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Dramatic Publishing

LA VIE ENNUI

Book, music and lyrics
by
GREGG OPELKA

a musical sorbet about life, love
and annoying accordion players



Dramatic Publishing

Woodstock, Illinois • England • Australia • New Zealand

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(LA VIE ENNUI)

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La Vie Ennui premiered May 19, 2002, at Theater Building Chicago, with Karol Kent as Fatiguée, Sheila Myrcik as Dominique and Gregg Opelka as Jean-Paul-Pierre. The production was directed and choreographed by Suzanne Avery Thompson and stage-managed by Jill Yetsky.

MUSICAL NUMBERS

On stage at Chez Leplée

1. A Couple of Belles Coquettes
2. Sad Songs
3. It's a Crazy World, N'est-ce Pas?
4. Say "Je t'aime"
5. The Accordeonist Song
6. Why Say Au Revoir?
7. You've Got to Be a Waif

In the dressing room

8. Living in the Cinema
9. Noo Zherzay

On stage at Chez Leplée

10. Toujours, But Not Today
11. The Boys of Days Gone By
12. The Tavern in Town
13. La Vie Ennui
14. It's a Crazy World, N'est-ce Pas? (reprise)

LA VIE ENNUI

A Full-length Musical
For 2 Women, 1 Pianist

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

FATIGUEE FOURBU a chanteuse at Chez Leplée,
about 40-45
DOMINIQUE JOLIE . . the other chanteuse at Chez Leplée,
about 33-37
JEAN-PAUL-PIERRE their accompanist;
ideally he should look like he's around 35-45

TIME: 1950.

PLACE: Chez Leplée, a small, run-down cabaret in the
Montmartre district of Paris, France.

Approximate running time: 90 minutes with no intermis-
sion.

A NOTE ABOUT PRONUNCIATION AND ACCENTS

Dominique and Fatiguée should always speak in a French accent. In general, they should pronounce all italicized French words correctly, with the accent on the final syllable, except when doing so would cause confusion or incomprehension in the listener.

On occasion throughout the play, it is necessary to sacrifice authenticity in pronunciation for the sake of clarity and to please the English listener's ears. I leave it to the director and cast's judgment to make the most tasteful decisions in this matter.

In general, it is better not to overexaggerate the accent or to make the character appear unbelievable because the accent is too prominent.

Also, the word *Paris* should always be pronounced like the American name "Mary," only with the accent on the final syllable.

LA VIE ENNUI

The place is Paris, France. The time is 1950. A nearly bare stage. Toward UR is a piano. On one side of the stage, about midway from the edge of the stage to the back wall, stands a small table, with two chairs at it. Overhead, there should be a sign saying “Chez Leplée.”

LOUDSPEAKER VOICEOVER (*male voice*). *Mesdames, messieurs, j'ai le très grand plaisir de vous souhaiter la bienvenue ce soir Chez Leplée... (Suddenly realizing his mistake.) Oh! Pardon! (Starting over.) Ladies and gentlemen, it gives me a large pleasure to bid all of you this beautiful evening a very warm welcome to Chez Leplée, our little nightclub set right in the heart of the off-off-off-off-Montmartre district. Tonight, your two favorite songbirds, Dominique and Fatiguée, have a wonderful surprise in store for you. But first a few words before we get underway. If you would like to have a cigarette, go right ahead—who are we to stop you? If you would like a glass of wine or a cocktail, please be our guest. We'll be doing the same. And if any of you *wealthy* gentlemen in the audience would like to meet either of our lovely ladies *after* the show, well, in Paris (*short beat*) anything is possible. And now, *mes amis*, Chez Leplée is honored to present Dominique Joli and*

Fatiguée Fourbu in a special one-night-only presentation of their new musical sorbet, *La Vie Ennui*.

(The stage is pitch black. We can just barely make out the silhouette of a man, who enters during the voice-over with a wine glass in hand and moves to the piano, where he sets the wine glass down. The man, JEAN-PAUL-PIERRE, is shabbily but artistically dressed in a gypsy sort of way. His age is irrelevant, but he should be old enough to be decadent without forgiving him it for his youth. He is wearing a daring colored shirt and an ascot but no jacket. He sits down at the piano and launches into a fiery downward run and a glissando back up. Just as he finishes, from opposite sides enter DOMINIQUE, a tall, beautiful—in an earthy, street sort of way—woman of about thirty-five with a dancer’s body, legs starting somewhere just beneath her neck, and FATIGUEE, a less, but not unattractive woman about five or seven years senior. They are both dressed in very elegant, but also very provocative outfits. They ooze self-assurance.)

(SONG #1: A COUPLE OF BELLES COQUETTES)

BOTH.

**WE’RE A COUPLE OF *BELLES COQUETTES*,
SINGING SONGS ABOUT NO REGRETS,
WORKING EVERY NIGHT OF EVERY DAY
IN AN OLD PARISIAN CABARET.**

**WE’VE BEEN DOING THIS FOR A WHILE,
SO WE’RE GOOD AT THE PAINTED SMILE.
NO, THE PUBLIC NEVER KNOWS.**

THEY SEE JUST *LA VIE EN ROSE*.
AND THEY DON'T CARE WHO YOU ARE,
JUST AS LONG AS YOU ARE SUFFERING LIKE
DANS SOME FILM NOIR. THEY JUST WANT
“GIVE YOUR HEART AND SOUL TO ME,
AND LIFE WILL ALWAYS BE...” ET CETERA.

WE'RE A COUPLE OF *CREPE SUZETTES*,
SERVING UP A FEW *CHANSONNETTES*
ABOUT LIFE, AND *L'AMOUR*, AND ENNUI, AND
ALLURE,
NOTHING LESS, NOTHING MORE,
ABOUT YOU? TO BE SURE.
IN A RUNDOWN, SMOKY, DARK, DECREPIT OLD
PARISIAN CABARET.

DOMINIQUE. *Bon soir, mes amis! Bienvenus!* Welcome
to Chez Leplée. Ooh, and there are so many of you!
That is nice. *(To FATIGUEE.)* We will make good
money tonight, Fatiguée. *(To audience.)* My friends, I do
not know about you, but I am going to have a marvelous
time this evening.

FATIGUEE *(quietly impatient)*. Dominique!

DOMINIQUE. Eh?

FATIGUEE. Just get on with it.

DOMINIQUE *(just slightly contrite)*. *Oui.*

(Sings.)

**JE M'APPELLE DOMINIQUE
ALLO AND BON SOIR, MONSIEUR.
YOU LOOK *TRES MAGNIFIQUE*,
AND I'M SURE YOU ARE, MONSIEUR.**

FATIGUEE.

JE M'APPELLE FATIGUEE

I'M A TIRED CAT, MONSIEUR.
BUT TONIGHT, *S'IL VOUS PLAIT*,
WE'LL HAVE NONE OF THAT, MONSIEUR.

BOTH.

NO SONGS *AMERICAIN* YOU'LL HEAR,
NO BANJO ON MY KNEE.
AND, *PARDONNEZ MOI*,
YOU'LL HEAR NO CHATTANOOGA CHOOCHOO
TRAIN.

WHOOOO, WHOO.

PAS DU TOUT!

WE'RE TWO GIRLS FROM PAREE. WHEE!
WE'RE A COUPLE OF GAY *GRISSETTES*,
LIVING LIFE BETWEEN CIGARETTES,
AND WE'RE ALWAYS AT WORK,
WE'RE NEVER AT HOME,
GROWING OLD IN THIS COLD CATACOMB.

BUT WE WELCOME YOU, NONETHELESS,
AND WE'RE READY TO EFFERVESCE.

YOU MAY CLAP, YOU MAY NOT.
YOU MAY NAP, IF YOU'RE HOT.
YOU MAY COUGH, YOU MAY MOVE.
OR RUN OFF TO THE *LOUVRE*.
WE DON'T MIND, WE DON'T CARE.
FOR WHO PAID FOR YOUR CHAIR?

BUT WE HOPE IF YOU STAY
YOU'LL BE GLAD AND YOU'LL SAY:

**WHO WOULD THINK YOU COULD SEE
SUCH A SLICE OF PAREE,
ALL THE TEARS AND THE *JOIE*,
AND THE FEARS, *PAR MA FOI*,
AND WHAT *JE NE SAIS QUOI*,
AND THE GIRLS, OOH LA LA!**

**IN A RUNDOWN, SMOKY, DARK, DECREPIT OLD
PARISIAN CABARET.
WE'RE A COUPLE OF *BELLES COQUETTES*.
WE'RE A COUPLE OF *CREPES SUZETTES*.
WE'RE A COUPLE OF...
ET CETERA.**

DOMINIQUE (*to audience, very hospitably, as applause fades*). *Bon soir, mes amis*. My friends. You look ravishing tonight. *Absolument*. (*Beat*.) And so do I, don't you think? Eh? (*Coaxes applause from audience*.) *Merci, merci beaucoup. Vous êtes très sympathique*.

FATIGUEE (*sarcastically*). I love an unsolicited compliment.

DOMINIQUE. *Ma chère Fatiguée*, compliments are like the police: Sometimes they come on their own...and other times you must call for them.

FATIGUEE. And in either case they are usually not worth the whistle.

DOMINIQUE (*sweetly pleading*). Oh, *Fatiguée*, don't be so pessimistic. After all, tonight we have gained our *liberté*. We are free. Free. Free as birds...to sing whatever we like. No Monsieur *Leplée* breathing down our neck.

FATIGUEE (*to audience*). Oh, *pardon*. You do not understand, *n'est-ce pas?* You see, dear audience, Monsieur *Leplée*—our boss—he is the owner of this cabaret. (*Sar-*

castic.) Yes, I know. It is lovely, isn't it? And Henri Leplée is...how shall I put it?

DOMINIQUE. He is demanding.

FATIGUEE. She means, he is a bastard. He makes us sing only the songs of Edith Piaf every night. Night after night after night. *(Singing.) "Mon legionnaire."*

DOMINIQUE. *"Non, rien de rien. Non..."*

BOTH. *"da da da da milord, da da da da milord..."*

FATIGUEE. You see, M. Leplée is far too cheap to hire *la grande dame*, Mademoiselle Piaf, herself. So while she is over at Cafe Matou working for *real* money, we are stuck here pathetically recreating her material for a quarter of the pay. It is too depressing.

DOMINIQUE. But tonight, my friends, M. Leplée, with a little *assistance* from yours truly, has been conveniently detained for questioning at the Bureau of the Chief *Inspecteur* of Police.

FATIGUEE. Not so convenient for him. What a pity!

DOMINIQUE. *Quel dommage!* *(They laugh.)* They promised not to release him any earlier than midnight.

FATIGUEE *(to DOMINIQUE)*. For twenty francs more, they'd have kept him till morning.

DOMINIQUE *(to FATIGUEE)*. Twenty francs—it is too much. For twenty francs I can buy that blue beret at *Monde de la Mode*. Why should I waste them on M. Leplée?

FATIGUEE *(to audience)*. Anyway, with M. Leplée out of the way, that means that tonight—and tonight only—Dominique and I will be singing our own repertoire. At last!

DOMINIQUE. *Enfin!*

BOTH. Finally!

(JEAN-PAUL-PIERRE plays a high note on the piano repeatedly to get their attention.)

DOMINIQUE. Ooh. We nearly forgot. That *occasionally* sober man at the piano is our *accompanist*—and good friend, Jean-Paul-Pierre.

(JPP rises and indifferently bows to audience, then sits down very hurriedly.)

FATIGUEE. As you can see, he is a real firecracker.

DOMINIQUE. We are only kidding, Jean-Paul-Pierre. You know, for a man of your age, you don't look half bad. *(To audience.)* I guess nothing preserves as well as good Bordeaux.

BOTH *(knowingly, to each other)*. By the barrel!

FATIGUEE. Jean-Paul-Pierre. It is an unusual name, no? At first we thought Pierre was his last name. But later on we learned the truth. His mother wasn't sure who the real father was, so she named him after the three most likely suspects.

DOMINIQUE *(beat)*. I like to call him "Je-pee-pee." *(Giggle.)* For short.

FATIGUEE *(sharply)*. Dominique! Our guests are growing impatient.

DOMINIQUE *(sexily)*. I certainly hope so.

FATIGUEE. What song shall we start with?

DOMINIQUE. I don't care. How about a good sad one?

FATIGUEE. Is there any other kind?

(SONG #2: SAD SONGS)

DOMINIQUE.

**SAD SONGS ARE ALL THE RAGE,
BOTH AT *LE CINÉMA* AND ON THE STAGE.
FOR GLAD SONGS GET THEM ANNOYED.
KEEP SINGING GLAD SONGS,
YOU'LL SOON BE UNEMPLOYED.
THE MODERN ARTIST MUST BE DEPRESSED.
SO, DARLING, PLEASE, NO MAJOR KEYS
AND BEAT YOUR BREAST.**

FATIGUEE.

**SAD SONGS,
THAT'S ALL THEY WANT
IN EVERY CABARET AND RESTAURANT
FOR GLAD SONGS JUST MAKE THEM BLUE.
SING LOTS OF THEM AND SOON THE
BUMS WILL PITY YOU.
SHOW PAIN AND ANGUISH RIGHT FROM THE
START.
IF YOU'RE NOT SUFFERING, MY FRIEND, IT
ISN'T ART.**

FATIGUEE (*D sings the countermelody wails*).

**JUST SING A DARK, DREARY AIR,
OR YOU WILL NOT HAVE A PRAYER.
LEARN HOW TO SPLURGE,**

DOMINIQUE.

SING A DIRGE

BOTH.

ON THE VERGE OF DESPAIR.

DOMINIQUE (*F sings the countermelody wails*).
A TOUCH OF BRECHT WILL CONNECT,
A BIT OF BREL GOES DOWN WELL.

BOTH.
YOU WON'T BE POOR FOR TOO LONG
IF YOU LEARN TO SING A BITTER SONG.

SAD SONGS,
THAT'S WHAT THEY CRAVE.
WEAR BLACK AND LOOK LIKE
YOU STEPPED FROM YOUR GRAVE.

FOR GLAD SONGS ARE SO *PASSÉ*.
CHIRP SOMETHING CHEERFUL AND
THEY'LL LOCK YOU AWAY.
SING OF LIFE'S HARDSHIP. BE DISCONTENT.
SONGS ABOUT RAINBOWS AND
THE SPRING DON'T PAY THE RENT.

SO IF YOU WANT TO SUCCEED,
DO NOT DEPART FROM THIS CREED.
SPEAK IN A HUSH, NEVER BLUSH,
AND DON'T GUSH LIKE CANDIDE.

YOU'LL BE A STAR OVERNIGHT
AND THE REVIEWERS' DELIGHT.
YOUR FANS WILL LINE UP IN THROGS
JUST TO SEE YOUR DRAB OBSESSING,
SO TO WIN THEIR BLESSING,
SING A FEW DEPRESSING SONGS.

DOMINIQUE. Speaking of *l'amour*, Fatiguée, how is your
new *beau*?

FATIGUEE. What do you mean? We weren't speaking of *l'amour*.

DOMINIQUE. That never stopped me from prying before. Come on, tell us all. How is he?

FATIGUEE. Don't be irrelevant.

DOMINIQUE. Come on, Fatiguée, how is that *hot new man* of yours?

FATIGUEE. Gaston? (*Angry.*) You are only half right. He is hot, but he is not a man. He is a rat. He is a skunk. I dumped him like an ashtray as soon as I found out about Jeanette. Bringing me Swiss chocolate and *americain* cigarettes—and all along two-timing me with that cheap customs agent.

DOMINIQUE. No!

FATIGUEE. Where do you think he got the chocolate and the cigarettes?

DOMINIQUE (*angry on F's behalf*). Men!

FATIGUEE (*suddenly becoming dreamy and starry-eyed*).

But he was so beautiful. His voice was like a symphony, his body like a rhapsody. His mind...

DOMINIQUE. ...a non-entity.

FATIGUEE (*still dreamy*). Do you think I cared about his mind when he was kissing me?

DOMINIQUE (*recouping*). Nevertheless, you are better off without him. Besides, there are millions of other men in Paris.

FATIGUEE. I suppose you mean that as comfort? That there are a million more pigs like him out there? No, Dominique, *fini! C'est tout!* I am through with *l'amour*. It is tiresome. And worse, it is...repetitive. Like those stupid old songs they sang before the first war—with their blue skies and full moons and red roses and all that

other *merde*. Most people count birthdays to tell how old they are. I count failed love affairs. And divide by two. Last year it was Marcel and André. The year before that it was Pierre and Philippe. The year before that it was Michel, Antoine and Grégoire.

DOMINIQUE. Really? Three that year?

FATIGUEE. It was a leap year. (*Beat.*) I had an extra day.

DOMINIQUE (*completely understanding her logic*). Ah, *oui*. Of course. (*Short pause.*) But really, Fatiguée, you know as well as I do that six weeks, a month from now, some handsome *garçon* will come strolling in to Chez Leplée. He'll buy you a cocktail—or more likely, you'll buy him a cocktail—and there you'll go again—singing that same old song, blue skies, full moon, red roses.

FATIGUEE. *Merde!* Not *moi*. After Gaston, I am finished. (*Suddenly dreamy again.*) But you know what the worst part about it is? I miss the *americain* cigarettes.