of me

(soldier shoulders his weapon and opens gate)

Why didn't I enter through my gate? ...

(Keeper exits as he pushes gate in front of him. Lights  
off.)

Joseph, all that time, marches on his place, the march  
turning into a quicker and more difficult running. Lights  
on Joseph's face.

Lights off. Darkness.)

THE END