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Dramatic Publishing

The Frogs: A Modern Adaptation

Comedy by Don Zolidis

The Frogs: A Modern Adaptation

Comedy by Don Zolidis. *Cast: 6 to 25m., 6 to 25w., 8 to 40 either gender.* Disgusted with the state of current entertainment, Dionysus, God of Wine and Poetry, decides that it's time to retrieve Shakespeare from the underworld. Surely if the Bard were given a series on HBO, he'd be able to raise the level of discourse! Accompanied by his trusted servant, Xanthias (the brains of the operation), Dionysus seeks help from Hercules and Charon the Boatman. Unfortunately, his plan to rescue Shakespeare goes horribly awry, as he's captured by a chorus of reality-television-loving demon frogs. The frogs put the god on trial and threaten him with never-ending torment unless he brings more reality shows into the world. It won't be easy for Dionysus to survive, and, even if he does get past the frogs, Jane Austen isn't ready to let Shakespeare escape without a fight. Adapted from Aristophanes' classic satire, *The Frogs* is a hilarious and scathing look at highbrow and lowbrow art. *Flexible staging. Approximate running time: 100 minutes. Code: FF5.*

Cover design: Molly Germanotta.

ISBN: 978-1-61959-067-0



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Your Source for Plays and Musicals Since 1885

311 Washington Street
Woodstock, IL 60098
800-448-7469

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The Frogs: A Modern Adaptation

By
DON ZOLIDIS



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(THE FROGS: A MODERN ADAPTATION)

ISBN: 978-1-61959-067-0

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The Frogs: A Modern Adaptation was first produced at Atherton High School in Louisville, Ky., May 5-9, 2015. It was directed by John Perry and the original cast was as follows:

DIONYSUS	Clay Bonin
XANTHIAS	Lydia Stewart
HERCULES	Daniel Lazar
SALLY/CARRIE ANN INABA	Ashleigh Barks
CHARON	Ryan LeBeau
AEACUS/BRUNO TONIOLI/ LEN GOODMAN/TURTLE/ DOCTOR/PERSONAL TRAINER	Mario Knox
DEBBIE	Megan Morrison
HADES	Samir Kusmic
PERSEPHONE	Angelina Torres
SHAKESPEARE	Shane Klemenz
JANE AUSTEN	Lucy Fitzgerald
SERVANT TO PERSEPHONE	Isabel Armour
NPR RADIO HOST	Kristin Carter
STAGEHAND	Haylee Brumley

The FROGS:

POISON DART TREE FROG	Madalyn Straub
PSYCHOACTIVE TOAD	Ayanna Suggs
CANE TOAD	Michaela French
RED-EYED TREE FROG	Christina Kelty
BULLFROG	Alexis Coomer
TOMATO FROG	Julia Pemberton
HORNY TOAD	Isabel Sloczkowski
HERMIN THE FROG/PUPPETEER	David Gambino

The Frogs: A Modern Adaptation

CHARACTERS

DIONYSUS: God of wine, theatre and revelry.

XANTHIAS: His slave/servant. Female.

HERCULES: A demigod.

SALLY: Hercules' girlfriend.

CHARON: The boatman into the underworld.

AEACUS: Judge of the underworld.

DEBBIE: Maid to Persephone.

HADES: King of the underworld.

PERSEPHONE: Queen of the underworld.

SHAKESPEARE: Playwright, dead.

JANE AUSTEN: Novelist, dead.

TURTLE

PIG

NPR RADIO HOST

DOCTOR

PERSONAL TRAINER

SERVANT: To Persephone.

THREE JUDGES: From a popular TV show.

The FROGS:

POISON DART TREE FROG

PSYCHOACTIVE TOAD

CANE TOAD

RED-EYED TREE FROG

BULLFROG

TOMATO FROG

HORNY TOAD

HERMIN

CHARACTER NOTES

CANE TOAD: Cane Toad should be in an inflatable sumo suit or something similar.

HERMIN: Hermin should be a stuffed animal or puppet controlled by a person wearing all black (the PUPPETEER).

Other specific Frogs may be added as necessary. The Frogs may be played by actors of any gender.

All of the roles may be played by actors of any ethnicity or race.

POP CULTURE REFERENCES

Feel free to update all pop culture references as necessary.

The Frogs: A Modern Adaptation

(Near HERCULES' house. DIONYSUS enters grandly.)

DIONYSUS. Here we are. I recognize the stench.

(XANTHIAS, struggling with a ridiculously large and heavy sack, is attempting to follow.)

DIONYSUS *(cont'd)*. Hurry up. The daylight is fading. Come on there. Put your back into it. Remember—if you believe in yourself, you can accomplish anything.

(XANTHIAS collapses.)

DIONYSUS *(cont'd)*. You need to believe more.

XANTHIAS. I believe I have collapsed.

DIONYSUS. You may leave it there for the moment.

(XANTHIAS rolls out from underneath the sack.)

XANTHIAS. Do we need all of this?

DIONYSUS. Do we need all of this, is that what you just asked?

I'm not a savage. *(Begins removing things from the sack. A folding chair.)* I'm not about to undertake an impossible, amazing journey without the full complement of supplies. *(He takes out a folding table of some kind.)* You see, there's a certain style that is required when one is a God—*(He takes out a bottle of wine and glasses.)* But you wouldn't know anything about that, would you? Because you are not a God. You are a mere human, destined to live out your pathetic brief life toiling away for others—like me. Assume the position.

(XANTHIAS gets on her hands and knees, and DIONYSUS puts his foot on her as a foot rest.)

DIONYSUS *(cont'd)*. I require fanning.

XANTHIAS. I'm having difficulty, sir, I can't—

DIONYSUS. A good servant would fan me and be a footstool at the same time. Also, sing me a song. Something by Beyoncé.

XANTHIAS *(singing softly)*. All the single ladies, all the single ladies, put your hands up—
Sir, I—

DIONYSUS. More singing! I cannot hear you until I have gotten down.

XANTHIAS. Whoa oh oh woah whoah put your hands up—
All the single ladies all the single ladies—
Can I ask what we're doing here, sir?

DIONYSUS. Oh so you want some exposition, do you?

XANTHIAS. It would be nice—

DIONYSUS. IT WOULD BE NICE IF MY SERVANT WOULD BE A FOOTSTOOL AND ALSO FAN ME AND ALSO SING EMPOWERING SONGS BY BEYONCÉ, BUT WE CAN'T ALL GET WHAT WE WANT, CAN WE? *(He gets up.)* That's it. You've ruined it. My whole groove. I hope you're happy.

XANTHIAS. Sorry, sir.

DIONYSUS. Sorry? You think sorry is going to put me in a better mood? Dance like a monkey.

XANTHIAS. Come on. I've got a little bit of pride.

DIONYSUS. I'll give you a cracker.

XANTHIAS. I don't even know how to dance like a monkey.

DIONYSUS. What are they teaching children these days?!
Like this! *(He does a little monkey dance.)*

XANTHIAS. That's not a very good monkey dance.

DIONYSUS. Are you kidding me? I am amazing at this!
These are part of my godlike abilities!

XANTHIAS. I can see the technical skill, but I'm not really seeing the heart in it.

DIONYSUS. Oh yeah? Well check this out then! (*He dances more like a monkey.*)

XANTHIAS. I've seen better.

DIONYSUS. What about this? And this?! I am all heart! I AM ALL HEART!

(*DIONYSUS really gets into it as HERCULES enters, wearing a lion skin.*)

HERCULES. What's going on out here?!

DIONYSUS. Ah!

XANTHIAS. He was dancing like a monkey.

DIONYSUS. I was not!

XANTHIAS. It wasn't very good.

HERCULES. Are you someone I need to fight?

DIONYSUS. No no, not at all, you see—

HERCULES. Are you sure I don't need to fight you?

DIONYSUS. I'm a lover, not a fighter.

HERCULES. Dang it. Every day I sit here and think, "Who will challenge the mighty Hercules? Who has the courage to fight me like a man?" Basically nobody. So I say, "How about any monsters? Are there any monsters in the vicinity who will come and challenge Hercules?" No takers. Seriously. I put out a call for Gorgons to fight me—nobody. So I remain, constantly ready, practicing my wrestling skills, waiting for the moment when a champion shall appear— (*He looks at XANTHIAS.*) You look Champion-like.

XANTHIAS. No I am not. I am a pathetic and miserable slave named Xanthias. *(Bows.)* Ow. I just hurt myself.

DIONYSUS. Hercules, we have come on a most important mission—

HERCULES. YES! I WILL JOIN YOU TO BATTLE WHATEVER IT IS WE ARE FIGHTING!

DIONSYUS. That's not actually why I'm here—I am Dionysus, God of Wine—

HERCULES. Oh yeah. I think you're one of my uncles.

DIONYSUS. Right, but—

(SALLY enters.)

SALLY. What's going on out here?

HERCULES. Honey, this does not concern you. This is the domain of Gods!

SALLY. He doesn't look very godlike.

DIONYSUS. I am incognito.

SALLY. And I thought we were partners from now on.

HERCULES. Sarah—

SALLY. Sally.

HERCULES. You sure?

SALLY. Yes.

HERCULES. Who's Sarah? Did you do something with Sarah?

SALLY. I'm Sally! Your girlfriend.

HERCULES. Oh. Right. Um ... Listen, baby, Hercules is probably gonna have to go on an epic quest now.

SALLY. Woah woah woah—no—we have company coming over! You have an epic quest to mop the kitchen floor.

HERCULES. Bah! No mop can hold Hercules!

SALLY. My mother is coming and she is very judgmental.

HERCULES. I SHALL CRUSH HER LIKE A CHIHUAHUA!

SALLY. Hey! No! You will not!

HERCULES. She's got this really high-pitched whiny voice, it's like listening to a police siren. You guys need me to come with, right?

DIONYSUS. I'm just looking for directions, actually.

HERCULES. To where?

DIONYSUS. Hades.

XANTHIAS. Dun dun dun.

SALLY. Hercules can't go to Hades. He's got chores to do.

HERCULES. I can go to Hades if I want! Your mother can go to Hades!

SALLY. You are *not* going to Hades! Last time you went you came back with that stupid three-headed dog! Who has to take care of that beast? Not the mighty Hercules, I can tell you that much! He's eaten five of our dog-walkers! You tell these people how to go to Hades and you get back here right now! *(She flounces off.)*

DIONYSUS. If this is a bad time I can come back.

HERCULES. No uh ... so the fastest way to get to Hades—take a rope, put it around your neck, jump off a stool, you'll be there in no time.

DIONYSUS. That's not actually the method I was thinking of—

HERCULES. Walk out into traffic. Lay down. Wait for a car.

DIONYSUS. That's not really what I had in mind—

HERCULES. Oooh oooh oooh—fight me.

DIONYSUS. No.

HERCULES. It'll be awesome. We'll make it really dramatic. *(He begins acting out an entire fight with himself.)* You'll be like, "I must crush you, Hercules!" And I'll be like,

“No one crushes Hercules!” And then it’s like bam! Bam! Waaaaa! Then I’m like hit and I’m down on one knee like this and you’re like, “Why won’t you die!” And I’ll be like “I’m immortal,” and you’ll be like, “Nooooo!” And then I grab you by your face and then I go “Aaaaaaah!” And I crush your skull. It’ll be really tasteful. Blood everywhere.

DIONYSUS. That sounds like fun, BUT—I need to go there in one piece.

HERCULES. Why?

DIONYSUS. Shall I lay out my grand quest for you? Thank you, I shall! As you know, I am Dionysus, God of Theatre, Merriment and Alcohol.

XANTHIAS. Just wine. We got another guy for hard liquor.

DIONYSUS. I will decide what I am God of, thank you very much. And lately, I have become highly distressed. You see—have you watched television lately?

HERCULES. I got Netflix, I don’t watch network TV anymore. And Sally doesn’t really like watching cool stuff, so—

DIONYSUS. Well, I do! And it’s terrible! You know what I watched last night? *Unusually Large Foods*. This was a show about unusually large foods.

XANTHIAS. There wasn’t a lot of mystery.

DIONYSUS. I lost half-an-hour of my life watching someone build a 30-ton pretzel! Who the heck is going to eat that?!

HERCULES. Where was this pretzel?

DIONYSUS. Well I’m sick of it!

XANTHIAS. Sick of it!

DIONYSUS. And I’m going to do something about it!

XANTHIAS. Do something about it!

DIONYSUS. What are you doing now?

XANTHIAS. I got your back. I’m supportive.

DIONSYSUS. Stop. OK? Stop. And that's just the tip of the iceberg—I turn on the TV, I'm watching shows about unpleasant, large-bottomed girls and reality shows about fishing! Reality shows about fishing! So—I have a solution—

XANTHIAS. Kill everyone.

DIONYSUS. No.

XANTHIAS. Oh I'm sorry I thought this was where you became a supervillain.

DIONYSUS. It is not!

HERCULES. Ooh! Do the supervillain thing. Then, I fight you. Awesome.

DIONYSUS. No, my plan is to go into Hades, find Shakespeare, and bring him back from the dead! And then I set him up with a show on HBO with a pretty serious budget.

HERCULES. And that will fix the world?

DIONSYSUS. Of course it will! I am determined, my trusty slave—

XANTHIAS. Servant—

DIONSYSUS. Is going to help me—And let me tell you, I have no fear of the underworld. I don't care if the shades of the dead tear Xanthias here limb from limb, I don't care if she goes mad from the screaming horror of tormented spirits, I don't care if small insects burrow into her skin and build hives in there—and then lay eggs which will erupt later in an a mind-bogglingly painful way!

HERCULES. All right. I'll help you... tell you what—take my lion skin—

SALLY (*from offstage*). Are you giving them your lion skin?

HERCULES. No.

SALLY (*shouting from offstage*). You wrestled a lion for that lion skin!

HERCULES. Just let me handle this, OK? OK, I'm going to leave this here ... and then you put it on and you pretend to be me—that way you'll get a lot of respect.

SALLY (*offstage*). This floor isn't going to mop itself!

HERCULES (*calling off*). Yes, dear.

DIONYSUS. You didn't tell us where to go!

HERCULES. Oh. Right. Go down this road, take a left, there'll be a big flashing sign that says Hades—and then a hole in the ground and a ladder. Take that. And if you fall off the ladder you'll get there quicker.

DIONYSUS. Wait, what?

HERCULES. Just kidding. Seriously—kill yourself.

DIONYSUS. No!

HERCULES. I gotta go.

(HERCULES darts off sheepishly.)

XANTHIAS. Well he was nice.

(DIONYSUS puts on the lion skin.)

DIONYSUS. How do I look? Do I look like a mighty hero sure to strike fear into the hearts of my enemies?

XANTHIAS. No.

DIONYSUS. Oh well. Come faithful slave!

XANTHIAS. Servant.

DIONYSUS. Whatever. Our journey continues!

(They exit.)

(They return momentarily.)

DIONSYUS. See it yet?

XANTHIAS. No.

DIONYSUS. If only we had some kind of sign.

(A flashing sign saying “Hades” drops from the catwalks or is carried in in some fashion.)

XANTHIAS. I think it’s this way.

DIONYSUS. You go first.

*(Smoke. Thunder. Lightning flash.
Elevator sound—ding!)*

DIONYSUS *(cont’d)*. That was less epic than I feared.

(More thunder. CHARON enters, wheeled in on a skiff. He raises his arms. Perhaps fog or smoke or thunder.)

DIONYSUS *(cont’d)*. Mommy!

(DIONYSUS tries to flee, but XANTHIAS pushes him back.)

XANTHIAS. Remember, you’re immortal.

DIONSYUS. I’m not that immortal!

(CHARON raises one hand importantly, then deliberately presses a device on his belt. Awful pop music, like One Direction or Justin Bieber, plays. NOTE: Any contemporary awful pop music that is familiar with your audience can be used.)

DIONYSUS. Ah! It burns! No I can’t do it!

XANTHIAS. Get a hold of yourself! You can do this!

DIONYSUS. Arrrghhh ... must fight it ... I can do this ...

XANTHIAS. Buns of steel, sir.

DIONYSUS. What?

(XANTHAIS slaps DIONYSUS in the rear, knocking him forward.)

DIONYSUS *(cont'd)*. I AM HERCULES AND I EAT BUGS FOR DINNER! Uh... CEASE YOUR TERRIBLE MUSIC.

(CHARON stops the music. Then holds out a hand.)

DIONYSUS *(cont'd)*. What's that mean?

(CHARON makes a motion with a second hand for payment.)

DIONYSUS *(cont'd)*. We're doing charades. OK, I'm good at this. I totally invented this. I mean—MIGHTY HERCULES PLAYS CHARADES WITH NO ONE EXCEPT GOOD FRIENDS.

CHARON *(ghostly)*. I require payment. Or I shall play the music again.

DIONYSUS. No! Uh... how much is it?

CHARON. One soul.

DIONYSUS. Awesome. Um ...

(DIONYSUS reaches back and grabs XANTHIAS.)

CHARON. Freely given.

DIONYSUS. Oh. *(DIONYSUS takes XANTHIAS aside.)* So you got this, right?

XANTHIAS. No!

DIONYSUS. If you were a God, and I was a slave—

XANTHIAS. Servant—

DIONYSUS. I would totally sacrifice my soul for you. That's because I love you. And obviously you don't love me as much as I would love you under imaginary circumstances. *(Goes back to CHARON.)* I WILL FIGHT YOU INSTEAD!

CHARON. Excellent.

(CHARON takes out a gigantic weapon of some kind. Possibly a nerf gun.)

DIONYSUS. Ah! *(Runs and hides behind XANTHIAS.)* Take this one first!

CHARON. Dionysus?

DIONYSUS. No you must be mistaken I am totally Hercules.

CHARON. I'd recognize that girlish scream anywhere. Dude! Oh man! What's up?!

DIONYSUS. Not much. Just going to Hades to steal Shakespeare.

CHARON. That's awesome!

XANTHIAS. You know this guy?

CHARON. Oh man me and D-man partied hard! Right!?

DIONYSUS. I don't even remember it actually.

CHARON. That's how hard we partied! This dude, this dude right here—man, you ought to be illegal, man—this dude is CRAZY! I love it! Sweet and now he's like going to the Underworld and breaking out playwrights?! Get out! Best prank ever!

DIONYSUS. I know, right?

CHARON. I know! High-five!

(CHARON high-fives DIONYSUS, loses his hand.)

DIONYSUS. AAAH!

CHARON. AAAAAH! *(He starts laughing.)* That was awesome man! Don't worry dude I got another one. Chest bump? You wanna do chest bump?

DIONYSUS. I'm actually kind of in a hurry.