

NERO FIDDLES ON THE ROOF

By Lee Karvonen

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|------------------------------------|--|----------------|-------------------------------|
| N 1 | (NARRATOR ONE) | N 2 | (NARRATOR TWO) |
| SI | (SAFETY INSPECTOR) | FA | (FIRST ASSISTANT) |
| PRO | (PRODUCER) | FM | (FIRE MARSHALL) |
| FP | (FACT PERSON) | FID | (FIDDLER, WITH VIOLIN) |
| SM | (STAGE MANAGER) | PM | (PEASANT MAN, TEVYE) |
| 3 ELDEST DAUGHTERS OF TEVYE | | NERO | (ROMAN EMPEROR) |
| SEN 1 | (FIRST SENATOR) | SEN 2 | (SECOND SENATOR) |
| SOL | (SOLDIER) | SLAVE 1 | (FIRST SLAVE) |
| SLAVE 2 | (SECOND SLAVE) | | |
| SBC | (SCHOOL BOARD CHAIR) | | |
| 3 FLAMES | (IN CALGARY FLAMES' JERSEYS, AND WITH PENNANTS, IF POSSIBLE) | | |

N 1: (enters from LEFT)

Ladies and gentlemen, tonight we would like to present 2 plays, Nero Fiddles While Rome Burns and Fiddler on the Roof.

(Safety Inspector enters from RIGHT.)

SI: Ahem. Due to time and space problems, you can only show one play this evening.

N 1: You're joking.

SI: I never joke about time and space problems. (exits RIGHT)

N 1: Ladies and Gentlemen, tonight we would like to present 1 play, Nero Fiddles While Rome Burns. (First Assistant enters from LEFT.)

FA: Excuse me, but there's been a writer's strike.

N 1: Okay, what does that mean?

FA: (stage whispers) We only have half of each play.

N 1: We only have half of each play?!?!

FA: Yes. Two halves. Not two wholes. Only--

N 1: I get it! Can someone get the producer out here, please!

PRO: (entering from LEFT) This better be good. I am busy.

N 1: Tell her.

FA: No. You tell her.

N 1: No way. You tell her.

FA: I'm not going to--

PRO: (grabs N 1 by the shirt front) YOU tell me! NOW!!!

N 1: Due to circumstances that I swear are beyond my control, we can only do one show tonight, but we only have 2 half shows available.

PRO: (screws up face, winces, starts to ask, then shrugs) I won't ask. Do not tell me. However, this is a key question. Which 2 halves do we have?

N 1: (to first assistant) Which 2 halves do we have?

FA: I'll find out right now. (exits LEFT, running)

PRO: For sure we'll have the Rome burning scene.

N 1: But what if--

PRO: For sure we'll have the Rome burning scene.

N 1: Yes, we will.

FA: (runs in from LEFT) We have the opening of Fiddler and the closing of Nero.

PRO: I will not ask why! (N1 exits RIGHT.)

N 2: (entering from LEFT) We have the Rome burning scene ready to go!

PRO: Okay, I want flames, lots of flames! (Fire Marshall enters RIGHT.)

FM: Ahem. Due to fire regulations, there will be no flames on this stage.

PRO: You're joking!

FM: I never joke about fire regulations! (exits RIGHT)

PRO: Okay, bring on the artificial flames. (FA exits LEFT)

N 2: We have real artificial flames!

PRO: Bring on the flames!

(Enter LEFT 3 students wearing Calgary Flames jerseys.)

FLAMES: We are the Flames!

PRO: (slaps hand to forehead, looks up to ceiling) Give me strength!

FA: (rushes in from LEFT carrying barbell) Strength is here!

PRO: Get out! GET OUT!!! (Flames and FA race out LEFT with barbell.)
Bring out the Roman emperor!... Where's Nero?!?!

(Fact Person enters RIGHT wearing sign that says FACT PERSON.)

FP: (pointing to sign) Yes. I am the fact person. (shrugs) It's a living, (shrugs)
Little known fact: Nero couldn't fiddle, not to save his life. He had a slave
fiddle for him. He just liked to hold his violin. He was worse than Jack
Benny. He was even worse than Inspector Clousseau, as played by
Peter Sellers. See historical notes if you missed the original *Pink Panther*
movie. (Fact Person exits LEFT.)

PRO: I don't care if wears dresses! Where's Nero?

FP: (races in LEFT) Actually, the toga he wore regularly resembles a dress.
(exits LEFT)

PRO: Where is NER-RO?

(Fiddler enters from RIGHT with fiddle.)

FID: Did someone call for a fiddler?

PRO: I called for NER-RO!

NERO: (enters from RIGHT) Here I a-am. Where's my fiddle?

PRO: Oh, shut up!

N 2: If you wish, we can take a look at our Fiddler section.

FID: Just which section of me are you talking about?

N 2: Not your section. Our Fiddler on the Roof section.

(Nero exits RIGHT.)

(Safety Inspector enters RIGHT.)

SI: Due to safety regulations, I cannot allow any fiddlers on the roof.
(Exits RIGHT)

PRO: Okay! Okay! Let's see. For safety reasons we have no intention of letting any of your children up on the roof. So it will be, and I'd like a show of hands on this, either a) Fiddler NOT on the Roof (This way we at least keep ROOF in the title.) or, as the safety inspector prefers, b) Fiddler on the Floor. So, by show of hands, a)? Thank you. b)? Thank you. It's Fiddler _____ . Now, can we get on with this show?!?!

N 2: Okay! Let's roll Fiddler! (Nothing happens.) I said, let's roll Fiddler!

SM: (strolls in from LEFT) We can't use our village set!

PRO: What! Why not?

SM: Ask the Fire Marshall. (exits LEFT)

(Fire Marshall enters RIGHT.)

PRO: What is it now?

(Fiddler plays "Fiddler On The Roof.")

FM: That Anatevka village set is a firetrap. You can't have a wooden structure on a public stage.

(Fiddler stops playing.)

PRO: Bring on the asbestos set!

SI: (Safety Inspector enters RIGHT.) Excuse me! Excuse me! Asbestos is a hazardous material! Due to safety regulations--

PRO: All right! All right! What can I use to build my set?

(Fire Marshall and Safety Inspector huddle and whisper.)

FM: You can't have a structure on this stage.

PRO: Why not ?

SI: It would have a roof, and there would be potential for someone to be on the roof.

PRO: You have got to be kidding!

FM/SI: We never kid about regulations! (They stomp off RIGHT.)

PRO: Okay! Scrap the opening village scene! What's next?

FA: (enters LEFT) The 3 older daughters sing "Matchmaker, Matchmaker."

PRO: Send out the 3 daughters. The older ones!

(3 peasant girls enter LEFT. Fiddler plays "Matchmaker, Matchmaker.")

GIRLS: "Matchmaker, matchmaker, make me a match...."

FM: (Fire Marshall races out RIGHT.) Stop! Stop that right now!

(Fiddler stops playing.)

PRO: Their clothes are flammable, right?

FM: We cannot and we will not have children playing with matches!

PRO: It's not that kind of match!

FM: A match is a match! That number is out! (Girls exit LEFT.)
(Fire Marshall exits RIGHT.)

PRO: (clearly sagging) What is next? Please tell me it's nothing that will burn.

FA: "If I Were a Rich Man."

PRO: Don't bother me with your salary demands now! I do not have the time for that!

FA: It's the next song title!

PRO: Oh. Okay. Bring out the wannabe rich guy.

(Tevye enters RIGHT. Fiddler plays "If I Were A Rich Man.")

PM: Dear god, you made many, many poor people--

(School board chair races in LEFT.)

SBC: NO! NO! That will not do!

(Fiddler stops playing.)

PRO: What will not do?

SBC: Prayer in school is not allowed.

PRO: It's not prayer in school! He's a character in a--

SBC: This is a school production. He is a student. He said, and I quote, "Dear God."

PRO: This is not happening!

SBC: You've got that right! (exits LEFT) (Tevye exits RIGHT.)

PRO: (on the verge of sobbing) Is there anything we can put on this stage?

FA: How about "L'Chaim?"

(Fiddler begins to play "L'Chaim.")

PRO: What's a L'Chaim?

FA: It's a song of celebration. It means "to life!"