

THE DEAN OF OZ
(A Musical Tragedy)

Douglas M. Stokes

To my students, without whom I could not have remained a misanthrope.

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DRAMATIS PERSONAE
(in order of appearance)

Narrator.....
Ms. Metaphor.....
Student #1.....
Student #2.....
Student #3.....
The rest of the students.....
Dorothea.....
Tutu, Dorothea¹'s dog..... Heather(?)
Cook.....
Student #4.....
Munchkin Leader.....
The Munchkins.....
Munchkin #1.....
Munchkin #2.....
Munchkin #3.....
The Scatterbrain.....
The Tin Hoodlum.....
The Cowardly Linebacker.....
The Director of Admissions.....
The Dean of Oz.....
The Wicked Teach of Science.....

THE DEAN OF OZ

Narrator: Our story opens in the quaint little town of Squalorville, Pennsylvania, where our plucky heroine Dorothea and her equally plucky canine companion, Tutu [hopefully played by Heather] are attempting to learn mathematics in a classroom at Elvis Costello High School, which has been devastated by the disastrous and morally bankrupt policies of the public education system of this country.

[Scene fades to classroom where students are throwing spitballs and airplanes, many of them wandering around aimlessly, suffering from obvious brain damage.]

Teacher: O.K. class, please come to order. Class!

[Nobody does of course come to order.]

Teacher: I have an announcement to read to you from the principal's office. There will be no recess today because of this morning's stabbing. Repeat, there will be no recess. Has anyone here seen Leon Rosetti?

Student #1: Doncha remember, teach? Leon OD'ed Saturday night.

Student #2: That's right teach!

Teacher: All right let us begin our lesson for today. Consider the equation $x^2 + 6x = \sin x$. What would you do to solve this equation?

Student #3. Well, you could subtract $\sin x$ from both sides.

Teacher: How pedantic. How mechanical. Don't you have any imagination? Listen to the equation: $x^2 + 6x = \sin x$. Don't you hear the alliteration? The author of this equation did not intend us to take it literally. Listen to what it is saying carefully. "An ex-square and a success combined together produce Sinex." Don't you get it? A cold remedy. The author is telling us that if we give up conventional behavior but experience success anyway, we will feel as if we didn't earn it and will feel physical discomfort. Either that or the author meant "square sex and sick sex are both sinful sex."

Dorothea (hereafter, D): Ms. Metaphor, when are we going to get a regular mathematics teacher? I'm sure you're a great English teacher, but you don't seem to know very much about mathematics!

Teacher: I'll have you know I am a tenured teacher. I have thirty years experience. It just so happens that there are no qualified math teachers to hire. And even if there were, the teachers' union would forbid hiring them if it meant laying off tenured faculty members who have dedicated 'their lives to this school, as I have!

[Bell rings.]

Teacher: O.K., class, time for lunch.

D: Come along, Tutu. It's time to eat.

[Dorothea walks across the stage to the lunchroom. Students in the hall are doing various degenerate things (girls dressed like prostitutes soliciting, boys shooting up, etc.). One of them looks at Dorothea as she moves past, exclaiming "Hey, mamma!" Finally Dorothea arrives at the lunch room and takes a tray.]

D (to cook)J What's for lunch today?

Cook: Rat meat and dandelion souffle.

D: Rat meat! That's the third time this week we've had rat meat!

Cook: Didn't you hear, sugar? The Secretary of Agriculture has declared rat meat a vegetable. We have to give it to you if we want to be eligible for federal funding.

D (sighs): Somewhere there must be a better place than this, a nicer place.

[Dorothea looks dreamy-eyed and bursts into song:]

D: Somewhere, o-on the Main Line
There's a school.
There's a school that I've dreamed of
Where everything is cool.

Way above the smokestack tops,
With all those little preppy shops,
That's where you'll find me.

I'll eat those Hoffert's candy drops.
At Mallory's I'll quickly stop.
I'll be a preppy.

Somewhere, o-on the Main Line.
There's a school.
There's a school that I've dreamed of
Where everything is cool.

[Dorothea collapses on table. Students rush over to her.]

Student #2: I think she's unconscious.

Student #3: She must- have caught rabies from eating the rat meat.

Student #2: Doesn't that cause hallucinations?

Student #3: Why yes, I think it does.

[Exit students quietly. Enter Munchkins (dressed like small round doughnuts) on tiptoes. Munchkins assemble quietly around Dorothea and then burst out in song.]

Munchkins:

Ding, dong, the teach is dead.
The wicked teach, the mean old teach.
Ding, dong, the wicked teach is dead.

Ding, dong, we flunked her test.
We tried our "best."
Ding, dong, she's gone to her final rest.

D (waking): Where am I?

Munchkin Leader: All hail the prom queen!

D: I'm not a prom queen at all. Prom queens are smart and beautiful and rich. I'm just a poor girl from Squalorville.

Munchkin Leader: Well, you sure psyched out our math teacher. She's completely catatonic. Man, you sure gave some weird answers on your oral exam. It was if if you had rabies or something.

Dorothea: You mean she flipped out? Then there's no more math requirement?

Munchkin Leader: None at all.

D: Who are you?

[Munchkins all giggle.]

Munchkin Leader: We're the munchkins.

D: And this place, where am I?

Munchkin Leader: Isn't that obvious. We are munchkins after all, You're at Dunkin' Doughnuts. (Munchkins giggle.)

D: Dunkin' Doughnuts. But isn't that right near the Ozzie and Harriet Nelson School for the Overprivileged?

Munchkin Leader: It sure is!

D: How do I get there?

Munchkin #1: Just follow Lancaster Ave.

Munchkin #2: Just follow Lancaster Ave.

Munchkin #3* Just Follow Lancaster Ave.

Munchkins (singing in unison):
Follow, follow, follow, follow
Follow Lancaster Ave.

You're off to see the Dean.
The wonderful Dean of Oz.
He's a lean and keen ol' dean.
If ever a dean there was.

If ever awhever a deean there was
The Dean of Oz is one "because...
Because of the wonderful things he does.

You're off to see the Dean,
The wonderful Dean of Oz.

[Dorothea and Tutu skip around the stage one time and then encounter the Scatterbrain, who is busily trying to operate a calculator. Munchkins have exited.]

D: Why, who on earth are you?

Scatterbrain (hereafter SB): Oh, I'm just a poor hopeless scatterbrain. I can't even find the cosine of pi over two on this calculator.

D. (looks at calculator): Oh, that's because you have to have it in radian mode.

SB: Oh, I'm afraid I'm an awful twit. My favorite TV shows are "Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous" and "Too Close for Comfort." My idol is Merv Griffin. I thought Isaac Newton was a wide receiver. Gee whiz, if I only had some brain!

SB (sings):
I'd regale the cocktail parties
With anecdotes and stories
About Moliere and Gide.

I'd solve those biquadratics
And analyze schematics
If I only had some brains.

Oh, I'd go to a formal.
I wouldn't be subnormal.
I wouldn't even drool.

I wouldn't be no fool.
I'd be the tops in school
If I only had some brains.

D: Oh, perhaps you should come along with me. I'm on my way to see the Dean of Oz to see if I can get admitted to the Ozzie and Harriet Nelson School for the Overprivileged. Why don't you come with me. Oz has a fine academic program; they could easily cure your stupidity.

SB: Oh, do you really think so?

D: Why sure! That's why Tutu and I are going there.

D & SB:

We're off to see the Dean,
The wonderful Dean of Oz.
He's a lean and keen ol' dean
If ever a dean there was.

[D and SB stop abruptly when they run into the Tin Hoodlum.]

D: Why, goodness gracious, what on earth are you doing?

Tin Hoodlum (leering up with a demented grin): I'm pulling the wings off this fly, you little twit. What does it look like I'm doing?

D: But that's horrible! You're totally unsocialized. Why, you're just a Tin Hoodlum.

SB: Yeah! That's cruel. You could wind up as a mass murderer. They begin by torturing animals, you know! Don't you have any kind of heart?

Tin Hoodlum (raises eyebrow, sings):

I'm a punk, I'm a tripper.
I'm just like Jack the Ripper.
I'm tearing flies apart.

I'm just a greasy slimeball.
I need a total rehaul.
If I only had a heart.

I'd be socially adjusted.
I never would get busted.
Won't get angel-dusted
If I only had a heart.

D: Why don't you come along with us? We're going to get admitted to Oz.

SB: Sure, I bet the Dean of Students could rehabilitate you. He could give you some guidance. Maybe put you in small-group discussions.

D: Or maybe they could give you in-school suspension.

Tin Hoodlum (hereafter, TH): By golly, I think I'll do it!

TH (sings): We're gonna ease on, ease on down the ro-oad.
Ease on, ease on...

D: No, we're going to be preppies.

TH: Oh, I forgot.

D, SB & TH (dancing around the stage and singing):

We're off to see the Dean,
The wonderful Dean of Oz.
He's a really keen, mean dean
If ever a dean there was.

[D, SB and TH halt abruptly when they encounter the Cowardly Linebacker, who is sitting on the ground sobbing.]

D: Why you poor boy! Whatever is the matter?

Cowardly Linebacker (hereafter, CL): I had to leave football practice. The coach was having the whole team do a tackling drill on my body. One guy would blindside me and another guy would clothesline me. Then two more guys would do the same thing. They kept it up even though they broke three of my ribs and my collarbone and ruptured my spleen. Now, because I left practice early, the coach will probably cut me from the team. (Sobs.)

TH: You wimp! That's pathetic! (pulls out knife) I ought to slice you up.

D: I should say! You should be ashamed of yourself. Why, you're nothing but a cowardly linebacker.

SB: Why don't you come along with us? We're going to enroll at Oz. I'm going to learn something, and the Tin Hoodlum here is going to be rehabilitated. And Dorothea is going so she can get into a good college and marry a socialite.

CL (still sobbing): Do you think they could help me?

SB: Sure, the coach at Oz is a great guy. They'll put you on the lacrosse team and he'll make a man out of you!

CL: Do you really think so?

CL (sings):

I'm just a little wimp,
A flabby, big fat blimp;
I'm really quite a klutz.

I could really be the dickens,
Bite the heads off chiekens
If I only had some guts.

Right now I'm just a putz,
But I really am assumin'
I'd be just barely human,
If I only had some guts.

TH: A heart.

SB: Some brains.

CL: Some guts.

All four:

We're off to see the Dean
The wonderful Dean of Oz.
He's a really keen ol' dean
If ever a dean there was.

[They come upon the Director of Admissions.]

Director: Who goes there?

D: We're just four pilgrims who seek to be admitted to Oz.

Director: Well, I'm the Director of Admissions, honey. And your friends obviously consist of a retard, a lower class punk, and a bloated wimp. Definitely not Oz material, I can assure you.

D: Well, I never! Just wait until I tell my Daddy. He's the Chairman of the Board of Toxxin Chemical Company.

Director: Chairman of the Board at Toxxin, eh? Why didn't you say so? That's a horse of a different color! Come on in. Why don't you go introduce yourselves to the Dean and get your class schedule? He's right over there.

[Dorothy et al. approach the Dean, who is standing with his back to them as they approach.]

D: Excuse me, sir. We're newly enrolled students and we want to know what we should do.

SB: Yeah, I need some heavy duty academic training.

TH: And I need some heavy social rehabilitation.

CL: And I pity the fool who tries to play quarterback against me.

D: So do we get our diplomas now or what? I want to go to Princeton. I hear they have Great Gatsby parties at Princeton. I mean, can you believe it? Great Gatsby parties!

Dean: Not so fast, you adolescent pimply-faced twerps! So you want to graduate from Oz, eh? First you have to pass the science final! Report to the Wicked Teach of Science! She's right over there.

[The quartet go over to see the Wicked Teach of Science.]

D: Excuse me, ma'am. We're here to take our science final.

Teach: Is that right, my little pretty? Feel pretty smart, do you? You'll have a rather interesting time with the exam I have planned for you! (Cackles.) Ready for your first question?

D: Yes, I think so.

[Tin Hoodlum begins playing around with Teach's chemicals.]

Teach: O.K., my little pretty! Here goes. What role do the intermediate vector bosons play in the weak interaction in the theory of quantum mechanics?

D: Why, that's not fair.

SB: Yeah, that wasn't on the review sheet.

Teach: Well, try this, you slimy little simpletons: A model equivalent to Schrodinger's wave mechanics was independently discovered by another physicist. Name that physicist and his model.

CL: Werner Heisenberg and matrix mechanics.

[D, SB & TH look askance at CL.]

THi What a geek!

Teach: Oh, a wise guy, eh? Why try this one, my little retards. Synthesize a chemical that will dissolve bones but not skin.

D (grabs beaker from TH and throws it on Teach): You mean old teach! These questions aren't fair at all.

Teach: I'm melting, I'm melting! My bones are dissolving. (Melts.)

SB: Did you hear that? Her bones are dissolving.

TH: All right! We aced it!

SB: Let's go see the Dean and demand our diplomas now!

[The four trot over to the dean.]

D: Well, we passed our science exam.

TH: Yeah, we aced it.

SB: Totally.

CL: For sure.

TH: Yeah, we all got grades of 59 or better. We don't even have to be reexamined. We want our diplomas now.

Dean: Very well, you little creep. You shall have them.

SB: But I feel cheated. I don't feel any smarter.

CL: And I'm not any braver.

TH: And I'm just as psychotic as I ever was.

D: Yeah, and I still can't get into Princeton.

Dean: Why, Scatterbrain, you don't need brains to make you smart. All you need is a facade. Buy yourself a smoking jacket. Develop a strange interest like butterflies. Become a lepidopterologist. Learn a few big words and sling them around. And you, Cowardly Linebacker. Just go into some obscure sport like four-man bobsled racing. In no time you'll be a national champion. How many people do you think have the time and money you need to become a first rate bobsledder? We're talking Olympic medals here. Just think, Marylou Retton, Greg Louganis, Rowdy Gains, Cowardly Linebacker. And you, Tin Hoodlum. All you need to be respectable is to receive this class night prize for the most improved social behavior by a subhuman. You could even join the Guardian Angels. Or become a security guard. You might even get to meet Jodie Foster.

D: But what about me, sir? I'll still never get into Princeton.

Dean: Why Dorothy, what you need is right under your nose. It's right on this block. You just have to believe you can be happy wherever you go and whatever you do. All you have to do is believe. I want you to say this with me now: "There is no place like Harcum."

D: Oh yes, Dean, thank you!

D & Dean: There's no place like Harcum. There's no place like Harcum.