



C. Edward Wheaton

Adapted from George du Maurier's novel *Trilby*
and Henri Murger's novel *The Bohemians of the Latin Quarter*

Norman Maine Publishing

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P.O. Box 1400
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**IF I CAN HYPNOTIZE A CHICKEN,
I CAN HYPNOTIZE ANYONE!**

-SVENGALI

THE BOHEMIANS

VICTORIAN MELODRAMAS. This adaptation combines two well-known classic novels of French Bohemian life—Henri Du Maurier’s *Trilby* and Henri Murger’s *The Bohemians of the Latin Quarter*, which inspired Puccini’s opera *La Bohème* and the musical *Rent*. Both works have made lasting impressions on popular culture: Du Maurier’s *Trilby* introduced “Svengali” into the English lexicon and Murger’s *The Bohemians of the Latin Quarter* made the term “Bohemian” synonymous with “artist.” This easy-to-produce one-act satirizes the carefree Bohemian lifestyle of 19th-century Paris. Three penniless British painters, who have questionable artistic talent, pass their time lounging about in cafés. One artist, Archey Pendleton, has fallen in love with the Scottish beauty Trilby O’Ferrall. But the humorous villain of the play, the German piano-playing chicken hypnotist, Svengali, has devised a plan to break up the happy couple and transform Trilby into a singing sensation.

Performance Time: Approximately 45-60 minutes.

CHARACTERS (13 m, 5 w, 5 flexible, extras)

TRILBY O'FERRALL: 19, tall young woman with thick wavy brown hair.

ARCHEY PENDELTON: 20-21, small, slender, well-built Bohemian.

SVENGALI: 30-45, tall, bony, dirty, dresses shabbily; wears a red beret and a large velveteen cloak; has long black hair that falls behind his ears down to his shoulders and a black beard, which grows almost from under his eyelids; his mustache is a shade lighter than his beard.

TALBOT WYNNE (TAFFY): late 20s, large young Yorkshire man; has heavy plunger's mustache—an immense pair of drooping whiskers.

ALEXANDER MCALISTER (SANDY): late 20s, tall with a beard and mustache.

GECKO: Small, swarthy young man, possibly a gypsy; dressed shabbily; always carries a fiddle and fiddlestick under his arm.

MRS. PENDELTON: 55, Archey's mother; sensible.

ELIZABETH PENDELTON: 18, Archey's sister; wants to be a Bohemian.

ALICE: 19, Trilby's roommate.

SHAUNARD: 20s, musician; French but speaks English as well as an Englishman.

REGINALD BUNTHORNE: Blonde hair, eccentric in his attire, so much so, that people stare at him as he walks by.

MARCEL: Bohemian.

GUSTAVE: Bohemian.

RUDOLPHE: Bohemian.

CARREL: Stately, well-dressed, courteous gentleman duly decorated with the rosette of the Legion of Honour.

DURIER: Old man, art student.

LANDLORD

WAITERS 1, 2

BELLHOP: Non-speaking.

TOUR GUIDE

MAN: Wealthy.

WOMAN: Wealthy; wants to have her very own Bohemian.

EXTRAS: As art students, café customers, Bohemians.

SETTING

Paris, 1897.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

- Scene 1:** Studio apartment. There is a window CS with a divan underneath it, a door SL, a wooden chair DL of the door, a door SR, easy chairs, a table, chairs, a piano, and a piano stool.
- Scene 2:** Café Bohème, afternoon. There are several tables covered with tablecloths, chairs, and a piano UR.
- Scene 3:** Café Bohème, evening.
- Scene 4:** Svengali's room. A roomy, dilapidated garret. There is an unmade trundle bed, a piano, a table with a lamp on it, two chairs, and a wooden cage with a chicken in it.
- Scene 5:** M. Carrell's painting studio. There is a piano next to the wall and a throne in the middle of the room.
- Scene 6:** Sitting room at the Hotel Corneille. There is a door SR that opens to a bedroom, a chair, a sofa, and a table.
- Scene 7:** Trilby's room. The room is modestly furnished and well kept, though the walls show signs of age. There is a bed, a dressing table, a window, and a mirror on the wall.
- Scene 8:** Studio apartment (same as Scene 1).

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PROPS

2 Covered wicker baskets	Flageolet, flute, or recorder
Wine	Book
Cheese	Wooden chicken cage
Envelope	Chicken
Easels	Money
Paintings	Greek costume, for Trilby
Backgammon set	Watch, for Carrel
Coffee carafe	Tea tray
Coffee cups	Teacups
Fiddle, for Gecko	Pocket watch, for Archey
Paint boxes	Engagement ring, for Trilby
Watch, for Taffy	

MUSIC

Where music is indicated, music of the period is to be used. In Scene 1, Trilby can sing a selection from Puccini's "La Bohème" or another suitable song.

SCENE 1

(AT RISE: Studio apartment. Sandy and Taffy are busy at their easels. Archey is standing near the window looking out over the city. Archey takes a deep breath and exhales.)

ARCHEY: Was there ever since the world began, a more glorious spring day?

(Sandy and Taffy look at each other and shrug.)

SANDY: (To Taffy.) The poor boy's got it bad.

TAFFY: Spring fever?

SANDY: It's worse. He's in love.

TAFFY: Ah! Then, I am afraid marriage is the only cure.

(Archey turns to both.)

ARCHEY: Say what you will, but I have never been so happy in all my life.

SANDY: And we are equally happy for you.

TAFFY: Trilby is a wonderful young lady, and I know you two will be very happy together.

ARCHEY: Was there ever, living or dead, such a glorious trio as we? In the two years since we met, we have become like the three musketeers.

SANDY: That's us! The three musketeers of the brush! All for one—

TOGETHER: And one for all!

(Knock at the door. Taffy goes to the door. Schaunard is standing there.)

TAFFY: Schaunard! Come in, old boy! What brings you here?

SCHAUNARD: I am solvent once again, and I am declaring a dividend. (Holds up a covered basket. Removes cover.) I

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thought perhaps you might wish to share this most excellent cheese and wine. (*Sets basket on piano.*) I was down to my last sou when I happened to hear of an Englishman who desired the services of a pianist. I hurried to his apartment and told him that there was only one musician in the city that was good enough for the job.

SANDY: And he wasn't available so he hired you.

SCHAUNARD: I was prepared to dazzle him with my pianistic skills, when to my surprise, he inquired as to how badly I could play.

ARCHEY: I've always said that of all the pianists in Paris, Schaunard could play as badly as any of them.

TAFFY: Yes. I have often heard that said. (*Schaunard just stares at them.*) Do continue.

SCHAUNARD: The Englishman's neighbor had a talkative parrot. It incessantly talked and squawked all day and all night. I had to play from five o'clock in the morning until night continually upon one scale and always the same scale until the man moved away or the bird died of boredom.

SANDY: Well, what happened?

SCHAUNARD: I had been playing about a week when the squawking ceased. Would you believe the bird flew away? He didn't even leave a note. He's probably half way back to the Amazon by now.

SANDY: I feel sorry for the bird.

TAFFY/ARCHEY: (*Shaking their heads.*) Poor bird!

SCHAUNARD: Well, then, perhaps I should take back my wine and cheese. You certainly would not want to partake of the spoils of the poor bird's misfortune.

(*He picks up the basket. Sandy stops him.*)

SANDY: It would be impolite to refuse a gift.

TAFFY: What kind of hosts would we be if we let you leave without eating your cheese and drinking your wine?

ARCHEY: Besides, there is more there than one man can eat
and drink. But first, play us a tune.

TAFFY: Before you begin...

SCHAUNARD: Yes?

TAFFY: How do you know the bird was a "he"?

(Schaunard is stumped. Taffy, Sandy, and Archey burst out laughing. Schaunard plays the piano while the four sing. At the end of the song, Svengali bursts in, shutting the door behind him. He flings his red beret on the piano and drops his cloak on the floor.)

SANDY: Well, Monsieur Svengali, no need to stand on ceremony! Do barge in!

SVENGALI: I am in. No?

(There is a knock at the door, Sandy answers it. Gecko is at the door.)

SANDY: Gecko! Come in.

(Gecko enters.)

GECKO: Monsieurs.

SVENGALI: Gecko! Sit! *(Gecko sits on chair by the door. To others.)* I was passing by, and I heard the most horrible noise coming from the building.

SCHAUNARD: We were singing.

SVENGALI: Is that what you call it? I have heard rusty hinges that sounded better.

SANDY: Has anyone ever called you obnoxious?

SVENGALI: Constantly. But what do they know? *(Pushes Schaunard off the piano stool.)* I hate to see such a beautiful instrument abused in such a manner. *(Runs his fingers across the keys.)* English, is it not?

TAFFY: Yes. I had it brought over from London.

SVENGALI: I thought as much. It plays with an accent. (*To Sandy.*) Please open your mouth, monsieur. (*Sandy complies.*) A little wider if you please. (*Sandy opens wider.*) Ach! There is a problem. No talent! The best thing for you to do, for the sake of mankind, is to give up singing altogether.

ARCHEY: I suppose you can sing better?

SVENGALI: Ach! Little Archey. I do not sing myself, but I can teach, eh Gecko? (*Gecko is about to speak but Svengali cuts him off.*) My pupil is la betite Honorine. Remember that name. One day the world shall hear of la betite Honorine.

SANDY: And what of your other pupil Madam Zara?

SVENGALI: Ach! That woman! She sings even worse than you. She assaults my ears at every opportunity.

TAFFY: Then why do you continue to teach her?

SVENGALI: For the five francs I receive.

SCHAUNARD: How much money would you take to leave?

SVENGALI: You could not afford it.

(Knock at the door. Archey answers it.)

SCHAUNARD: (*To Svengali.*) You see? First you knock and wait for the door to be opened.

SVENGALI: But what if nobody is at home? Did you ever consider that? Hmm?

ARCHEY: Reggy! Come in, old boy.

(Reggy Bunthorne enters.)

SVENGALI: *Ach du lieber!* What is that!?

ARCHEY: This is Reginald Bunthorne.

SVENGALI: I suppose you are a painter?

TAFFY: He is also a poet.

SVENGALI: I am sorry to hear that.

SANDY: Hear what?

SVENGALI: That Monsieur Butthorne —

REGINALD: Bunthorne.

SVENGALI: That is what I said—that Monsieur Butthorne is not only a painter, but also has bad manners to be a poet.

REGINALD: My dear sir, what is wrong with being a poet?

SVENGALI: Nothing. As long as it happened to you.

TAFFY: (*To Reginald.*) In case you were wondering, this ill-mannered fellow is Svengali. (*Svengali bows. Indicates Gecko.*) And this is—

(*Gecko starts to rise. Svengali interrupts with a wave of his hand as though Gecko were nothing.*)

SVENGALI: Simply Gecko.

GECKO: Monsieur.

SVENGALI: Sit down, Gecko. (*To Reginald.*) Perhaps you have heard of me, hmm?

REGINALD: No, I have not!

SVENGALI: Someday I must tell you what a great musician I am.

REGINALD: I am sure you will. But tell me, Mr. Svengali, what have you got against poetry?

SVENGALI: You are English, no?

REGINALD: Yes, but—

SVENGALI: English poetry makes my ears hurt.

REGINALD: Perhaps if you washed them once in awhile.

SVENGALI: Bah! Music is the only true poetry! The poetry of the soul.

REGINALD: There is poetry in all things. Even in these paintings. (*Looks at one.*) Well, maybe not in this one. But one has only to listen to the harmonies of nature and aspire toward the infinite.

SVENGALI: And Svengali says, what do you know?

REGINALD: I have only known you for a short time, but I find you to be rude and crude. Your manners are gross, you could use a bath, and you give me the willies!

SCHAUNARD: (*To others.*) He left out obnoxious.

SANDY: I think he did rather well for the first meeting. And he did mention the willies!

ARCHEY: Yes, that was an excellent topper.

SVENGALI: Ah, Monsieur Butthorne—

REGINALD: (*Slightly irritated.*) I beg your pardon, sir—

SVENGALI: There is no need to apologize.

REGINALD: Apologize! I wasn't apologizing!

SVENGALI: (*Sighs.*) Ah, that is why the British Empire is not what it once was.

REGINALD: Now, see here!

SVENGALI: No need to be upset. Svengali was only making a little joke. I look upon your being English as merely a birth defect. You could not help yourself. But tell me one thing.

REGINALD: What is it?

SVENGALI: What are these "willies" you speak of?

(Knock at the door. Taffy answers. Trilby is standing in the doorway.)

TAFFY: Trilby!

(*Tribly enters carrying a covered basket. Various items can be seen protruding from under the cover.*)

SVENGALI: Ach! It is Drilpy!

SCHAUNARD: Trilby.

SVENGALI: That is what I said. (*Pushes past everyone.*) Ach! Dear Drilpy.

(*Svengali kisses her hand. Trilby wipes the back of her hand on her blouse.*)

TRILBY: I am on my way to sit for Durien.

SVENGALI: My dear, Drilpy, why do you waste your talents?
You should be a great singer instead of a common model.
Place yourself in these hands.

TRILBY: Perhaps if you washed them first. (*Pushes past Svengali.*) I just dropped by to deliver these objects of art and virtue. They are the real things, you know. I borrowed them from pere Martain, Chiffonneer en gros en detail, grand officer de la legion d'Honneur, member del'Institut et cetera treize bis Rue du Petrus d' Amor rez-de-chaina see au fond de la cour a gauche, vis-avis let mont-de piete! He is one of my intimate friends, and—

SVENGALI: You do not mean to say that you are the intimate friend of a rag picker?

SANDY: You are a snob!

SVENGALI: Svengali must maintain his position in society.

ARCHEY: If that isn't the pot calling the kettle black.

(*Svengali ignores them.*)

SVENGALI: But, my dear, lovely Drilpy. Why do we speak of such worthless trinkets? Let us speak of beautiful things. Your voice! Please, open your mouth. (*Trilby complies.*) You see, monsieurs, the roof of her mouth is like the dome of the Pantheon; there is room in it for "Joutis less gloriis de la France" and a little to spare. What a shame to waste your talents. Please sing for us! I am thirsting for those so beautiful chest notes. Show these rusty hinges what real singing is. I shall play for you. (*Trilby sings a song or portion of a song.*) Ah! Your voice is a burst of spring in midwinter. It is the flower that blooms amongst the weeds. (*Indicating the others in the room.*) What a voice, eh Gecko? (*Gecko is about to speak but is cut off by Svengali.*) There, you see? Even Gecko agrees with me. I give you one last chance—give up modeling and place yourself under my care.

TRILBY: I intend to give up modeling, but there is only one person whom I am about to place myself in his care.

SVENGALI: I do not give up so easy.

(Pause. Archey and Trilby stare at each other. Schaunard notices.)
SCHAUNARD: Why don't we go into the next room and have some wine and cheese?

(Schaunard nods his head toward the room. Taffy, Sandy and Reginald get the idea.)

TAFFY: Good idea! Come along, old boy!

(They surround Svengali and almost shove him out of the room.)

REGINALD: You know what they say, two's company and your presence is not particularly welcome.

SVENGALI: But I do not wish to go!

SCHAUNARD: Yes, come along and we will sing for you.

SVENGALI: But I do not like your singing!

REGINALD: You can put your fingers in your ears, old chap.

SVENGALI: (As he is shoved into the next room.) Gecko! Come!

(Gecko rises with a smile, bows to Archey and Trilby, then follows Svengali. All exit except Archey and Trilby.)

ARCHEY: I've got some good news. Mother is coming to Paris to meet you. I received the letter today.

(He takes out an envelope from his coat pocket.)

TRILBY: (Unenthused.) Oh.

ARCHEY: What's wrong? I thought you would be happy.

TRILBY: Of course I am, but—

ARCHEY: But what? Don't you want to meet her? You know that sometime during the marriage you'll have to meet her. It's tradition.

TRILBY: Of course I want to meet her.

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ARCHEY: Then everything is all right.

TRILBY: But—

ARCHEY: But what?

TRILBY: What if she doesn't like me?

(*Archey lays the envelope on piano.*)

ARCHEY: What are you talking about? What's not to like?

TRILBY: What did you tell her about me?

ARCHEY: How beautiful you are and how much I love you.

TRILBY: Oh, Archey, you know what I mean. Did you tell her
I was a model?

ARCHEY: Of course.

TRILBY: Why?

ARCHEY: Why? There is nothing wrong with being a model.

You have nothing to worry about. (*Trilby stands silent.*)

Now it becomes quite clear to me.

TRILBY: What are you talking about?

ARCHEY: You are looking for a way to back out of the
marriage. We are going to be married and that's final. If
you try to back out now, I'll have the law on you. Breach of
promise is what they call it! We have a contact! Offer and
acceptance. (*He takes her left hand and holds it up, exposing the
engagement ring.*) It will hold up in any court in the British
Empire! Now what do you have to say?"

TRILBY: Archey, I love you!

(*She throws her arms around his neck.*)

ARCHEY: That's better. Now go and tell monsieur Durien
you cannot sit for him today.

TRILBY: But, really, Archey, I can't. Monsieur Durien is
counting on me today.

ARCHEY: Well, then this evening. We are all going to the
Café Bohème and celebrate.

TRIBLY: Celebrate what?

ARCHEY: Well, Taffy washed his socks this morning.

TRIBLY: Be serious.

ARCHEY: You have never been around when he takes off his shoes.

(*Loud laughter is heard offstage from the next room. Svengali enters.*)

SVENGALI: Only Svengali gets the last laugh! (*He picks up his cloak from the floor and his beret from the piano. He also picks up the envelope and quickly puts it in his pocket.*) Gecko! Come! (*Gecko enters, with a slice of cheese in his hand. He is about to take a bite of the cheese, but Svengali grabs it and tosses it away.*) English cheddar! (*With a flourish of his cape.*) We go!

(*Svengali goes out the door first, slamming the door in Gecko's face. Gecko merely sighs and turns.*)

GECKO: (*Bows.*) Monsieurs. (*Bows.*) Mademoiselle. (*Gecko opens the door and exits.*)

SCHAUNARD: Monsieur Svengali certainly brightens a room with his absence.

(*Blackout.*)

SCENE 2

(AT RISE: *Café Bohème*, afternoon. Marcel is painting at his easel. Several paintings lean against the legs of the easel. Gustave and Rodolphe are at a table playing backgammon. The Landlord is pleading with the trio.)

LANDLORD: Please, monsieurs! This is a public place.

GUSTAVE: And we are the public.

LANDLORD: But you come in every day and take tables away from paying customers.

GUSTAVE: We are... (*Thinks for a moment.*) ...the public.

RODOLPHE: We would gladly order something if you extend us credit.

LANDLORD: And what would you repay me with?

GUSTAVE: You could always loan us the money.

LANDLORD: (*A little frustrated.*) Why don't you stay at your studio? I am sure there is a bowl of fruit that needs painting.

GUSTAVE: We ate that long ago.

RODOLPHE: Besides, Marcel is always here.

LANDLORD: Marcel, my friend, why don't you paint at your studio?

MARCEL: Because Gustave and Rodolphe are always here and I get lonely.

LANDLORD: (*Sighs.*) Why don't you at least have some coffee?

RODOLPHE: An excellent suggestion.

(Rodolphe produces a basket containing a carafe of coffee. He pours cups for himself and Gustave.)

LANDLORD: That is it! You leave me with no other alternative but to have you forcefully removed!

(Landlord signals for Waiters 1, 2 to oust the Bohemians. But as Waiters 1, 2 are about to make their move, a Tour Guide enters, followed by a Man and a Woman of some wealth and position.)

GUIDE: (To Man and Woman.) And here is the Café Bohème. Inhabited, as you might expect, by Bohemians.

(During the following exchange, Gustave and Rodolphe never look up from their game.)

WOMAN: Oh, Richard! Bohemians in their natural surroundings! How wonderful! Richard, couldn't I take one of them home? (Goes over to Marcel.) This one!

MAN: Absolutely not!

WOMAN: Oh, but Richard!

MAN: No!

WOMAN: I promise to take care of him.

MAN: I really must draw the line somewhere.

MARCEL: Oh, but monsieur, I am housebroken.

MAN: You'll have paintings and sculptures cluttering up our home. And I don't wish to have a stranger underfoot as well.

WOMAN: But Richard!

MAN: Do you remember when the Japanese exhibition came to London? Hmm? And how many times did you drag me to see Gilbert and Sullivan's opera *The Mikado*? You just had to have a Japanese tea garden. You had the whole yard torn up. If that wasn't bad enough, I had all those little people under foot. No, absolutely not. Besides, you know as well as I, you would soon tire of him in favor of some other fad.

MARCEL: (To Gustave and Rodolphe.) What did he call me?

(Man looks pointedly at Marcel.)

MAN: And then I would have to shoot him.

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WOMAN: (*Sighs.*) You are right, of course.

MARCEL: Madam, I have a way by which I could be your houseguest by proxy and avoid the embarrassment of being shot. (*Takes a painting.*) I have here a self portrait.

(*Woman holds the painting up, looks it over, then looks at Marcel. He poses as in the painting.*)

WOMAN: Are you sure this is you?

MARCEL: Madam, I assure you, this is me. I use it to shave by every morning. One hundred francs.

MAN: I'll give you 20 francs.

MARCEL: Fifty francs!

MAN: Ten francs.

MARCEL: Twenty!

MAN: Done!

(*Marcel looks around, smiling as though he just got the better end of the deal.*)

WOMAN: Oh, this is wonderful!

(*Man pays Marcel. Landlord is in the background rubbing his hands together looking very pleased. Man, Woman, and Guide exit. Landlord comes back to the table.*)

LANDLORD: And now, monsieurs, what can I get for you?

(*Marcel closes his paint box and folds his easel. Gustave and Rodolphe put their game away. The three head for the exit.*) But where are you going?

MARCEL: Since you obviously want to be rid of us, we are going to the Café Momus.

(*Marcel exits. Landlord raises his arms imploringly toward heaven. Blackout.*)

SCENE 3

(AT RISE: *Café Bohème, evening. Enter Sandy, Reginald, Taffy, and Schaunard. They seat themselves at a table. Waiter 1 approaches their table.*)

WAITER 1: Would you care to order now?

SANDY: We are waiting for our two friends. But we will have four coffees.

WAITER: Very good.

(*Taffy looks at his watch.*)

TAFFY: I wonder where Archey and Trilby are?

REGINALD: Maybe they decided they wanted to be alone.

SCHAUNARD: (*Sighs.*) Ah, love! Without it, what would any of us do in our spare time?

(*Enter Trilby and Archey.*)

SANDY: Ah, here they are.

ARCHEY: It was such a lovely evening, we took a detour through the park. Did we miss anything?

(*Schaunard looks around.*)

SCHAUNARD: If we did, it happened when we weren't looking. Why don't we liven things up? That piano is just sitting there doing nothing.

REGINALD: Good idea. Why don't you give us a tune?

SCHAUNARD: I accept! But you must help me. Come along.

(*Archey, Schaunard, Reginald, and Sandy go to the piano and start sorting through the stack of music. Taffy and Trilby are left alone at the table. Taffy notices that something is bothering Trilby.*)

TAFFY: What is troubling you, Trilby?

TRILBY: Oh, nothing.

TAFFY: Come on, now. You haven't said a word since you arrived.

TRILBY: (*Hesitates.*) Taffy... (*Grasping his forearm.*) ...I'm worried.

TAFFY: What about?

TRILBY: Archey's mother is coming to meet me, and she knows I am a model.

TAFFY: There is nothing wrong with the type of modeling you do.

TRILBY: But what if she thinks there is? What if...what if she doesn't like me? What if she thinks I'm not good enough for Archey?

TAFFY: Since we are speaking of what-ifs, what if she likes you? What if she sees you are the only woman who can make Archey happy? What if that? (*Trilby remains silent.*) Have you told Archey how you feel?

TRILBY: Yes, but he thinks I'm acting silly.

TAFFY: I don't think you have anything to worry about. She'll love you. Archey loves you, and you love Archey. That is all she will be concerned with.

TRILBY: Maybe you are right.

TAFFY: I know I am. Just be yourself, and I wager she'll love you as much as we do. As for tonight, we should enjoy ourselves—a sort of celebration of our friendship.

TRILBY: Oh, Taffy, I've grown to love you and Sandy almost as much as Archey. After my parents died, I thought I would never have another family. I have never been so happy in all my life. Promise me we'll always be friends.

(*Taffy places his left hand on Trilby's hand, and raises his right hand.*)

TAFFY: I promise.

(Archey and the others begin to sing. Svengali rushes in during the song, both hands over his ears.)

SVENGALI: Murder! Murder! (Everyone's attention on Svengali.) Ach! Mine ears! This noise is killing me!

SCHAUNARD: Have you ever noticed how impossible it is to rid oneself of cockroaches?

(Svengali merely gives Schaunard a glance of contempt. Svengali takes out a flexible flageolet [or flute or recorder], screws it together, and plays a melody. Audience applauds at end.)

SVENGALI: That is how music is played! That is how I teach music to be played, il bel canto! It was lost, the bel canto, but I found it, in a dream, I, and nobody else, I, Svengali! I, I, I! (Spots Trilby.) But that's enough of music; there is my Drilpy.

ALL: Trilby!

SVENGALI: That is what I said. (Goes to table where Trilby and Taffy are seated. To Trilby.) Why do you sit here alone?

TRILBY: I am not alone. There is Taffy.

(Svengali looks over at Taffy.)

SVENGALI: Oh, forgive me, monsieur, I did not notice you sitting here! But I suppose you are used to that, hmm? Why do you not go over and join the other rusty hinges?

TAFFY: Because I like it right here.

SVENGALI: It is of no matter.

TAFFY: Where is Gecko?

SVENGALI: Who?

TAFFY: Gecko.

SVENGALI: (With a shrug.) Who cares? I am more concerned with my Drilpy.

TAFFY: Trilby.

SVENGALI: That is what I said. (*To Trilby.*) Have you thought over Svengali's offer? (*Trilby sits silent.*) Ach, I know, you are playing what you English call, "hard to get"! But remember, he only gives just so many chances.

TRILBY: I will be too busy being a wife.

SVENGALI: A wife? If that is all you want, I will do you the favor of marrying you myself! (*Schaunard starts playing discords on piano very loudly.*) Ach! (*Puts his hands over his ears, flees the establishment.*)

SCHAUNARD: What do you know! It works on cockroaches!

(*Blackout.*)

SCENE 4

(AT RISE: *Svengali's room. Gecko is seated on one of the chairs. Svengali is at the table with a book in his hand, trying to hypnotize a chicken.*)

SVENGALI: (*To chicken.*) Look into my eyes. You no longer have a will of your own.

GECKO: Monsieur Svengali? (*No response.*) Monsieur Svengali?

SVENGALI: (*Annoyed.*) What is it, Gecko?!

GECKO: Why are you trying to hypnotize that chicken?

SVENGALI: (*Sighs.*) It is quite simple. If I can hypnotize a chicken, I can hypnotize anyone.

GECKO: But, how will you know when the chicken is hypnotized? I mean, I have seen magicians hypnotize someone into believing they are a chicken. But, what can you make a chicken believe she is?

(*Svengali stops and thinks a moment. His face shows that it has dawned on him how foolish he looks. He slowly turns to Gecko.*)

SVENGALI: Gecko, you think too much. It is no good for your brain. You could hurt yourself. (*Throws book down.*) What I need is a diversion.

GECKO: We could go to the Café Bohème.

SVENGALI: No! I am in no mood to mix with peasants!

GECKO: Well, then, how about the Englishman's studio? It is pleasant there.

SVENGALI: Pleasant! All they do is make fun of Svengali!

GECKO: Perhaps if you weren't so—

(*Svengali turns and gives Gecko a threatening look.*)

SVENGALI: Yes? (*Almost daring him to finish the sentence.*)

GECKO: (*Loses his nerve.*) But I like the Englishmen.

SVENGALI: And I do not! Painters with their stinking oil bladders and their little footle pigs-hair brushes. They are fortunate that Svengali speaks to them at all! I would not have them paint my house.

GECKO: You do not have a house.

(*Svengali gives Gecko a threatening look.*)

SVENGALI: The only reason I associated with them at all is to see my dear Drilpy.

GECKO: Trilby.

SVENGALI: That is what I said. That voice! It is incredible! It gives one cold all down the back! It drives me mad. Everything that Paganini could do with the violin, she does with her voice, only better. What a voice! And she is beautiful! She can make Svengali rich, if she would only place herself in these hands.

(*Svengali holds his hands out. Gecko gazes at Svengali's hands.*)

GECKO: Perhaps you should wash them first.

SVENGALI: Bah! You are a fool, Gecko! What do you know about anything, hmm?

GECKO: (*Meekly.*) I suppose, nothing.

SVENGALI: On that point, you are quite correct. I believe I shall go to Carrel's. Drilpy will be modeling there today. I shall give her one last chance to change her mind and forget that pig-dog Archey Pendelton.

GECKO: But why do you persist? They will soon be going back to London to be married.

SVENGALI: Do you think so? (*He pulls out the envelope and taps his chin with it.*)

GECKO: What have you there?

SVENGALI: This, my dear Gecko, is none of your business. (*Puts envelope away.*) How much money have you?

GECKO: Why, I have none.

SVENGALI: Don't lie to me! I know you have received payment for playing your violin at the Cafe Momus.

GECKO: Yes, but—

SVENGALI: Give it to me! (*Svengali approaches Gecko menacingly. Gecko shrinks back. Svengali extends his hand. Gecko reluctantly hands over money.*) Is this all?

GECKO: Yes.

(*Svengali counts the money.*)

SVENGALI: It is enough. (*Looks at the disappointment on Gecko's face. In mock sympathy.*) Oh, forgive me. Do you need money?

GECKO: Yes, I do.

SVENGALI: Then go out and earn some more. (*He puts on his cloak and beret.*) Gecko, stay! (*Svengali opens the door, and is confronted by Madam Zara.*) Madam Zara! Please, I have no time to listen. I tell you what, you stay and sing for Gecko, and I will only charge you four francs. (*Sticks out his hand and waits.* *Madam Zara hands Svengali four francs.* *Svengali then shoves her toward Gecko as he speaks.*) He is a great admirer of yours, isn't that right, little Gecko? You see! He is just shy. I have an important appointment to keep. Please be gone when I return. Thank you so much.

(*Svengali exits. There is a pause as Gecko and Madam Zara stare at each other. Madam Zara suddenly lets out a yowl, which startles Gecko right off his chair. Blackout.*)

[End of Freeview]