

# The Sudden Madness of Friedrich Nietzsche

by David McQueen and William McMurtrie



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Script 16/03/2017 - rehearsal 6



Start soundtrack at 7.15pm

7.32pm cast take their places

Binswanger in chair 10, nurse Cosima/Brockhaus/chair 9,  
Tailor's assistant, Wagner's children, students chair 8,  
Wagner, Wenzel, old academic soldier etc. chair 7,  
Elisabeth chair 6, Nietzsche chair 5, Overbeck/Rée chair  
4,. [Chair 3 empty] Narrator/Lou chair 2,

**NARRATOR:**

In May 1882 a Russian 22 year-old woman by the name of Lou Salome was photographed in the Jules Bonnet studio in Lucerne, Switzerland with two men. The two men were friends at this time and they had both separately, on more than one occasion, proposed to Lou Salome. She had rejected them as she would reject many other men in her life. To celebrate their 'unholy trinity' as one of the men called it, they stood together by a cart for the infamous photograph. Lou Salome was posed on the cart with the two men holding reins as if they were horses.

**NIETZSCHE**

When thou goest to woman, take thy whip.

Nietzsche is guided by 'nurse' to chair 1 on the apron and remains behind the patient.

**NARRATOR:**

Eight years later, in 1890 one of these men found himself under the care of one Professor Otto Binswanger, Director of Psychology at the Sanatorium at Jena University in Germany, where he lectured to the University's medical students.

Binswanger stands. Nurse stands by chair 9 to answer him.

**NURSE**

Good evening Dr. Binswanger.

**BINSWANGER**

Good evening. Is our patient here?

**NURSE**

Yes doctor, he's in the auditorium.

**BINSWANGER**

Not agitated?

**NURSE**

No, quite calm.

**BINSWANGER**

Thank you.

Nurse sits down (chair - 9). Binswanger behind chair 1

**BINSWANGER**

Gentlemen, today I shall present to you a forty-four year old male patient who has been under our care for eleven months now. He was transferred from the Basel Institute on the 18<sup>th</sup> January with a diagnosis of paresis paralytica. Initially we concurred. Common symptoms of general paralysis of the insane were evident, including episodes of extreme disturbance, mania, delusions of grandeur, feelings of persecution ..and paranoia - all typical of the disease.

..The immediate diagnosis of general paresis was confirmed by a small scar on the sexual organ, evidence of an early syphilitic chancre. The patient frequently reports violent hemicranias consistent with advanced syphilis.

The patient often complains of supraorbital neuralgia also consistent with syphilis. Now, gentlemen. What other signs should we be looking for?

Jurgen?

**JURGEN (CHAIR 7)**

The tongue. Trembling of the tongue.

**BINSWANGER**

Good. We would expect to see trembling of the tongue in any case of dementia paralytica. Professor, could you stick out your tongue for us, please?

Professor? Your tongue.

**NIETZSCHE**

My tongue?

**BINSWANGER**

Your tongue. Please stick out your tongue.

Further please, as far as you can manage.

Elizabeth (stage right- from 3) stands at front of stage and reads something she has been writing to audience.

**ELIZABETH**

In the autumn of 1864, my brother began his university life in Bonn, and studied philology and theology; at the end of six months he gave up theology, and in the autumn of 1865 followed his famous teacher Ritschl to the University of Leipzig. There he became an ardent philologist, and diligently sought to acquire a masterly grasp of this branch of knowledge.

It was in the role of a lecturer on

the 18th January 1866, that he made his first appearance in public, before the philological society he had helped to found in Leipzig. The paper he read disclosed his investigations on the subject of Theognis the moralist and aristocrat, who, as is well known, described and dismissed the plebeians of his time in terms of the heartiest contempt.

The aristocratic ideal, which was always so dear to my brother, thus revealed itself for the first time. Moreover, curiously enough, it was *precisely* this scientific thesis which was the cause of Ritschl's recognition of my brother and fondness for him.

The amount of work my brother succeeded in accomplishing, during his student days, really seems almost incredible. But in those days, as he himself declares, he still possessed the constitution of a bear. He knew neither what headaches nor indigestion meant, and, despite his short sight, his eyes were able to endure the greatest strain without giving him the smallest trouble

That is why, regardless of interrupting his studies for two years, he was *so glad* at the thought of military service in the forthcoming autumn of 1867; for he was particularly anxious to discover some means of employing his bodily strength.

He discharged his duties as a soldier with the *utmost* mental and physical freshness, and was the crack rider among the recruits of his year.

However, while mounting his horse one day, the beast, which was an uncommonly restive one, suddenly reared, and, causing him to strike his chest sharply against the pommel of the saddle, threw him to the ground. My brother then made a second attempt to mount, and succeeded this

time, notwithstanding the fact that he had severely sprained and torn two muscles in his chest, and had seriously bruised the adjacent ribs.

For a whole day he did his utmost to pay no heed to the injury, and to overcome the pain it caused him; but in the end he fell unconscious, and a dangerously acute inflammation of the injured tissues was the result.

He was sincerely sorry when, owing to this accident, he was compelled to leave the colours before the completion of his service. As a result of this accident he had his first dangerous illness.

Elizabeth moves Friedrich from the front apron (1) to the 'bed' (5). She sits on his left (6). Rée (4) stands and moves to far stage right corner (to return as Overbeck).

#### NARRATOR

Leipzig November 1868. Twenty-two year old Elisabeth Nietzsche tends to her brother. She administers a small dose of laudanum for the pain he is experiencing.

#### ELISABETH

Right out.

..Slowly.

Elisabeth smooths back his hair and rests the back of her finger on his chest.

#### ELISABETH

No temperature. Good.

Franz Overbeck enters stage right and stands looking at Nietzsche. Nietzsche's eyes are closed, he is dozing.

#### OVERBECK

How is our patient today Elizabeth?

ELISABETH

Slowly on the mend Franz, thank God.

OVERBECK

I hope you are still keeping your distance from horses.

NIETZSCHE

You've nothing better to do than come here and torment me?

OVERBECK

Ah, fighting talk. Good.

Overbeck sits next to Nietzsche's bed (4). Nietzsche's eyes remain closed.

Well, your military career may be over but you are still in demand.

NIETZSCHE

No lectures, please.

OVERBECK

No, this is an *invitation*.

NIETZSCHE

Who?

OVERBECK

Well, let's say he got past the border guards again...  
And he's staying with his sister at the Brockhaus's, here in Leipzig...  
And he wants to meet you.

Nietzsche's eyes are now open looking at Overbeck.

ELISABETH

Who is it?

NIETZSCHE

Richard Wagner.

OVERBECK

Who else?

ELISABETH

But won't they arrest him?

OVERBECK

If they catch him, yes!

ELISABETH

And he wants to meet *Friedrich*?

OVERBECK

Yes.

ELISABETH

Why? How did he find out about you?

NIETZSCHE

When?

OVERBECK

Tonight.

ELISABETH

Tonight?

NIETZSCHE

Help me up.

OVERBECK

See? I said you were malingering.

NIETZSCHE

I'll need my suit from the tailor.

He makes an effort to stand the pain dulled by the opiate as he struggles to straighten himself. Overbeck and Elizabeth remain seated.

OVERBECK

There you go!

ELISABETH

Stop. You must rest! How did Richard Wagner [...]?

NIETZSCHE

No, I need to move. I'm well enough to go and I need to get out of this room.

ELISABETH

I don't understand. Fritz, please lie down.

OVERBECK

Your brother has been summoned Elisabeth.

ELISABETH

Well, if they catch you consorting with Richard Wagner they'll throw you out of the university.

NIETZSCHE

I don't think so. He has too many friends in high places now.

OVERBECK

They *will* arrest him if his presence the city becomes public. We're all sworn to secrecy.

**ELISABETH**

No. This is one of your jokes.

**OVERBECK**

I wouldn't joke about something like this Elizabeth.

He turns to Nietzsche.

This could be a real break for you.

**NIETZSCHE**

I must get dressed.

**ELISABETH**

Save your strength. I'll get your suit.

Elizabeth stands. Nietzsche speaks to Overbeck.

**NIETZSCHE**

Why?

**OVERBECK**

I'm not sure. What can you offer him?

Nietzsche stands up and moves to front apron (1) and sits again.

Back in the BINSWANGER INSTITUTE Nietzsche's tongue is still out.

**BISWANGER INSTITUTE: JENA 1890**

**BINSWANGER**

Note that there is no trembling of the tongue gentlemen. Indeed, no hyperactive tendon reflexes at all. Unusual, if not unheard of in late syphilis.

This was the first indication that our initial diagnosis might be wrong. So, what could we have here?

Wenzel?

**WENZEL (7)**

Meningioma?

**BINSWANGER**

Very good. Such a brain tumor might explain the headaches, personality disorders and weakness in the arms.

And you will also note there is asymmetry in the pupils of the eyes - the right pupil is larger than the left - a typical symptom of parietic syphilis, but perhaps also of a tumor.

What do we make of this gentlemen? Many of the symptoms of general paresis, but no trembling of the tongue. And the patient does not suffer slurring of speech, although he rarely talks.

The patient is staying with us in the second-class ward, but was, at one time, Professor of Philology at Basel. He was considered an original thinker before he lost his mind. I have read a little of this work over the last few months and I note traces of megalomania in some of his writings. So, the onset of this disease may have begun many years ago.

His name is Professor Friedrich Nietzsche. His name was at one time associated with the late Richard Wagner.

Herr Professor do you remember Herr Wagner?

**NIETZSCHE**

My suit. I must fetch my suit.

**BINSWANGER**

Sorry Professor, what's that about a suit? Are you cold?

**NIETZSCHE**

Thank you Elisabeth.

**BINSWANGER**

Who is Elisabeth Professor?

Elizabeth stands and moves close to front stage, reading to audience.

## ELIZABETH

The whole of his Leipzig days proved of the utmost importance to my brother's career. There he was plunged into the very midst of a torrent of intellectual influences which found an impressionable medium in the fiery youth.

The influences that exercised power over him in those days may be described in the three following terms: Hellenism, Schopenhauer, Wagner.

His love of Hellenism certainly led him to philology, but philology in itself, with its splendid method and thorough way of studying classical texts, served him only as a means to an end.

If Hellenism was the first strong influence which obtained a sway over my brother, in the winter of 1865-66, a completely new, and therefore somewhat subversive, influence was introduced into his life with Schopenhauer's philosophy.

When he reached Leipzig in the autumn of 1865, he was very downcast; for the experiences that had befallen him during his one year of student life in Bonn had deeply depressed him. He had sought at first to adapt himself to the students and life there, with the hope of ultimately elevating them to his lofty views on things; but both these efforts proved vain.

Now he had come to Leipzig with the purpose of framing his own manner of life.

It can easily be imagined how the first reading of Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Idea* worked upon this man, still stinging from the bitterest experiences and disappointments. He writes:

Nietzsche stands (1).

**NIETZSCHE**

"Here I saw a mirror in  
which I espied the world, life, and  
my own nature depicted with frightful  
grandeur."

He moves back to (5).

**ELIZABETH**

As my brother, from his very earliest  
childhood, had always missed both the  
parent and the educator through our  
father's untimely death, he began to  
regard Schopenhauer with almost  
filial love and respect. Indeed my  
brother's bonds to the men he most  
respected, whether as thinkers or  
men, most likely all had their  
foundation in that sad loss which  
cast its deep shadow so early across  
our family.

Only Elizabeth standing.

**INT. TAILOR'S SHOP, LEIPZIG 1868. EARLY EVENING**

**NARRATOR**

Leipzig 1868. It is a cold, sleety  
evening outside and Elisabeth brushes  
some flakes of snow from her cape as  
she enters a tailor's shop. Inside  
there are four tables with men at  
sewing machines working on suits.

**ELISABETH**

I've come to collect a suit for Herr  
Nietzsche.

**TAILOR (7)**

My apologies, it isn't ready yet  
ma'am.

**ELISABETH**

Sorry?

**TAILOR**

Yes, there's some stitching to do on  
the jacket. We should be finished by  
tomorrow.

ELISABETH

What is your name?

TAILOR

Grenz. The *proprietor*.

ELISABETH

My name is Elisabeth Nietzsche and my brother, Friedrich Nietzsche of Leipzig University, is meeting Herr *Richard Wagner* in three hours. Have you heard the name *Wagner*, Herr Grenz? It would be a sad reflection on your establishment if the tardiness of your workmen were to prevent this meeting. And I would make it my business that this became known.

TAILOR

Gustav? How soon can Herr Nietzsche's jacket be made ready?

ASSISTANT (GUSTAV) (8)

An hour or so, if I drop everything else.

TAILOR

My man will bring it to Herr Nietzsche's apartment as soon as possible.

ELISABETH

No later than six.

TAILOR

We will do our best, Frau Nietzsche.

ELISABETH

No, Herr Grenz. You will deliver it by six o'clock.

Elizabeth front stage to read to audience.

ELIZABETH

In October 1868, my brother returned to his studies in Leipzig with double joy. These were his plans: to get his doctor's degree as soon as possible; to proceed to Paris, Italy, and Greece, make a lengthy stay in each place, and then to return to Leipzig in order to settle there as an Associate Professor.

All these plans were, however, suddenly frustrated owing to his premature call to the University of Basle, where he was invited to assume the duties of professor.

Now Ritschl, who had early recognised my brother's extraordinary talents, must have written a letter of such enthusiastic praise to the university (" Nietzsche is a genius: he can do whatever he chooses to put his mind to "), that one of the more cautious members of the council is said to have observed:

**ACADEMIC (QUAVERING) (7 DAVID)**

"If the proposed candidate be really such a genius, then it were better we did not appoint him; for, in any case, he would only stay a short time at our little University of Basle.

Elisabeth moves back to (3).

**NARRATOR**

Back in Nietzsche's lodgings in Leipzig, it is nearly six o'clock. The sleet has now turned to heavy rain outside. There is a faint tinkling sound of a doorbell.

**OVERBECK**

It's a good thing we sent Elisabeth, Friedrich.

**NIETZSCHE**

It can't be often that they are visited by a Medusa.

**ELISABETH**

He tried to ignore me. So I lost my temper!

Overbeck leans out of the window and shouts...

**OVERBECK**

Hoy! Are you from the tailor's?

ASSISTANT (GUSTAV) (8)

Yes sir!

OVERBECK

You're soaked man. How long were you waiting out there?

ASSISTANT (GUSTAV)

A while, sir.

NIETZSCHE

Let's see the suit then.

TAILOR'S ASSISTANT

A good fit, sir.

NIETZSCHE

Yes it is, isn't it?

Elisabeth nods in approval.

The tailor helps him take the jacket off. The assistant presents Nietzsche with a bill.

NIETZSCHE

What's this?

TAILOR'S ASSISTANT

The bill for the suit, sir.

NIETZSCHE

Thank you.

TAILOR'S ASSISTANT

I'm to collect payment, Herr Nietzsche.

NIETZSCHE

I have nothing to do with you. I will make payment to the tailor from whom I ordered the suit.

TAILOR'S ASSISTANT

I was clearly instructed to collect the money on delivery of the suit, sir.

**NARRATOR**

Nietzsche reaches out for the suit trousers to put them back on, but the assistant keeps hold of them. Elisabeth cannot help turning to see what is happening. They tussle for a moment but Nietzsche is left in his shirt-tails without trousers.

**NIETZSCHE**

You will regret this insolence. Tell your master that he can keep his suit. It is of no use to me unless I can have it now.

Tell him that I will not forget the manner in which his errand boy has treated me tonight!

Overbeck laughs.

**ELISABETH**

Franz, you just stood there! Why didn't you stop him?

**OVERBECK**

Wagner's come to meet Friedrich, not to see his new suit.

Nietzsche sits back in the sofa (5)

**NIETZSCHE**

Well, it looks as if I'll be wearing these rags after all.

**EXT. BROCKHAUS HOME, LEIPZIG. NIGHT.**

**NARRATOR**

Two hours later Nietzsche and Overbeck are outside the Brockhaus's home. Overbeck gives Nietzsche's coat a flick on the shoulders and rings the bell.

The door is opened and an enormous black dog rushes forward and leaps up at Nietzsche, who winces in pain and moves as if to kick the dog away. The dog is restrained by FRAU BROCKHAUS.

OVERBECK

I think he likes you.

FRAU BROCKHAUS. (9)

Russ. Enough! Good evening Franz!

NARRATOR

Nietzsche looks down at his clothes besmirched with pawmarks. Overbeck takes his arm and leads him gently into the room..

FRAU BROCKHAUS.

I'm sorry about that Herr Nietzsche, Russ is a little overfriendly.

Richard, this is Dr. Franz Overbeck a colleague of my husband at the university. ..And Herr Friedrich Nietzsche, studying, but also lecturing now here in Leipzig.

OVERBECK

A great pleasure to make your acquaintance sir.

NARRATOR

Nietzsche clicks his heels and bows slightly, military style (despite the pain this causes).

NIETZSCHE

Good evening, Herr Wagner.

WAGNER (7)

But there's nothing good about it - it's perfectly rotten! Please come through, you'll catch your death in this hall. How do you stand this cold Oattie?

FRAU BROCKHAUS

We'll be sure to arrange more clement weather for your lordship's next visit.

**WAGNER**

As you can see gentlemen, Russ's enthusiasm for strangers makes him a perfectly hopeless guard dog.

**NARRATOR**

Nietzsche eyes the dog warily as they go through to the parlour.

In the parlour the men enjoy several drinks and Wagner plays one of his compositions at a snail's pace. The others laugh as Wagner impersonates a conductor exaggerating a gruff Saxon accent:

**WAGNER**

For the love of all that is holy, no for the love of humanity - we have some *passion* coming up, and so all of you: more *passion* please!

**NARRATOR**

The music is played at a much faster pace to everyone's amusement. Oattie refills Franz and Nietzsche's glasses as they sit back at the dining-table, with Wagner at the head. The dog's head is in Wagner's lap. Oattie carries out a tray of empty bottles.

**WAGNER**

So Friedrich, this post at Basel?

**NIETZSCHE**

It's a vacancy for Professor of Classical Philology. I have applied, but it's a role I might be suitable for in five or ten years. They wouldn't take someone with so little experience.

**WAGNER**

Nonsense. We do some of our best work in our twenties while we have fire in our belly, believe me. Franz tells me you are published. Great work he says. Your lectures well attended, you set up that club..

**NIETZSCHE**

Well yes.

**WAGNER**

Basle is a backwater. They need fresh blood.

NIETZSCHE

You're very kind.

WAGNER

I'd put in a good word, if it made any difference. But it might have the opposite effect!

NIETZSCHE

Your name is known across Europe.

WAGNER

But for all the wrong reasons, Friedrich. I have to skulk around begging for funds even to have my work performed. Believe me, being a fugitive is an expensive business.

OVERBECK

The world needs to hear your opera. Now, more than ever.

WAGNER

Not operas. I shall write no more operas. These are dramas.

NIETZSCHE

Our nation is in a deep sleep. But your music has the power to rouse it, to heal us of our pessimism. To revive our will.

WAGNER

The will to life. Schopenhauer understood how music captures that in ways that words never can. Beyond reason, beyond logic, beyond science - to the thing, to the very idea itself.

NIETZSCHE

That unstoppable will to life in Tristan.

WAGNER

Precisely!

NIETZSCHE

Music can open up to us the most secret sense of these things - a kind of pure understanding.

WAGNER

Yes! If we surrender to it.

**NIETZSCHE**

If we commit to music, if we allow ourselves to be truly shaken by it we are no longer alone. We become united, we become *fused* with our fellow man.

Through your music we are united. We come together as Germans, as Europeans, as humans.

**WAGNER**

This is my highest aim Friedrich. And in this perhaps you two can be my secret allies!

**NIETZSCHE**

I have friends in a newspaper. I could contribute something... perhaps a column of some kind?

**WAGNER**

Excellent! You must come to our house in Tribschen to discuss this. On your way to that job in Basel! It will break up the journey and we have plenty of space, fine views of a lake. You can work undisturbed. You'll need a rest and you are welcome!

Nietzsche looks at Overbeck in discreet triumph. They raise their glasses to each other.

**INT. NIETZSCHE'S LODGINGS, LEIPZIG, NIGHT.**

**NARRATOR**

Back in Nietzsche's lodgings, it is late and Elisabeth sits alone in silence at the window. The fire is now down to a few glowing embers and Elisabeth stirs it with a poker. She takes a blanket from the back of a sofa and wraps it around her shoulders. She moves to the window and looks down at the empty street.

INT. BROCKHAUS HOME, LEIPZIG. NIGHT.

NARRATOR

It is midnight at the Brockhaus's home. Wagner leads the men through the house to a conservatory. They each carry a candle and have drunk a fair amount of wine:

NIETZSCHE

.. the Greeks yearned for nothing more than to return to the lives they had left. No matter how much they suffered..

OVERBECK

Not like our Christian souls who simply can't wait to get away!

Wagner stands

WAGNER

Now a soul ...is a possession I may be lacking. Do you know why? Because I have the courage, on a cold, bright night, to look up at the sky .. and see nothing but stars.

OVERBECK

*'The vast silence of these infinite spaces terrifies me'.*

Wagner recognizes the quote and points at Overbeck

WAGNER

Pascal.

NIETZSCHE

Faith as no more than a failure of courage, a failure of nerve.

WAGNER

And nerve is what artists must depend on, isn't that right Friedrich?

NARRATOR

Much later, back at Nietzsche's lodgings. Nietzsche enters and moves over towards Elisabeth who is asleep by the window. He kisses her cheek and she 'wakes'.

ELISABETH

How did it go?

NIETZSCHE

He wants me to write for him.

ELISABETH

Oh, that's wonderful!

NIETZSCHE

Yes. His damned dog jumped up all over me when we arrived.

He laughs quietly, but this hurts.

.. so it's a good thing I didn't pay for the suit.

ELIZABETH

He jumped up on you! You must rest or this will not heal.

Nietzsche is led to his bed (5) by Elizabeth.

NIETZSCHE

He asked me to write for him. He said I could be his 'secret ally' whatever that means. He wants me to write a column, once a month at least, once a week even. I'd be his official publicist.

ELIZABETH

Oh Fritz, that's just fantastic! Just think what this could do for your career.

NIETZSCHE

I think even Overbeck was surprised how well it went. We have been invited to his house in Switzerland. He said he wants to meet you.

ELIZABETH

Me?

Elizabeth moves to front of stage. Elizabeth, to audience (from the Introduction to the Birth of Tragedy):

ELIZABETH

'Now, in the autumn of 1865, to these two influences, Hellenism and Schopenhauer, a third influence was added one which was to prove the strongest ever exercised over my brother and it began with his personal introduction to Richard Wagner.

For years, my brother had been a passionate admirer of Wagner's music;

but now that the artist himself entered upon the scene of his life, with the whole fascinating strength of his strong will, my brother felt that he was in the presence of a being whom he, of all modern men, resembled most in regard to force of character.

Again, in the case of Richard Wagner, my brother, from the first, laid the utmost stress upon the man's personality, and could only regard his works and views as an expression of the artist's whole being, despite the fact that he by no means understood every one of those works at that time.

My brother was the first who ever manifested such enthusiastic affection for Schopenhauer and Wagner, and he was also the first of that numerous band of young followers who ultimately inscribed the two great names upon their banner.

Nietzsche moves to (1).

Whether Schopenhauer and Wagner ever really corresponded to the glorified pictures my brother painted of them, both in his letters and other writings, is a question which we can no longer answer in the affirmative

Perhaps what he saw in them was only what he himself wished to be some day'.

Elisabeth sits (3)

**BINSWANGER INSTITUTE**

**BINSWANGER (VOICE)**

Note the limited movement or expression around the face, although not entirely expressionless. There is also some weakness of the extremities. Could the patient raise his arms please?

There is no movement from Nietzsche. Binswanger comes

over to him and asks again, this time more kindly.

**BINSWANGER**

Professor, could you raise your arms?

With some effort Nietzsche raises his arms. Binswanger motions to the nurse who unbuttons Nietzsche' top 4 shirt buttons.

**BINSWANGER**

Note, unusually, a total absence of gummata, no rashes or spots. A scar here is from an injury the patient sustained in military training in his early twenties. Shortly after this injury the Professor was introduced to Herr Wagner.

At one time their relationship was very strong. He spent a lot of time at his house and wrote long essays praising his work. Professor do you remember meeting Richard Wagner? Professor...?

Nietzsche does not respond. Binswanger sits.

Nietzsche moves to (4) and moves close to Elisabeth (3) as if on piano. Wagner to (5), Ree to (9), Cosima to (6).

**INT. WAGNER'S HOUSE TRIBSCHEN. DAY.**

**NARRATOR**

Tribschen, Switzerland. December 1869.

A large salon where we hear laughter as Elisabeth and Nietzsche play a duet on the piano in the Wagner's house.

They play well together with the odd comic touch from Nietzsche and mock stern reaction from Elisabeth who shoots disapproving glances at the children, provoking more laughter. At the end of the piece there is applause from Wagner, and from Cosima, who has a three year old child EVA by her side, and a young baby SIEGFRIED in her arms. Three older children DANIELA (ten), BLANDINE (seven), and ISOLDE (five) sit close to the piano. DANIELA speaks to Cosima.

DANIELA (8)

Mama, can Aunt Elisabeth play another Christmas song?

COSIMA

No Daniela, it's time for bed.

ISOLDE (8)

Papa, just one more!

WAGNER

Isolde what did your mother just say?

COSIMA

Children, tomorrow the *Weihnachstmann* will be asking if you were good this year. What shall I tell him?

BLANDINE (8)

That we were good!

COSIMA

Then straight to bed.

BLANDINE, DANIELLA (8)

Yes, mama..

NARRATOR

A governess standing nearby leads the children away, carrying Eva with her. Cosima passes the baby to a second nanny. Russ, the dog, smells Nietzsche who strokes him affectionately.

NIETZSCHE

Russ, you are a very fine hound. I'm thinking of getting a dog you know.

COSIMA

What kind would you get Friedrich?

NIETZSCHE

I'd quite like a great dane.

WAGNER

I think a spaniel would be more suitable to a man of your circumstances.

COSIMA

Or a poodle.

Elisabeth laughs, Nietzsche shoots her a disapproving look.

WAGNER

Friedrich, Elisabeth. Have you ever walked barefoot in the snow?

COSIMA

Richard! It's late.

WAGNER

You must rest, my treasure. But my young friend here will not escape so easily.

Elisabeth and Cosima stand front stage.

EXT. TRIBSCHEN GARDEN. NIGHT.

NARRATOR

A garden snowscape overlooking a huge frozen lake. Outside, Wagner and Nietzsche march barefoot in the snow. Friedrich tries to hide the fact that it is agony. Wagner sings a rousing march that Nietzsche has trouble following. Elisabeth watches them from the patio doorway. Cosima feels the cold draught coming from the open door and reaches forward to close it.

COSIMA

You love him very much, don't you?

ELISABETH

Who?

COSIMA

Your brother.

ELISABETH

Of course! We have always been close.

COSIMA

You are lucky. So many families fall apart.

ELISABETH

Not Fritz and I. We used to play together every day as children. I think I was the only one in Naumburg who understood him.

COSIMA

Not many men become professors at twenty-six, Elisabeth. He could go very far.

ELISABETH

I've always believed he would.

COSIMA

But great men sometimes need someone else to bring that greatness to life. To nurture it.

ELISABETH

What do you mean?

COSIMA

Richard would not survive if I allowed everyone who wanted to visit him through our door. I help make a space where he can work undisturbed. Then I arrange for him meet the right people when required.

ELISABETH

Friedrich hates being disturbed when he is working.

COSIMA

Do you think he is likely to marry?

ELISABETH

Friedrich? No!

COSIMA

You seem very certain..

ELISABETH

Friedrich could not bear children around him all the time.

COSIMA

Then he must find someone else who understands him.

ELISABETH

Do you mean me?

COSIMA

Would you sacrifice your own happiness to help bring your brother fame?

Elisabeth looks out at her brother.

**EXT. TRIBSCHEN GARDEN, NIGHT.**

Nietzsche and Wagner half-march, half-run back to the house and up the stairs, laughing.

Cosima sits in (5), Wagner in (4), Nietzsche in (3), child in (6), Elisabeth in (8).

## BEDROOM AT TRIBSCHEN, EARLY MORNING

### NARRATOR

It is Christmas morning in Tribschen. Nietzsche is half awake, coughing. The door is thrown open by Wagner who enters dressed in black satin pants and black velvet painter's beret with a sack and a stout stick in his hand. He puts his finger up to his mouth indicating quiet. Nietzsche stifles a cough. Wagner throws the stick and sack on the bed. He pulls a red and white outfit and a crude white beard out of the sack.

Wagner now wearing beret (from sack under 5) gives Nietzsche a Father Christmas hat.

### WAGNER

Put this on and come out quickly.

### NARRATOR

Wagner steps out of the room. Nietzsche dresses quickly and adds two parcels to the sack. Dressed now as Saint Nicholas with his sack and stick, and his dark moustache clashing ludicrously with the white beard, Nietzsche emerges onto the landing to find thirteen musicians waiting, bows poised.. Elisabeth emerges from another room. Daniela, the older child, is also awake, standing next to her father on the landing with a package in her arms. Wagner again holds his left forefinger to his lips and raises his right like a baton. He drops his hand with a flourish and the orchestra start playing the Siegfried Idyll. Another bedroom door opens. Woken by the music - sleepy Blandine, Isolde and tiny Eva look out. Their eyes widen with fear as they see Nietzsche in front of them. Wagner opens the door to Cosima's bedroom and he and Daniela walk slowly in, as the music plays, beckoning the rest (Elisabeth, Nietzsche and the children) to follow. Cosima is sitting upright in bed against an array of pillows, smiling. Daniela hands Cosima the

package, which she unwraps  
reverentially.

**COSIMA** (looking radiant)  
If I were to die now I would enter  
heaven in perfect happiness.

**NARRATOR**  
Wagner kisses Cosima.. The children  
now stand around Nietzsche with an  
attitude of fascination and terror.

**WAGNER**  
What must you say Blandine?

**ALL CHILDREN**  
Dear Father Nicholas,  
Please don't look at me so crossly.  
Put away your rod,  
I promise I will always be good.

**NIETZSCHE**  
But have they been good, Herr Wagner?

**WAGNER**  
I don't know. What do you say mother?

**COSIMA**  
...Yes, of course they have been very  
good.

**NIETZSCHE**  
In that case, I won't need this  
stick.

**NARRATOR**  
He gives presents to all the children  
from the bag. Then he takes a wrapped  
gift from the sack and gives it to  
Wagner and another to Cosima.

**WAGNER**  
What's this?

**NIETZSCHE**  
I thought you might like it.

**NARRATOR**  
Wagner unwraps a framed sketch by  
Dürer of a knight slaying a dragon.

**WAGNER**  
Friedrich. It's magnificent.

**COSIMA**  
And what is this?

#### NARRATOR

She unwraps a bound copy of a book. The title reads 'The Birth of Tragedy' by Professor Friedrich Nietzsche. She places the book on a sidetable as the children climb onto her bed.

Nietzsche walk to front of stage. To audience

#### NIETZSCHE

If someone were to transform Beethoven's Ode to Joy into a painting and not restrain his imagination when millions of people sink dramatically into the dust, then we could come close to the Dionysian.

Now is the slave a free man, now all the stiff, hostile barriers break apart, those things which necessity and arbitrary power or "saucy fashion" have established between men. Now, with the gospel of world harmony, every man feels himself not only united with his neighbour, reconciled and fused together, but also as if the veil of Maja has been ripped apart, with only scraps fluttering around before the mysterious original unity. Singing and dancing, man expresses himself as a member of a higher unity. He has forgotten how to walk and talk and is on the verge of flying up into the air as he dances. The enchantment speaks out in his gestures. Just as the animals speak and the earth gives milk and honey, so now something supernatural echoes out of him. He feels himself a god. He now moves in a lofty ecstasy, as he saw the gods move in his dream.

The man is no longer an artist. He has become a work of art. The artistic power of all of nature, the rhapsodic satisfaction of the primordial unity, reveals itself here

in the intoxicated performance. The finest clay, the most expensive marble—man—is here worked and chiseled, and the cry of the Eleusianian mysteries rings out to the chisel blows of the Dionysian world artist: "Do you fall down, you millions? World, do you have a sense of your creator?"

Nietzsche sits in (1) Wagner in 7, Nurse seat 9.

#### BINSWANGER INSTITUTE

##### BINSWANGER

Professor do you hear me? Can you remember meeting Richard Wagner?

Nietzsche looks directly at Binswanger, for the first time with clarity.

##### NIETZSCHE

No.

Binswanger addresses Nietzsche and his audience whilst holding a copy of a slim book whose title we do not see.

##### BINSWANGER

Professor, this work, *The Birth of Tragedy*, is dedicated to Herr Wagner and in your preface you call him 'my esteemed friend'.

After a pause there seems a slight movement of Nietzsche's head, neither shaking nor nodding clearly.

You compared Herr Wagner to Bach and Beethoven as amongst Germany's greatest artists. You were a great admirer were you not? Perhaps even a 'disciple'?

In fact, you ingratiated yourself calling him 'Master' as if he was the Professor and you the student. You ran errands for him and his wife, promoted his work, offered to leave

your post to work full time as his champion. You helped raise thousands of thalers for Bayreuth which became a temple for his music.

But some years later you changed your mind about 'the Master'. Wagner became an enemy and he and his music, the whole Bayreuth project, attacked in books and essays. Why was that?

Nietzsche remains silent.

Professor? What happened between you?

More silence.

Professor, did you eat breakfast this morning?

**NIETZSCHE**

It was my wife Cosima who brought me here.

**BINSWANGER**

Cosima? Herr Wagner's wife?

Binswanger waves his hand at the side of Nietzsche's right eye. There is no response.

Cosima Wagner brought you here?

Binswanger signals to a nurse to bring a pendant gaslamp, lit, from behind and to Nietzsche's right side.

Cosima Wagner?

The Professor hears, but does not understand.

The lamp is brought close to Nietzsche's right ear but even when the flame is close he seems unaware of it.

Note the right pupil is enlarged and constricts more slowly in response to light. A possible symptom of parietic syphilis. The patient is functionally blind in his right eye.

Binswanger signals the nurse to move around the back of the patient to his left side. Nietzsche notices the light and as it is brought closer he reacts and shields his

eye and face with his hand

**BINSWANGER**

But there is sight in his left eye,  
and evidence of photophobia. Strong  
light sources disturb the patient.  
Possible symptoms of what condition  
gentlemen?

A student puts up his hand.

Walter?

**WALTER (8)**

Sensitivity to light is a symptom of  
syphilitic aseptic meningitis.

**BINSWANGER**

Good. Other symptoms we should be  
alert to in that case?

**WALTER**

Seizures, headaches, nausea and  
vomiting, neck pain, sensitivity to  
loud noises.. an inability to  
communicate.

Binswanger walks to a lectern placing the book there.

**BINSWANGER**

Correct. But there is another  
possibility. Tabes dorsalis -  
syphilitic myelopathy.

Binswanger is not looking at the audience at this point,  
studying the book in front of him.

Symptoms? Wenzel?

Binswanger still not looking at the audience. Wenzel  
lowers his hand with a glance at the others.

**WENZEL (7)**

Loss of coordination,  
pain.. difficulty walking

He turns to Nietzsche.

**BINSWANGER**

Yes. Could you walk a little for us  
today, Professor?

Nietzsche continues to sit. Binswanger approaches closer  
until he is very close. Quietly, he asks again.

Could you walk a few steps for us?

**NIETZSCHE**

Yes.

He stands and walks very slowly.

**BINSWANGER**

He understands this simple instruction perfectly. Now, Professor, an old soldier like you will surely be able to march correctly!

Nietzsche begins marching and we see that there is some odd disturbance in his gait, the right side affected by a stroke. The memory of his military time has a stimulating effect on him. He paces the room with a firm stride.

Nietzsche sits in (5)

**NARRATOR**

We are in Basle, 1870. Nietzsche, is reading a newspaper as he climbs the stairs to his apartment. He stops and brings the paper closer to his face to make out the words under a headline 'France Declares War'. He opens the door to his apartment and enters.

**INT. NIETZSCHE'S LODGINGS, BASLE. DAY. 1870.**

**ELISABETH**

Well, is it true?

**NIETZSCHE**

Yes, if you can believe anything in this rag. It seems a single telegram has plunged two nations into war.

**ELISABETH**

What are you going to do?

**NIETZSCHE**

What am I going to do? What can any man do if the French are cussed enough to crown another Bonaparte?

ELISABETH

Could you enlist?

NIETZSCHE

They need soldiers, not invalids  
Elisabeth.

ELISABETH

The army is recruiting  
administrators, translators, nurses,  
doctors. Germany needs men, like you.

Nietzsche stands and spreads his arms.

NIETZSCHE

Behold the man.

ELISABETH

Friedrich. Mother needs me in  
Naumburg. She's sick and I have to be  
with her. I owe that to her as her  
daughter. I would have thought you  
owe much more to your country.

NIETZSCHE

The University would never let me  
enlist. Precious Swiss neutrality is  
at stake. But they might let me train  
as a medic.

He looks at Elisabeth who comes over to where he is  
standing and hugs him. He accepts the hug, but there is  
no enthusiasm for what lies ahead.

Elisabeth moves to (8); soldier (Stephan) moves to (3).

NARRATOR

We are at a railroad depot near  
Stuttgart, August 1870.  
Soldiers are boarding trains, amidst  
thick smoke, noise of whistles,  
trains shunting, orders shouted.  
Nietzsche in military medic's uniform  
approaches an officer in charge.

NIETZSCHE

Friedrich Nietzsche reporting. I'm  
trying to reach my regiment in Metz.

~~He hands the officer his orders.~~

OFFICER

Very well. Rée, escort this man to

platform four.

**NARRATOR**

PAUL RÉE is wearing the same uniform as Nietzsche. He takes one of Nietzsche's heavy bags which allows him to shake hands.

**RÉE**

Paul Rée. We're in the same regiment.

**NIETZSCHE**

Friedrich Nietzsche. Where have you come from?

**RÉE**

Bartelshagen.

**NIETZSCHE**

Bartelshagen?

**RÉE**

Near Saal. On the Baltic.

**NIETZSCHE**

That's about as far north as you can get and still be German. German enough to enlist, anyway.

**RÉE**

My father's idea, not mine. He thinks it'll make a man of me.

**NARRATOR**

They board a train and take seats after Rée has struggled to put bags on the rack above.

**RÉE**

How on earth did you carry this?

**NIETZSCHE**

They're personal letters for the regiment. I've been made an honorary postman.

**RÉE**

Well, that's more popular than honorary surgeon.

**NIETZSCHE**

Did you do the training in Erlangen?

**RÉE**

A whole fortnight. I'm fully qualified now, they say.

RÉE

You're Thuringian?

NIETZSCHE

Near enough. Saxon - from Naumburg.

RÉE

It's a long ride ahead, we'll need a drink.

Rée takes out a flask and offers it to Nietzsche. He accepts it and takes a swig of the fiery spirit.

NIETZSCHE

Dear God. What's this?

RÉE

Cherry brandy, a local speciality.

NIETZSCHE

I know where to come if we run out of surgical spirit.

RÉE

This, a saw and a litre of morphine should see us through the war.

NIETZSCHE

Is the morphine for us, or the casualties?

RÉE

Yes!

Now, Friedrich.

He stubs out the cigarette.

Do you play cards?

He smiles at Nietzsche and takes out a pack from his pocket. Two of the other soldiers (Stephan (3) and Rolf (6) cheer at the sight of the cards.

NARRATOR

A LARGE, GLOOMY BAR IN WÖRTH AM RHEIN, GERMANY near the French border, 1870, NIGHT.

Rée and Nietzsche are playing cards at a table with the two soldiers (Stephan and Rolf). There is a small pile of money by Rée. Two women leaning against a wall nearby watch the men as they drink. They are

dressed to catch the men's eye, but  
the men ignore them.

RÉE

I think Stephan has the bitch.

STEPHAN

Nice try Rée.

RÉE

Your hand, Friedrich.

Nietzsche, who is drunk, holds the card up to his left  
eye squinting to make them out.

RÉE

If you have a Queen it's time to play  
her.

NIETZSCHE

I can't even see my cards in this  
light. Gentlemen, it was a pleasure  
losing money to you. I bid you  
goodnight.

NARRATOR

He stands unsteadily, collecting his  
few remaining coins. One of the women  
comes over and holds his hand with  
the coins in it. Rée notices she has  
a sore by her mouth. She whispers  
something to Nietzsche. He nods and  
she leads him away up some  
dilapidated stairs. Rée watches them  
leave, and then plays a card, looking  
at the others who are focused on the  
money they are losing. Rée plays a  
Queen of Spades which produces curses  
from the two men.

Rée hears a piano being played  
upstairs. Rolf throws in two more  
coins

RÉE

That's the spirit.

NARRATOR

Rée extinguishes a cigarette, plays  
and wins the hand to more curses from  
Rolf. The music upstairs comes to a

sudden halt. Rée collects his money and stares at the ceiling a little anxiously.

Nietzsche and Rée take their chairs and put them in the centre of stage before sitting in them.

COUNTRY ROAD NEAR METZ, FRANCE, AUGUST 1870, DAY

NARRATOR

A German unit advances in bright sunshine along a lane outside the village of Beuvange, near Metz 1870. ~~There is the sound of artillery in the background.~~ Nietzsche is towards the rear of the short column in a horse-drawn ambulance. He quietly sings the same military tune that Wagner taught him. Rée sits next to him smoking. He offers his flask but Nietzsche waves it away.

The unit passes a farmhouse. One of the horse-drawn military vehicles has stopped and the German soldiers are dragging two young men out of the building. An older man, their father, rushes out the farmhouse doorway protesting in French and brandishing a bread knife. One of the soldiers strikes him down with his rifle butt and takes the knife away. Rée sees all this from the back of their wagon, and Nietzsche, hearing the commotion, sits up. Nietzsche looks at Rée, who indicates by gesture with his thumb that the men have been drinking.

A woman emerges from the farmhouse, shouting angrily at the soldiers; as she approaches, the soldier standing above her prostrate husband slaps her.

The two younger men struggle more fiercely now to defend their parents but the other soldiers turn on them in earnest. In the scuffle one of the young French men is stabbed with a bayonet in the groin and he cries out in pain.

**NIETZSCHE**

Enough!

Ca suffit.

**NARRATOR**

The woman, crying, tries to strike the soldier who stabbed her son. Rée steps in and speaking in French tries to quieten the woman:

**RÉE**

Ne pas interférer - ils vont vous tuer. Ils sont ivres. (check!)

**NARRATOR**

One of the soldiers hears Rée speak French and comes up to him.

**SOLDIER (7)**

Tell them Napoleon's men did this to my village fifty years ago. My grandfather's house was burnt to the ground. Tell them Germany won't stand for another Bonaparte. We're much stronger than before. For every German they kill this time - we'll kill five Frenchmen.

Or women. And tell them if they fight back we will burn them alive in their stinking barns.

**RÉE**

Il dit que si vous vous battez, ils vont vous tuer.

**NARRATOR**

Nietzsche goes to help the wounded teenager lying by his unconscious father. The soldier turns:

**SOLDIER**

Leave him. You'll need your bandages at the front.

**LIGHTS-DOWN**

Very loud sound of shelling.

**LIGHTS-UP**

Paul Rée is writing on script at front of stage (amused by something he has just read): To audience conspiratorially

### RÉE

The brain of many is pickled in scholarship.

Finishes writing, now reads more loudly..

Let us add in passing that patriotism is not very strong in human beings. Few persons are really prepared to sacrifice their fortune or their blood for their country. Rather, if one examines the motives from which the soldiers of an army act, one finds, with the officers in particular, ambition (a desire for distinction) and with the common soldiers, the sense of honor (fear of shame).

Even with the Romans, most of the actions useful to the nation rested not on the presence of an especially strong patriotism, as is commonly supposed but on the fact that great honor was associated with just such actions, and great dishonor with contrary actions.

But selflessness and patriotism are no longer so necessary even in war, now that ambition and the sense of honour render just as good service; non-egoistic feelings are important only for the harmony of the people among themselves. For just this reason, then, it is not selfless dedication that ordinarily gains the decision in conflicts between peoples, and it is not therefore the most selfless peoples who are victorious and survive. Hence, no furthering of non-egoistic feeling can be brought about by natural selection

Sound of heavy shelling

### NARRATOR

A German military medical tent in a rainy meadow, August 1870. Nietzsche is applying bandages, preoccupied. His breathing is labored as he works on the injured soldier and he is

perspiring heavily. Rée is working next to him cutting the trouser leg from an injured soldier. He picks up a saw and prepares to cut.

Nietzsche coughs, a rasping harsh sound.

RÉE

I don't like the sound of that.

NARRATOR

Rée puts down the saw and feels Nietzsche's neck.

RÉE

You are swollen. Open up

NARRATOR

Nietzsche, irritated by Rée's actions stops and opens his mouth. Rée prods his finger down on his tongue.

RÉE

Your tonsils are inflamed. Very nasty.

NARRATOR

Rée wipes his finger on his trousers, then lifts the sleeve of Nietzsche's jacket and reveals a skin lesion.

RÉE

Congratulations, the war's over for you - you're contagious. Go and see Muller, but tell him you think it's diphtheria. You might as well take my flask while you are at it you've been drinking from this.

NIETZSCHE

Is that it? Just two weeks?

RÉE

Count yourself lucky - you might have had shrapnel in your arse like Stephan. Take it!

He forces Nietzsche to take the flask. The sound of distant shelling. Nietzsche walks, then marches behind 1 back and forth.

NIETZSCHE MOVES TOWARDS (1)

**BISWANGER INSTITUTE: JENA 1890**

Nietzsche stops marching, and stares dead ahead.

**BINSWANGER**

There's little recorded of his time in the 1870 war, but he was only at the front a few weeks. He returned with his health broken by severe dysentery and diphtheria.

Binswanger comes and stands next to Nietzsche.

**BINSWANGER**

Gentlemen, it is also likely that the Professor began self-medicating whilst a medic. He developed a taste for opium and chloral hydrate. Chloral is fine if you need to put a horse to sleep, but take it over a decade and it is likely to kill you. His mother is convinced it was what sent him mad. We have to be very careful about offering prognosis where elderly mothers are concerned, but the cocktail of drugs he was taking in the report from Basel in all likelihood contributed to his poor mental state.

Binswanger gently helps Nietzsche sit in (1).

So constant nausea, upset stomachs, lack of sleep, disturbed thoughts. Where do the origins of these ailments lie? Dysentery? Diphtheria? Syphilis? Drug addiction? Are one of these at the root of the Professor's present condition? Or all of them?

Did something happen at the front which affected his body and his mind? Mental disease is very common amongst returning soldiers, as we know, and while he did not fight, who knows what he saw as a medic on the battlefield?

But this is pure speculation. It may be that the origin of his madness lie elsewhere in his family's history.

What is certain is that from 1870 the Professor's health was a constant concern to himself, his friends, family and colleagues. He had to give up his position in Basel and wander Europe looking for a climate that suited his delicate constitution. Something also turned him quite violently against Richard Wagner and his sister Elizabeth.

There may have been other conditions missed in his diagnosis. But he never fully recovered his good health after the war and he entered a slow physical and mental decline that eventually led him here.

Binswanger sits. Nietzsche stands

#### NIETZSCHE

And whoever wants to have fame, must take leave of honour betimes, and practice the difficult art of - going at the right time.

Sour apples are there, no doubt, whose lot is to wait until the last day of autumn: and at the same time they become ripe, yellow, and shrivelled.

To many men life is a failure; a poison-worm gnaws at their heart.

Then let them see to it that their dying is all the more a success.

Many never become sweet; they rot even in the summer. It is cowardice that holds them fast to their branches.

Far too many live, and far too long hang they on their branches.

Would that a storm came and shook all  
this rottenness and worm-eatenness  
from the tree!

#### NARRATOR

BAYREUTH OPERA HOUSE, August 1876  
Brunhilde is riding into the funeral  
pyre. This marks the end of 3 days  
(20 hours) of The Ring and Nietzsche  
is tired, ill and feeling  
claustrophobic..  
The audience rise for an ovation and  
there is thunderous applause.  
Nietzsche and Paul Rée - next to him  
- also applaud, but there is a sense  
of relief, rather than enthusiasm.  
Wagner eventually stands to take a  
bow. Nietzsche stands with difficulty  
and then whispers to Rée. Rée nods  
and watches him leave. Cosima notices  
his exit.

Nietzsche throws open a side door of  
the opera house as the crowd continue  
to cheer behind him. He walks quickly  
across the park and suddenly bends  
over and retches. There is nothing in  
his stomach. He gasps for air.  
Inside, Wagner, dressed theatrically  
in black velvet with a large,  
matching beret, addresses a crowd of  
dignitaries. He stands by a long  
table, and holds his hand up for  
silence.

#### WAGNER

Tonight we are deeply honoured both  
by the presence of European nobility,  
and by that of one of the great  
musical geniuses of our age: Franz  
Liszt, the father of my beloved wife  
Cosima to whom I dedicate this work...

...I believe that, tonight, here in  
Bayreuth we have witnessed the birth  
of a new hope.  
.. hope for everything that a united  
Germany might bring us...

.. and it is my hope that this new

aspiration is what also now pervades  
the music you have heard tonight: an  
aspiration towards strength...

..an aspiration too towards a new  
kind of purity : the purity of a  
race.

However such purity is not yet there.  
No: it will not be won without a  
determination to rid the composition  
of all that is redundant. Not only  
redundant, but in a strict sense  
*parasitic*.

I think you will all be aware of the  
impurities I speak of... I refer, of  
course, to the Jewish question.

RÉE

You are missing the main event.

NIETZSCHE

It's impossible to find even a glass  
of water in this labyrinth. ...

WAGNER

And so, honoured guests: let me thank  
you once again for your continuing  
generosity and support. And let me  
express my own sincere hope that the  
music you have heard here tonight  
will go on to play its part in  
building a new and united Germany!

Applause from everyone. As applause dies.

NIETZSCHE

.. Half his conductors are Jewish.

RÉE

Perhaps he resents sharing the  
applause.

NIETZSCHE

No. He resents his Jewish stepfather,  
who loved him like his own. Richard's  
adopted name was Geyer.

~~Cosima in (6) next to Nietzsche~~

COSIMA

If I didn't know you better,  
Friedrich, I'd say you were avoiding  
us.

Nietzsche kisses her proffered hand.

**NIETZSCHE**

Dear Cosima, now I have to wait in line behind Europe's royalty like everyone else.

**COSIMA**

Friedrich, where are your manners tonight?

**NIETZSCHE**

Apologies my dear Cosima. May I present Doctor Paul Rée, who was in our corps in France in 1870 and is currently a colleague in Basel? He has, through his work, inspired me, against all the odds, to revisit the French thinkers.

**COSIMA**

Another philosopher? Do you share Friedrich's enthusiasm for my husband's music, Dr. Rée?

**REE**

Frau Wagner ..we are of the same mind on all important matters.

**COSIMA**

And as evasive as dear Friedrich. Will you at least pay us a visit this week?

**RÉE**

Madam, with great pleasure, if my friend's health permits it.

**COSIMA**

Then, Friedrich, I must insist on a speedy recovery.

**NARRATOR**

Rée kisses her hand. She moves away, smiling but watchful.

**RÉE**

Why do I have the impression she suspects me of something?

**NIETZSCHE**

Whatever it is, it won't take her long to uncover it.

**JOURNALIST (8)**

...Herr Wagner, there is talk of a new opera, marking a break in your music, a new beginning.

**WAGNER**

For a musician... there are only new beginnings. As Friedrich Nietzsche here reminds us, we cannot visit the same river twice.

**JOURNALIST (8)**

Some critics are surprised to find Christian themes emerging in your new music. Is this what *Parsifal* represents for you?

**WAGNER**

The Grail legend runs deep in our culture ... the story of a knight seeking purification and redemption ... We can no more put such stories down and walk away from them than we can from our own history. And after all that history remains very much a Christian one ... It would be foolish to (pretend that we can) simply deny it.

**COSIMA**

Gentlemen, my husband will need to rest now. And we thank you for coming here today, for spending time with us, and hope too that this encounter will leave you feeling that you wish to assist us in promoting this great new movement which has begun in Bayreuth.

**NARRATOR**

The journalists leave. Wagner walks over to a cabinet and pours vermouth for Nietzsche and Rée.

**WAGNER**

You know Dr. Rée, neither Wahnfried nor Bayreuth would be here today without Friedrich here pleading our cause so eloquently to the Emperor. But sadly, the three-day festival was too much even for his sturdy constitution.

**NIETZSCHE**

Now you are teasing me Richard.

**WAGNER**

And how did you find it Paul?

RÉE

It was ..overwhelming.

NARRATOR

Wagner sits down at the piano and plays a piece from his Ring Trilogy.

WAGNER

With Ludwig's 10,000 thalers Bayreuth's future is now secure. And for that we must thank you for all your hard work.

NARRATOR

He finishes with a flourish. Cosima, Rée and Nietzsche applaud again. Wagner stands, bows. Picks up the score to the *Ring des Niebelungen* and presents it to Nietzsche.

WAGNER

Friedrich, a small token of my gratitude.

NIETZSCHE

This is too great an honour. I suspect the King takes little notice of my essays.

COSIMA

One day, Friedrich, you will come to believe in yourself.

REE

His books are selling quite well now. Maybe even well enough to buy him a new suit!

NIETZSCHE

If it covered a quarter of my pharmacy bill I could sleep more easily.

WAGNER

There's nothing wrong with your health that a good wife couldn't cure.

COSIMA

Is he frightened of falling in love?

WAGNER

No, I suspect vanity. Friedrich's self-love may even extend to the bedroom!

**COSIMA**

Richard!

**NIETZSCHE**

No, but my vanity does extend as far as your piano. I want to play you a piece I have composed.

**NARRATOR**

Nietzsche steps forward seats himself on the piano stool and begins to play. The music is quiet, thoughtful and quite unlike Wagner's. Cosima and Wagner seem to be stifling laughter and Wagner interrupts the piece with a glance at his wife.

**WAGNER**

Friedrich, you play far too well for a professor. Was it composed for a church recital?

**COSIMA** laughs aloud

Pause. We see from Rée's slightly shocked reaction that this is a barely concealed insult to the piece.

**NIETZSCHE**

..Then let me play you some Brahms I have been practicing. His Victory Song.

**WAGNER**

Please. Not Brahms.

**NIETZSCHE**

I insist.

**NARRATOR**

He begins to play, loudly and a little angrily. Wagner slams the top of the piano with the flat of his hand.

**WAGNER**

Enough! Friedrich, do not insist on playing this music in my presence.

**NARRATOR**

Wagner leaves the room. Cosima follows Wagner, gesturing apologetically. Rée looks at Nietzsche, who is breathing heavily, staring at the piano. He closes the piano lid slowly.

Wagner goes front stage. Reads his letter to Dr. Eiser  
(Nietzsche's doctor) - 23 October 1877 to the audience:

**WAGNER**

'In assessing Nietzsche's condition I have long been reminded of identical or very similar experiences with young men of great intellectual ability. Seeing them laid low by similar symptoms, I discovered all too certainly that these were the effects of onanism. Ever since I observed Nietzsche closely, guided by such experiences, all his traits of temperament and characteristic habits have transformed my fear into a conviction. I do not have to tell a friendly physician any more details... (...) One can only say that the ophthalmologist that N. consulted in Naples a while ago recommend that above all he - marry!'

Nietzsche to 1, Wagner back to 7.

**BISWANGER INSTITUTE: JENA 1890**

Binswanger faces the audience.

**BINSWANGER**

Our patient never married. He may have been aware of the disease he carried and not wished to condemn anyone else to certain death. Although it is said he did propose to one young Russian woman. A Fraulein Salomé.

**NARRATOR**

Rome, May 1882. A courtyard at the Von Meysenbug house, late afternoon.

Paul Rée walks through entrance of building.

Malwida von Meysenbug, and various guests sit around, a little restless. Some of the audience have copies of Paul Rée's book, '*The Origin of the Moral Sentiments*'. Among them is a young LOU VON SALOMÉ.

**MALWIDA VON MESYENBUG**

I am so glad we have not been disappointed, Dr. Rée. We were beginning to feel concerned ..

**RÉE**

Unfortunately, so is the cab-driver, who appears not to trust his fellow man.

Malwida, quietly, so as not to be heard by the guests.

**MALWIDA**

You are incorrigible, Paul. When will you learn to manage your financial affairs?

**RÉE**

Perhaps when I go hungry. Fortunately that has not yet occurred, thanks to the kindness of friends.

**NARRATOR**

Malwida crosses the small courtyard to pay the cab-driver. Rée, embarrassed, glances around at the waiting guests. In passing, he smiles at Lou, who returns his smile. Malwida returns, opens her fan and turns towards him.

**MALWIDA**

And so, finally, to our guest, Dr. Paul Rée, who will speak to us tonight about his recent book 'The Origin of the Moral Sentiments', a book which has caused some concern in more conservative circles. Dr. Rée.

**NARRATOR**

Paul Rée begins his talk, but his attention is repeatedly drawn towards the youngest member of the circle, Lou Salome.

**RÉE**

..and so I wonder, sometimes, where all the concern with altruism originated? Certainly throughout the 17<sup>th</sup> century, no-one felt ashamed of self-interest. ..

.. in fact *amour propre*, some degree of self-love based on the esteem we

have for ourselves, was seen as a natural part of our make-up, not something to be ashamed of..

RÉE

.. And so along with Herr Nietzsche, it seems to me that such other-worldly concerns, above all regarding personal immortality .. violate what we naturally are, and therefore the only morality which is possible for us: one based upon our real nature.

Lou raises a hand and he turns towards her.

RÉE

A question?

LOU

That name ... is it 'Nietzsche'? You have mentioned it several times ..

RÉE

Professor Friedrich Nietzsche, a thinker who proclaims the Death of God.

LOU

Could you spell that name for me?

RÉE

Of course. .. But actually he can spell it for you himself. Fraulein ..

LOU

Fraulein Lou von Salomé.

Nietzsche comes centre stage. Reads from The Gay Science.

NIETZSCHE

Have you not heard of that madman who lit a lantern in the bright morning hours, ran to the market place, and cried incessantly: "I seek God! I seek God!" -- As many of those who did not believe in God were standing around just then, he provoked much laughter. Is God lost? asked one. Did he lose his way like a child? asked

another. Or is he hiding? Is he afraid of us? Has he gone on a voyage? emigrated? -- Thus they yelled and laughed.

The madman jumped into their midst and pierced them with his eyes. "Where is God?" he cried; "I will tell you. *We have killed him* -- you and I. All of us are his murderers. But how did we do this? How could we drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon? What were we doing when we unchained this earth from its sun?

Do we not feel the breath of empty space? Has it not become colder? Is not night continually closing in on us? Do we not need to light lanterns in the morning? Do we not yet hear the noise of the gravediggers who are burying God? Do we smell nothing as yet of the divine decomposition? -- even the Gods decay!. God is dead. God stays dead. And we have killed him!

Here the madman fell silent and looked again at his listeners; and they, too, were silent and stared at him in astonishment. At last he threw his lantern on the ground, and it broke into pieces and went out. "I have come too early," he said then; "my time is not yet. This tremendous event is still on its way, still wandering; it has not yet reached the ears of men. Lightning and thunder require time; the light of the stars requires time; deeds, though done,

still require time to be seen and heard. This deed is still more distant from them than most distant stars -- and yet they have done it themselves.

It has been related further that on the same day the madman forced his way into several churches and there struck up his requiem. Led out and called to account, he is said to have replied nothing but: "What after all are these churches now if they are not the tombs and sepulchers of God?"

Nietzsche stays where he is. Not Rée.

#### NARRATOR

24th of April, 1882, St. Peters Basilica, Rome. Nietzsche crosses wide flagstones with Rée.

A woman appears, walking from the far side of the wide basilica, her blond hair covered by a length of lace. She walks slowly and confidently towards them. She is beautiful and self-possessed.

As she approaches them, Nietzsche advances towards her. He looks intensely at her and bows.

Lou stands and approaches Nietzsche

#### NIETZSCHE

From what stars could we have fallen to have met here like this!

#### LOU

Well Professor, I have come from Zurich.

Nietzsche sits in (1) Rée in (4)

Lou steps forward stage front and reads to a letter to her from Nietzsche written later that year.

## LOU

'My dear Lou, Your idea of reducing philosophical systems to the personal records of their originators is truly an idea arising from a 'brother-sister brain'. In Basel I myself taught the history of ancient philosophy in just this sense. I like to tell my listeners that such-and-such 'a system has been disproved and is dead, but the person behind the system cannot be disproved and that person cannot be killed' - Plato, for instance'.

If the task of the biographer is to explicate the thinker through his person, it applies in an unusual degree to Nietzsche because external intellectual work and a picture of his inner life coalesce completely. What he says in this letter about philosophers is pertinent to himself: one should test their systems against their personal actions. Later he expressed the same concept: 'Gradually it has become clear to me that every great philosophy up to the present has been the personal confession of its author and a form of involuntary and unperceived biography'

Towards the end of this letter to me he wrote this:

Yesterday afternoon I was happy; the sky was blue, the air was mild and pure. I was in the Opera House, lured there by the music of Carmen. There I sat for 3 hours and drank the second cognac this year in memory of the first cognac (which ha! Tasted too horrible) and I reflected in all innocence and with malice as to whether or not I had some predisposition for madness. Finally, I told myself no. Then then Carmen music began, and for half an hour I was submerged in tears and felt the beating of my heart. But when you read this, you will at the end say yes! And make a note of it for your

'characterization' of me.

Come to Leipzig right *soon!* Why wait until the 2<sup>nd</sup> of October? Adieu, my dear Lou! Your F N.

Lou sits, Elisabeth rises.

Elisabeth reads to the audience front stage.

#### ELISABETH

So this *ingénue* entered our orbit through the cunning of Dr. Reé. He was all too eager to corrupt this Russian child, despite my brother's efforts. I believe he used her as an instrument against Friedrich.

Not that Miss von Salomé needed any encouragement. Her mother had let her loose in Europe presuming she was gravely ill, close to death even, when in all likelihood she was she was simply escaping the Christian schooling which she boasted of so much.

She took delight in taunting and flirting with older men, and for a while she practised her charms on my brother. This was the time of the photograph - a teenage joke which Friedrich was foolish enough to permit at the expense of his dignity. But he saw through them both in time, as we all did.

Elisabeth stays stage front.

#### BINSWANGER

Well, gentleman. I think you will agree that the nature and circumstances of Professor Nietzsche's condition requires further consideration. Many possible diagnoses, none as yet clear. There is other troubling evidence to examine in this case that complicates our inquiry. So, we are presented with many difficult and possibly

unanswerable, questions - but as  
doctors we have to at least ask them.

And therefore, we will continue here  
tomorrow at the same time. Nurse,  
please lead the Professor back to the  
ward.

Nurse leads Nietzsche away for a moment then back to  
front of stage alongside Elisabeth.

All cast rise and join them for a bow.

#### NARRATOR

Ladies and gentlemen, there will be a  
short bathroom bar break of 15  
minutes and then we will return to  
the stage for audience feedback.

Play Wagner/Nietzsche music - 10 min break then audience  
feedback.