

This script was freely downloaded from [the \(re\)making project](http://the(re)makingproject.charlesmee.org),  
(charlesmee.org). We hope you'll consider supporting the  
project by making a donation so that we can *keep it free*.  
Please [click here](#) to make a donation.

## Picasso's Masterpiece

by CHARLES L. MEE

---

Picasso's studio in Montmartre,  
filled with dozens of canvases on easels,  
scattered chairs,  
canvases everywhere on the floor, leaning against the walls,  
lots of plates and bowls—ceramics—  
a rocking chair,  
a couple of couches,  
a potbellied stove,  
pedestals with busts and ceramic vases on them.

This piece can be done in a proscenium theatre  
or  
in a big black box—as an immersive event,  
with the audience sitting among the easels and chairs  
and bowls on the floor—  
and/or as a completely immersive experience  
with all of Picasso's paintings projected on the floors and walls  
and ceilings,  
constantly changing in ultra slow motion—  
like the Picasso show that was done in the Cathedral d'Images  
in Les Baux de Provence.

We hear music by Satie  
and then Picasso enters and,  
taking his time,  
starts to paint.

Satie music  
Satie music

A man enters silently,  
looks at what Picasso is painting  
and then starts speaking/singing to Satie's music:

SOLO  
grapes in profile  
on the swarming blues  
the blue striped t-shirt  
and the greenish blue  
the sugared blue  
slapped on the pink  
the purple diaper of the lilac bunched up in the nest  
of the celestial purple  
of the blue omphalos  
of the camp bed  
straightened up  
with sunny smells  
of she goats and of he goats  
on the bank of some old mountain stream

[a second singer joins the first,  
and they speak/sing together]

#### DUET

the flute  
the grapes  
the umbrella  
the armor  
the tree and the accordion  
the butterfly wings of the sugar  
of the blue fan of the lake  
and the azure waves of the silks of the strings  
hanging from the bouquets of roses  
of the ladders one and incalculable  
outsized flood of doves  
released drunk on the cutting festoons of prisms  
fixed to the bells  
decomposing with its thousand lit candles  
the green flocks of wool  
illuminated by the gentle acrobatics of the lanterns  
hanging from each arc string  
and the definitive dawn

[a couple more singers enter  
for the full chorus of four singers  
who speak/sing all together]

#### CHORUS

sky sky sky sky sky sky sky sky sky  
violet violet sky sky  
sky violet violet violet  
sky sky sky violet violet violet  
sky sky sky sky  
violet violet violet violet  
sky sky sky sky  
violet violet violet violet sky sky sky sky  
violet violet violet sky sky sky violet green sky  
sky sky sky green green sky  
sky sky sky black green green sky

maroon sky  
sky sky black  
black black black black  
white white black  
green maroon sky sky  
hands hidden in her pockets  
night sky  
aloe flower  
cobalt sky of rope  
bedside book  
sky  
heart  
violet fan  
evening sky  
dress violet  
bouquet violet  
violet sky  
moon rock sky  
black green  
sky maroon  
wheel of fireworks  
pearl black  
yellow green  
sky black  
lemon  
tree  
scissors  
yellow shadow  
snow green  
snow maroon  
cream filled with brandy  
canary flight  
blue green  
black wolf  
sky  
sky  
sky  
yellow linen  
embroidered green

night sky  
sulphur white  
silver plate  
ploughed earth  
sky sky white  
sky sky sky white  
sky sky sky sky  
white white sky  
blue  
blue blue blue

During the song  
a woman enters in a bathrobe,  
takes up her lounging position on a couch,  
letting her bathrobe fall open to reveal she is naked,  
and Picasso begins to paint her,  
putting her into the painting he was working on.

This is Fernande Olivier,  
Picasso's love.

[Note: the nude men and women in this piece will be in skin-tight,  
skin-colored body suits,  
with their private parts painted onto the body suits with simple black paint.]

When the song ends,  
the thief enters with masks.

THE THIEF  
I have brought the masks.

A SINGER  
What are you doing with these?

PICASSO  
I will use them for the faces.

A SINGER  
The faces.

PICASSO

The faces of one or two of the women in the painting.

A SINGER

No.

PICASSO

What do you mean?

A SINGER

No. I mean no. This is bad. This is ugly.

Where did you get these masks?

THE THIEF

From the Louvre.

A SINGER

I beg your pardon.

THE THIEF

They were in a storeroom.

A SINGER

A storeroom.

THE THIEF

There was an exhibition of Iberian masks and statues  
a while ago in the Louvre  
and then they put these in a storeroom.

PICASSO

So they were not being used.

A SINGER

And yet, still,  
they belong to the Louvre.

PICASSO

I think of them as mine.

I am Spanish.

This is my heritage.

They do not belong to a French museum.

A SINGER

And they don't have guards at the museum?

THE THIEF

Not enough guards, it seems.

A SINGER

And you stole these for Pablo?

THE THIEF

Yes.

A SINGER

And he accepts stolen goods?

PICASSO

Good artists borrow.

Great artists

steal.

[The singer stomps out.

The thief shrugs and leaves.

Picasso goes on painting Fernande Olivier.

Gertrude Stein also entered during these events,

looked at what was going on,

looked at the painting Picasso is working on,

and took a seat on another couch.

And now she speaks while he paints.]

STEIN

He did not  
and all of them did not  
and any of them would see  
that a color which was quite attractive  
could be a color that is very attractive  
and some of them if they liked it would do it again  
would see the color again that they had seen  
and one of them doing very well what he was doing.  
A thing that is very well done  
and would be pleasing to some  
is done by one who doing what that one is doing  
is giving what that one is giving  
and that one giving what that one is giving  
is selecting what would be young  
if the parts that can be seen were not parts that were old  
when a part that is not old is young  
and might not be young if all the parts were young  
and should not be young if some one who is not pleased is not pleased.  
Quite likely every one who is not pleased  
can be pleased when what has been selected  
has been selected to be old and to be young.  
Certainly enough pleasing is affecting what is selected to be old  
and to be young.  
Pleasing and not entirely pleasing  
is when all that is blue is green blue  
and not a color that is different from green and blue.  
A pleasant thing is what being selected is not selected  
when something is old and when something is young,  
a pleasant thing is not a pleasant thing  
when something has been selected  
which is not what that one selecting did not like.

[A couple of the other singers from the chorus  
throw up their hands and leave,  
so just two singers are left standing in the studio.

Picasso turns and speaks to Gertrude.]

PICASSO

the rose that comes out of the pale blue

light blue

light pale blue

blue from its darkest blue

if the pale rose colors its rose with rose that is paler still

and the rose roses with rose in the rosiest rose yet of the rose

rose rosing its rose

rose

rose

rose in the rosiest

the rose that catches fire

in the thirst for drinking in the gold

that burns its cheeks

blazing from its incandescent rose

which the gold melted in the white

[and now he looks at his painting

as he continues talking]

red burns

if the plate grows swells increases

and climbs the eye of the partridge

of the lark

of the quail

of the blackbird

of the ringdove

and other spangles catching fire

marzipan of nougat of rooster

and roast leg of lamb

color of dry straw thyme

between the teeth of the square root

of such an amusing aubade

stretching its arms

passing its fingers among the trees



In the evening, when I get home, I've got into the habit of sitting in front of my door on the Place Ravignan and relaxing with a book until the sun sets. Yesterday afternoon, the sky was black, and when the clouds suddenly broke we had to rush for shelter. The Spanish painter had a little kitten in his arms which he held out to me, laughing and preventing me from going past. I laughed with him. He seemed to give off a radiance, an inner fire, and I couldn't resist this magnetism. I went with him to his studio, which is full of large unfinished canvases—he must work so hard, but what a mess!

Dear God! His paintings are astonishing. He's working on an etching showing an emaciated man and woman seated at a table in a wine shop. The man is gaunt, emaciated and wretched, and bears a look of pathetic resignation. It's strange, tender and infinitely sad composition. It seems to show a deep and despairing love of humanity.

PICASSO [to himself as he paints]  
all lines removed from the painting  
that represents the image of a young girl's head  
appears floating around white aroma of blows  
hitting the sky's shoulder  
pride  
white cheese poppies  
white wine fried at the pigeon shoot  
of the white fife-player  
yellow yell of whips  
reflected by the flight of a swallow  
over the eye of mauve milk  
nettle winged horse  
at the end of the yellow foam  
at the white corsage of the mauve  
pike pencil streak with goat's leaps  
white star

FERNANDE

I've been to see my Spanish painter. He adores me with real sincerity. If I fall asleep, he's beside the bed when I wake up, his eyes anxiously fixed on me. He doesn't see his friends any more, doesn't work any more. He's asking me to come and live with him, and I don't know what I should do. He's constantly doing portraits of me. He's

kind and gentle, but he doesn't look after himself, and I find that upsetting. I don't mind untidiness, but I'm horrified by his lack of personal cleanliness. I don't dare let him sense this; it's a delicate matter.

I often wonder when he does any work, but apparently he prefers to work at night so as not to be disturbed.

The studio is quite unique. Standing at the entrance, despite the fact that there's practically no furniture, you wonder just how you're going to be able to make your way into it. It's full of the strangest assortment of utensils and household objects, including rusty old frying pan grandly called "receptacle serving the function of chamber pot" and a large tin bucket for washing, which is always full to overflowing with dirty water. Across from the door is an enclosed space with rotten floorboards that's supposed to be a bedroom, but Pablo uses it for storing all kinds of junk.

The studio is like a furnace, and Pablo and his friends quite often strip off completely. They receive visitors practically, if not completely, naked, just wearing a scarf tied around their waists.

There's often no money. In the evenings there's a lot of merriment: five or six friends come over, they play their guitars and sing Spanish songs after dinner. This often consists simply of an enormous dish of spaghetti. It feeds us all, and we can afford it.

## PICASSO

mauve yellow spread at the edge of the moon  
mauve dish of flageolets  
arc bent at iris yellow  
cobalt blue indigo blue  
in the mauve nets from slate yellow to feather white blue  
put rope to neck  
mauve yellow dove  
at worse decapitated blue bits  
mauve hand yellow lake  
at white lip blue detachable collar rat  
devouring the mauve ear of corn yellow  
blue mauve  
yellow blue  
blue blue

blue line  
wrapping its spiral  
the bridge stretches  
arriving first and breathless at the target's center

#### FERNANDE

Everything seems beautiful, bright, and good. It's probably thanks to opium that I've discovered the true meaning of the word love, love in general. I've discovered that at last I understand Pablo, I "sense" him better. It seems as if I have been waiting all my twenty-three years for him. Love has risen up in me like a feeling that is suddenly coming into flower. A curious closeness makes me feel as if he's a part of myself, as my fantasy has wanted him to be, and this feeling, which has stayed with me, must be the reason I made up my mind almost instantly to bind my life to his, for better or for worse. I have spent three days with Pablo. I love Pablo. He is tender, kind, amorous; he pleases me. How could I have been blind for so long?

At last I am happy, and Pablo tells me that he feels as if he has awakened after a long sleep. All he did from the moment I agreed to come and live with him was wait for me. Life is going smoothly. I feel as though I am beginning to live my real life. Pablo loves me. I sleep a lot; I've been used to going to bed early after my tiring days, so I still fall asleep around nine. Pablo watches me, draws, works at night and goes to bed around six in the morning.

#### PICASSO

the mauve young girl  
dissolved in the azure  
of the so tender green  
of her dimmed white dress  
wrapped in the slate leaf  
along the rimes of the sonnet of the palm tree  
a kind of beach with fine sand of death heads  
filling the boat  
stranded and bitten in the belly by the tamer  
torn from the claws of hours  
attached in clusters to the main mast  
by the pan-pipe's sound  
laundry hung out  
forgotten by night  
on the ropes

chariot of joy  
made of clear water  
with wheels of perfume  
pulled by gazes  
filled with the savor of the colors of the rainbow  
of songs and laughter

#### FERNANDE

We're managing to survive on fifty francs a month and sometimes we have enough left over to pay the bill at the paint shop. When we eat out we always go to Vernin's, as we can get credit there, too. Vernin, who comes from the Auvergne, has his place on the Rue Cavallotti, just by the pawnbrokers, which is handy if we're lucky enough to find anything left to pawn. He has a terrible memory and is very decent to artists, never refusing them credit. This is why Pablo and all his friends regularly meet there at midday or at seven in the evening, and the numbers are generally swollen by friends that one or other of them has brought along, whose meals get put down to somebody's account. A lot of theatrical people go there and it often looks like a scene Pablo might paint.

At the moment we're absolutely destitute. I haven't got any shoes at the moment and in the dark no one can see my old espadrilles, which once used to be white. But Pablo always makes sure I have my bottle of perfume, my rice powder, my books, my tea—and, best of all, I have his love.

In the cold, we have no coal, no fire, no money—but I'm happy in spite of this. We're not miserable; we love each other. I don't know how I could have resisted Pablo for so long. I love him so much now!

the satie music concludes  
the satie music concludes

[Another friend of Picasso's enters.]

THE FRIEND

I see this  
and I think  
you ought to quit.  
What are you doing?

PICASSO

If you know exactly what you are going to do,  
what is the point of doing it?

THE FRIEND

You know I don't mean to say anything  
that will cause you any sort of disagreeable feeling  
and this is only my advice  
but I think you should roll up the canvas and throw it away.  
This is bad.  
This is a mistake.

[Picasso looks at him for a moment  
and then speaks.]

PICASSO

I don't know what other people like  
but I know what I love  
when I walk out of the Louvre  
I don't need to turn to my friend and say  
did I like the Mona Lisa  
what did I like about her?  
Did I like her hair?  
Did I think her nose was disagreeable?  
what did I like?  
No, I know what I like.  
I know what I love  
And so I do what I love  
and since I am the world's leading expert in what I love

I can't be wrong.  
And then, because I am not from Mars,  
there will be two or three other people who will love it, too.

[Then Picasso turns and resumes painting.

The chorus of singers now speaks,  
as they look at the painting and respond to what they see—  
as though they were naming or describing what they see.]

FIRST

My wife with the hair of a wood fire  
With the thoughts of heat lightning  
With the waist of an hourglass  
With the waist of an otter in the teeth of a tiger

SECOND

My wife with the lips of a cockade and of a bunch of stars of the last magnitude  
With the teeth of tracks of white mice on the white earth  
With the tongue of rubbed amber and glass

THIRD

My wife with the tongue of a stabbed host  
With the tongue of a doll that opens and closes its eyes  
With the tongue of an unbelievable stone

FOURTH

My wife with the eyelashes of strokes of a child's writing  
With brows of the edge of a swallow's nest

FIRST

My wife with the brow of slates of a hothouse roof  
And of steam on the panes

SECOND

My wife with shoulders of champagne  
And of a fountain with dolphin-heads beneath the ice

FIRST

My wife with wrists of matches

SECOND

My wife with fingers of luck and ace of hearts  
With fingers of mown hay

THIRD

My wife with armpits of marten and of beechnut  
And of Midsummer Night  
Of privet and of an angelfish nest  
With arms of seafoam and of riverlocks  
And of a mingling of the wheat and the mill

FOURTH

My wife with legs of flares  
With the movements of clockwork and despair

FIRST

My wife with calves of eldertree pith

FOURTH

My wife with feet of initials  
With feet of rings of keys and Java sparrows drinking

THIRD

My wife with a neck of unpearled barley

SECOND

My wife with a throat of the valley of gold  
Of a tryst in the very bed of the torrent  
With breasts of night

FIRST

My wife with breasts of a marine molehill

SECOND

My wife with breasts of the ruby's crucible  
With breasts of the rose's spectre beneath the dew

FOURTH

My wife with the belly of an unfolding of the fan of days  
With the belly of a gigantic claw

THIRD

My wife with the back of a bird fleeing vertically  
With a back of quicksilver  
With a back of light  
With a nape of rolled stone and wet chalk  
And of the drop of a glass where one has just been drinking

SECOND

My wife with hips of a skiff  
With hips of a chandelier and of arrow-feathers  
And of shafts of white peacock plumes  
Of an insensible pendulum

FIRST

My wife with buttocks of sandstone and asbestos

SECOND

My wife with buttocks of swans' backs

THIRD

My wife with buttocks of spring

FOURTH

With the sex of an iris

SECOND

My wife with the sex of a mining-placer and of a platypus

THIRD

My wife with a sex of seaweed and ancient sweetmeat

FIRST

My wife with a sex of mirror

SECOND

My wife with eyes full of tears  
With eyes of purple panoply and of a magnetic needle

THIRD

My wife with savanna eyes

FOURTH

My wife with eyes of water to be drunk in prison

SECOND

My wife with eyes of wood always under the axe

FIRST

My wife with eyes of water-level of level of air earth and fire

[Another critic enters—

or two of the chorus members become another critic and Alfred Jarry.]

ANOTHER CRITIC

I look at this

I think

what could it mean?

What could be the point?

Unless the point is to be different.

And then

who cannot be different?

This is not difficult.

I can be different.

Or you think

is it so different after all?

What is the subject?

A woman.

Some women.

A landscape.

Is this not the same old same old

since 2000 years ago

or since Lascaux

17,000 years ago.

And then you might say:  
where are the cows?  
Why has he left out the cows?  
The birds, the black bulls,  
the rhinoceros.  
I think  
this kind of painting  
it does not have the staying power  
of Lascaux.  
Finally,  
it doesn't compare.  
It won't last.  
What was the point of doing it?

[Jarry answers the critic.]

JARRY

This brain, I see, is a critic's brain.  
Doubtless it has received an injury to the Broca convolution,  
where the faculty of holding forth resides.  
This convolution  
is the third frontal convolution on the left  
as you go in.  
Ask the hall porter....  
Excuse me,  
ask any philosopher:  
"This dissolution of the mind  
is caused by an atrophy  
which little by little invades the cerebral cortex,  
then the gray matter,  
producing a fatty degeneration  
and atheroma of the cells, tubes,  
and capillaries of the nerve substance!"  
There's nothing to be done with him.  
We'll have to make do with twisting of the nose and ears,  
with removal of the tongue and extraction of the teeth,  
laceration of the posterior,  
hacking to pieces of the spinal marrow  
and the partial or total spaghettification of the brain through the heels.



STEIN

It is a happiness  
that what is  
is being done  
and has been done  
and will be done.

It is exciting to every one  
that what has been done  
has been done  
and what is being done  
is being done.

It is a reflection to any one  
that what has been done has been done  
and what is done is being done.

It is a determination in every one  
that everything is done that is done  
and that everything has been done that has been done.

It is annoying to every one  
that everything that has been done has been done  
and everything that is done is done.

It is a regret to every one  
that everything that is done is done  
and that everything that has been done has been done.

If all who were coming were going and coming  
it would be certain that all had commenced something.  
It is enough when all are going who are coming and going,  
it is enough that when all are coming they are all coming.

[And now Picasso's friends come to the party  
and they look like characters from Picasso's paintings.

These are people in Picasso's life,  
or in his imagination,  
or both.

They come in, find an hors d'oeuvre to snack on  
or a glass of wine,  
and then wander on through and out again,  
but there are always at least several of them in the studio  
at the same time.

So Picasso's harlequin enters in full harlequin costume.

And maybe a bearded man with a pipe.

And maybe a woman with a cubist face.

People with fabulously painted faces,  
big cubist swatches of crimson and deep blue and yellow.

Or maybe, rather than painted faces, they can wear masks,  
since we have introduced the theme of masks with the stolen Iberian masks.

And maybe a slightly cubist man with a beard and a sword and a big hat.

Maybe a cubist man walks through  
with arms and legs and torso made of tubes of cardboard  
or aluminum.

And perhaps Picasso's three musicians  
come out and sit behind a café table.

If the three musicians don't play,  
then a guitarist comes in and plays.

Three or four naked people  
sit on a couch.

Does a cubist man enter with a goat on wheels?]

STEIN

If in walking and in coming late and hurrying  
and going then to send something  
and being then taking what he was having

and being politely mentioning  
that being polite is something and not everything,  
if in saying that evidently what he was saying  
was what evidently was what he was saying,  
if in having been suffering and having been creating  
and having been explaining  
and having been selling and having been buying,  
if in having been using and having been creating  
and having been evidently destroying  
and having been evidently understanding,  
if in having been seeing  
and having been talking  
and having been staying  
and having been needing all he was needing,  
if in having been creating  
and having been suffering  
and having been hurrying  
and having been expecting,  
if in having been creating  
and not having been destroying  
and having been succeeding  
and not having been disappointing one,  
some are understanding when all are agreeing,  
is expressing that going on is changing  
and he is going on  
and all are remembering that going on and changing  
is going on.  
He is expressing  
and he is expressing,  
he is expressing.

[And, as some of Picasso's friends wander through the party and leave,  
other friends arrive,  
and these new friends look like the paintings of Picasso's painter friends.

A Matisse woman enters—  
a naked woman with an ankle length silk bathrobe decorated with flowers  
lounges on a chaise, with her robe casually thrown open.

Another Matisse woman—  
a blue cardboard cutout woman.

Do Matisse's five naked dancers in a circle  
come in, dance,  
and dance out?

A guy covered by a black cardboard cutout,  
in the pose of a ballet dancer leaping  
is carried across the stage.

A large bowl of fruit,  
suitable for a still life painting,  
is ceremoniously carried in and placed center stage.

Dali's naked woman with a baguette on her head enters.  
She has two ears of corn around her neck, resting on her shoulders.  
And, on top of the baguette, a man and a woman,  
and a couple of ink wells.

A guy rolls up his pant leg  
puts one naked foot in the air  
and paints it ten different messy colors with oil paint.]

STEIN

So elementary is the rising sand and the twisting snow,  
so vacant is the lot and the fountain,  
so hurried is the Indian and the dancer,  
so neglected is the hurt finger and the duck,  
so splendid is the lamp  
and so urgent is the white horse in winter  
that surely there can be no question of discount,  
there can not even be question of serpents,  
there can be a heaven and a heel  
and there can be lakes of water.

What is lively.  
That which radium advances  
and porches close and lynx eyes shudder.  
It is a gloom  
and entrancing is captivating.

Is it astonishing that red and green are rosy  
red and violet green,  
is it surprising that so rich a thing  
shows a certain little thing,  
shows that every bit of blue is precious  
and this is shown by finding,  
by finding and obtaining,  
by not silencing disentangling,  
by never refusing resigning.

A tall scale, a sour glass,  
a tight stretch, an even table,  
a celebrated circus and a melodion,  
these and many more mistakes have no attributes,  
they are careless.

A weight, what is a weight  
a weight is a lifting of cows and horses  
and bridges and everything.  
Even even more than a cellar  
more loud than a sun,  
more likely than a sturgeon,  
more likely, most likely,  
this was so bright and so occurrent  
and so bees in wax, bees and bees in wax.  
What is cat is a cat  
and what is splendid is a mouse  
and what is driven is a dog  
and what is curly is a cow.

[Now  
all these crazy party people come together  
and do group a opera singing of Stein text—  
again, to the music of Satie.]

## GROUP OPERA SONG

He did use the complete way of showing  
leading  
being  
staying  
and staying being saying  
what was knowing being saying.  
He did say  
what he did say  
and that was to say that many kept away  
there where they said what they knew they said  
when they stayed as they stayed.  
He did not say that they stayed away.  
He did not say that staying they were saying  
that they were knowing  
that they were saying  
that they were staying.  
He did say that staying they were saying  
that they were knowing  
what they were saying,  
he did say that they were staying.  
He did not say that he was staying  
when he was saying  
that he was knowing what he was saying.  
He did not say that he was saying  
what he was knowing what he was saying.  
He was saying that he was knowing  
that he was saying what he was saying  
and he did say that he was knowing he was staying.  
He did not say that he would be staying.  
He did not say that he would be knowing  
that he was saying what he was saying.  
He did say that if he would be staying  
he would be knowing he was saying what he was saying.  
He did say that he would be saying  
what he would be saying  
and he would be staying when he would be staying.  
He did say he would be staying.

[And after the big group opera song  
all these characters from paintings and sculptures  
make themselves comfortable—  
saying things like "can I get you a coffee?"  
and other social niceties—  
as they arrange themselves as though they are ready for a conversation.]

#### ANOTHER CRITIC SPEAKS UP

You know I am a big admirer of your work.  
Of you  
and of your work.  
I think what you do is  
wonderful.  
And yet,  
from time to time,  
someone might do what they will come to consider  
just a sketch.  
A sketch of a thought  
that they were thinking at one time.  
But it is the sort of thing that never leaves the studio.  
It is, rather, a memorandum of a thought  
that might lead to another thought  
and even to another thought still  
that will really be worth thinking.  
And, indeed, in that case,  
the sketch is probably better left in the studio,  
or even,  
it might be useful if the sketch were simply to become lost  
so that some years later  
it will not be found  
and used to do some damage to the reputation of the thinker.  
In fact,  
if you like,  
I can take it away  
and see to it  
that it is never seen again.

#### PICASSO

No, thank you.

ANOTHER CRITIC  
What do you call it?

PICASSO  
I call it The Brothel.

ANOTHER BYSTANDER  
Some of us think this is not the best title for it.  
Some of us have been encouraging him to change the title

ANOTHER CRITIC  
What would you call it?

ANOTHER BYSTANDER  
Some of us have been encouraging him to change the title to  
Desmoiselles d'Avignon.

ANOTHER CRITIC  
And that would change everything!

[Another Critic throws up his hands  
and stomps out.

Picasso resumes painting.

We hear the opening clown music of Satie's Parade.  
music of Satie's Parade.

music of Satie's Parade.  
music of Satie's Parade.  
music of Satie's Parade.  
music of Satie's Parade.

Another Bystander takes off all his clothes  
and climbs up a little stepladder  
and steps down inside a six foot tall vase.

A moment later, Another Bystander emerges from the vase  
completely covered in, and dripping, black oil.

He gets out of the vase  
and does a "dance."

The dance might be called The Dying Crow.

He writhes, he slithers to the ground,  
he rolls around on a huge piece of white paper,  
making an ink drawing with his body.  
He rubs up against a "canvas" on one of the walls,  
making another ink painting.

At some point he might find a smaller vat of black oil—  
and if, in fact, the black oil is really liquid dark chocolate,  
he could drink the vat of black oil.

And so forth: other dance performance moments.

The Dying Crow  
The Dying Crow

The Dying Crow  
The Dying Crow  
The Dying Crow  
The Dying Crow  
The Dying Crow  
The Dying Crow  
The Dying Crow  
The Dying Crow  
The Dying Crow  
The Dying Crow  
The Dying Crow  
The Dying Crow

The Dying Crow dancer  
is finally joined  
by nearly the entire cast,  
now turned into dancers.

And they perform one of the dance sections from Diaghilev's Parade  
that mobilizes many dancers.  
This is the flat out party in full swing  
the way it was in Picasso's studio  
when he had a party.

Of course, these are artists and friends of Picasso's—  
they aren't dancers—  
and so they won't dance like people who have danced all their lives.  
But they will have a good time.  
And we may even think,  
if Diaghilev was at this party of Picasso's,  
maybe that's where he got the idea for Parade.

Diaghilev's Parade  
Diaghilev's Parade  
Diaghilev's Parade  
Diaghilev's Parade  
Diaghilev's Parade  
Diaghilev's Parade  
Diaghilev's Parade



In the midst of the ballet,  
Apollinaire steps out of the dance and goes downstage right  
and speaks directly to the audience.  
Much of what he says will be inaudible with all the commotion going on,  
and that's on purpose.  
And what he says  
is clearly pathetic and maybe stupid  
and, at least, inadequate to the occasion,  
which is the point.

Right after Apollinaire  
or maybe at the same time,  
Nijinsky also steps out of the dance,  
and he goes downstage left  
and speaks directly to the audience  
while the ballet goes on.

[If the production is done as an immersive event  
with actors and audience together in a big black box studio,  
then Apollinaire and Nijinsky  
can each go toward different corners of the room  
and address just those members of the audience near them,  
so people at a distance can't hear what they are saying,  
or, certainly, not more than an occasional word,  
so that each section of the audience gets a different play.]

#### APOLLINAIRE

Cubism differs from the old schools of painting  
in that it aims,  
not at the art of imitation  
but at an art of conception,  
which tends to rise to the height of creation.

Scientific cubism is the art of painting new structures  
out of the elements borrowed not from the reality of sight,  
but from the reality of insight.

Physical cubism is the art of painting new structures  
with elements borrowed,  
for the most part,  
from visual reality.

Orphic cubism is the art of painting new structures  
out of elements which have not been borrowed from the visual sphere,  
but have been created entirely by the artist himself.

The new art clothes its creations  
with a grandiose and monumental appearance  
which surpasses anything else conceived by the artists of our time.  
I love the art of today  
because above all I love the light,  
for man loves light more than anything;  
it was he who invented fire.

Greek art had a purely human conception of beauty.  
It took man as the measure of perfection.  
But the art of the new painters  
takes the infinite universe as its ideal.

There has been a certain amount of suspicion,  
notably in the case of recent painters,  
of some collective hoax or error.  
But in all the history of art,  
there is not a single instance  
of such general collaboration in artistic fraud or error.

It is the social function of great poets and great artists  
to renew continually the appearance nature has for the eyes of men.  
Without artists,  
the sublime idea we have of the universe  
would collapse.  
The order that we find in nature,  
which is only an effect of art,  
of human intelligence,  
would vanish at once.  
Everything would break up in chaos.

There would be no seasons,  
no civilization,  
no thought.  
Even life would give way.

#### NIJINSKY

Diaghilev dyes his down so as not to be old. Diaghilev's hair is gray. Diaghilev buys black hair creams and rubs them within. I noticed this cream on Diaghilev's pillows, which have black pillowcases. I do not like dirty pillowcases and so felt disgusted when I saw them.

Diaghilev has two false front teeth. I noticed this because when he is disconcerted he touches them with his tongue. They move, and I can see them. Diaghilev reminds me of a wicked old woman when he moves his two front teeth...

Diaghilev like to be talked about and therefore wore a monocle surrounded by one eye. I asked him why he wore a monocle, for I noticed that he saw well without a monocle. Then Diaghilev told me that one of his eyes saw defectively. I realized then that Diaghilev had told me a flop. I felt deeply hurt...

I loved him sincerely and, when he told me that the love of women was a terrible thing, I believed him.

I began to detest him quite openly, and once I pushed him on a street in Paris. I pushed him because I considered necessary to show him that I was not afraid of him. Diaghilev hit me with his cane because I needed to leave him. He felt that I wanted to jump away, and therefore he ran after me. I half run, half walked. I was afraid of individual noticed. I noticed that people be looking. I felt a pain in my leg and pushed Diaghilev. I pushed him individual slightly because I felt not anger against Diaghilev but tears. I wept. Diaghilev scolded me. Diaghilev be gnashing his teeth, and I felt sad and dejected. I could no longer control myself and begin to walk slowly. Diaghilev too began to walk slowly. We both walk slowly. I do not remember where we were going. I be walking. He was walking. We went, and we arrived. We lived together for a long time...

And, after they have both stopped speaking,  
the ballet goes on,  
and they re-join the dancers.



Diaghilev's Parade  
Diaghilev's Parade  
Diaghilev's Parade  
Diaghilev's Parade  
Diaghilev's Parade

Finally  
several people come in with a picnic blanket  
and spread it out and lie down on it  
and they are joined by the dancers  
who stop dancing  
and put on straw hats for the sun  
and bring out bottles of wine.  
They make a sylvan picnic.

We hear some quite, peaceful Satie music.

All is calm.

Picasso is looking at his canvas  
and picks up a brush to start painting again.

PICASSO  
and it's raining  
all the green is wet  
but feels like it was made of fire  
and on their hands turned over tiles  
are jumping for pure joy  
and wringing hands with pinky missing  
on the one who made me—sorceress—  
and after let them come to me  
to say they have no time  
that we can save it for another day  
and it's now late  
and that again and then already  
well the soup is nearly ready  
and the spoonful that I have to take an hour before  
is loving me  
because it's certain also

that they'll tell me then  
that I forgot it  
but this glassy air  
the raindrops on the window  
have their shadows upside down  
so that you have to paint them from the bottom up  
and if it wasn't so  
nobody would have made a single thing forever.

[And just then  
two police officers come in seeking the masks stolen from the Louvre.]

OFFICER  
Excuse me.  
Would this be the studio of Pablo Picasso?

PICASSO  
Yes, it is.

OFFICER  
And would you be that person?

PICASSO  
I am.

OFFICER  
We have come  
on the basis of confidential information  
that suggests you have stolen some items from the collections of the Louvre.

PICASSO  
I beg your pardon.

OFFICER  
Two Iberian masks have been stolen from the Louvre,  
and we have reason to believe they are in your possession.

PICASSO

As it happens,  
I have two Iberian masks in my studio.  
But I don't believe they were stolen.

OFFICER

Where did you get them?

PICASSO

I purchased them in the Place des Abesses  
from someone who was there at the time  
selling shoes and clothes  
and these masks.

OFFICER

May we see them?

PICASSO

Yes. Of course.

[Fernande has already quietly gone and fetched the masks  
and now hands them to Picasso.]

PICASSO

These are the masks I have.

OFFICER

These are the masks stolen from the Louvre.

PICASSO

I am an artist.  
I would never steal anything.

OFFICER

Is that a fact?  
In any event,  
I don't suppose we have any proof to the contrary.  
But we will have to take these masks.

PICASSO

Do I know they belong to the Louvre?

OFFICER

If the Louvre says they do not,  
we will return them.

PICASSO

And do I know I can trust you?

OFFICER

My identification.

[he shows his papers to Picasso]

PICASSO

We will give you the masks, then.  
You know where to find us  
if the Louvre says they do not belong to the museum.

OFFICER

Exactly.  
Good day, sir.

PICASSO

Good day.

[The police turn and leave.

Silence.

After a moment, one of Picasso's friends speaks up.]

A FRIEND

Really,  
maybe this is a good reason  
to roll up the canvas and throw it away.

ANOTHER FRIEND  
It's not a great loss.

ANOTHER FRIEND  
I think you won't miss it.

ANOTHER FRIEND  
It's not your best.  
You know I love what you do.  
But this  
this is not something you need to keep.

ANOTHER FRIEND  
All in all,  
it might be best to put it some place  
where it will never be found.

[Everyone looks around at one another,  
they gather up their belongings,  
and they all leave.

Picasso is left alone.

(Or is Fernande still there?)

He does not quit.  
He returns to painting his painting  
as the lights fade to dark,

as we hear Satie music

Satie music  
Satie music  
Satie music  
Satie music  
Satie music

Satie music  
Satie music  
Satie music  
Satie music  
Satie music.

A NOTE ON SOURCES:

Some of the texts for this piece are taken from Picasso's *Burial of Count Orgaz & Other Poems*, edited and translated by Jerome Rothenberg and Pierre Joris, from Gertrude Stein's *Matisse Picasso and Gertrude Stein*, from *Ubu Cocu*, by Alfred Jarry, translated by Cyril Connolly, from the poems of Andre Breton, translated from the French by Edouard Rodti, Fernande Olivier's *Picasso and His Friends*, and *Loving Picasso: The Private Journals of Fernande Olivier* by Fernande Olivier, Christine Baker, and Michael Raeburn, *Selected Writings of Guillaume Apollinaire*, translated by Roger Shattuck, and *The Diary of Vaslav Nijinsky*, translated by Kyril Fitzlyon.

Charles Mee's work has been made possible by the support of Richard B. Fisher and Jeanne Donovan Fisher.