

Baguette

A Frivolous French Farce About Frivolousness

Book and Lyrics by Kate Chadwick

Music by Aferdian Stephens

Frivolous, adj: not having any serious purpose or value.

Cast of Characters

Félice Frivolou Staunch von Austria, a thirty-year-old flibbertigibbit.

Baron Sirius Staunch von Austria, a fifty-five-year-old bible printer, a sermon-maker, and landowner. Félice's husband.

Monsieur Armand LesCheveux, a forty-five-year-old wig maker and stylist to the most fashionable ladies in Paris.

Time and Place

We are in Paris in 1770, in the master bed chamber of the manor home of the Baron and his wife, Félice. The action of the play takes place in real time, just after night has fallen.

Songs

1. Félice's Tirade.....Félice, Monsieur
2. A La Mode.....Félice, Monsieur
3. Poiseless Noise.....Félice, Monsieur, Baron
4. Finale.....Félice, Monsieur, Baron

Monsieur LesCheveux sits, styling a tall wig at the vanity. Félice enters and slams the door. She paces as she sings, knocking things over with her hip bustles; Monsieur chases after her, catching the lamps, knick-knacks, and vases in her wake.

Félice

HATEFUL!
AWFUL!
HIS BOOMING VOICE BOOMS OUT HIS HATEFUL HATE,
AND I'M COMPELLED TO STATE:
HE'S AWFUL!
HATEFUL!
HE'S HATEFUL, AWFUL,
AWFUL, HATEFUL,
HATEFUL, AWFUL,
HATEFUL, HATEFUL!
AWFUL! AWFUL!
HATE! FULL!
AW...

Monsieur

What happened?

Félice

Oh, Monsieur! He's hateful.

Monsieur

Yes, I heard. But...

Félice (facing Monsieur)

HE KNOWS I NEED MY THINGS.
YOU KNOW I NEED MY THINGS.
IS THERE A MAN OR BEAST ON EARTH
WHO THINKS I DON'T NEED THINGS?!

Monsieur

No!

Felice (back to pacing)

AND HE SAYS, "NO NO NO"
AND I SAY, "NO NO NO"?!
IS THERE A WORD OR PHRASE ON EARTH
MORE HATEFUL THAN "NO"?

Monsieur

NO!

Félice

HATEFUL!
AWFUL!
HIS FROWNING FACE FROWNS OUT HIS FROWNING FROWN,

AND I'M PUSHED FURTHER DOWN!
HE'S AWFUL!
HATEFUL!
HE'S HATEFUL, AWFUL,
AWFUL, HATEFUL,
HATEFUL, AWFUL,
HATEFUL, HATEFUL!
AWFUL! AWFUL!
HATE! FULL!
AW...

Monsieur

It sounds like you're saying you hate falafel.

Félice picks up her fan and fans herself petulantly during this next section.

Félice

UGH!
"YOU MUST BE FRUGAL, WIFE."
I WON'T! I WON'T! I WON'T!
"WE LEAD A SOLEMN LIFE."
WE DON'T! WE DON'T! I DON'T!
AND THEN HE SAYS THE WORST OF ALL,
THE FLAGRANT USAGE OF HIS GALL!
HE SAYS...
HE SAYS...
HE SAYS...

Monsieur

OH, GOD, Félice! Say it!

Félice

HE SAYS...

She squeals and smacks her fan closed against her hand.

"Félice:
YOUR WIG MONEY'S GONE!"

Monsieur

NO!

Félice

YES!

Monsieur takes the fan and fans himself like Félice did.

Monsieur

HATEFUL!
AWFUL!

Félice

Yes!

Monsieur

IT'S JUST AN HOUR OUT FROM MADAME'S BALL!
YOU MUST IMPRESS THEM ALL!

Félice

HE'S AWFUL!

Monsieur

HATEFUL!

Félice stands right next to Monsieur to feel the fan on her face, too.

Monsieur/Félice

HE'S HATEFUL, AWFUL,
AWFUL, HATEFUL,
HATEFUL, AWFUL,
HATEFUL, HATEFUL!
AWFUL! AWFUL!
HATE! FULL!
AW...

Monsieur smacks the fan closed.

Monsieur

Does he want you to go TO MADAME'S BALL WIGLESS?!

Félice

I guess so!

Monsieur

You are to show YOUR NATURAL HAIR AT MADAME'S SPRING FETE?

Félice

I CANNOT DO THAT!

Monsieur

YOU WILL NOT DO THAT!

Félice (bursting into tears)

OH! I'M LOST! WHAT SHALL I EVER DO!?

Félice crumples to the ground and kicks and screams. During his next line, Monsieur finds a way to pick her up and lead her over to her vanity. She sits down like a wet noodle.

Monsieur

Oh, my darling! What a brute! He knows nothing of the world we live in. Nothing! But... Listen to me, Cherie. I have been concocting a plan while you were out of the room...

Félice (*weeping and throwing herself down on the table*)

No! No! All is lost! Forever! I CAN NEVER BE SEEN IN PUBLIC AGAIN! I SHALL DIE IN THE GUTTER A POOR AND FRIENDLESS CREATURE WITH NO FOOD, NO POWDER FOR MY POVERTY WIGS, ET CETERA, ET CETERA!

Monsieur

No! Sit up. Hush, hush now. Here. Give me a little kiss. (*puckering/grimacing*) Mmmmmm...

Félice (*pathetically*)

Mmmmmm...

They kiss awkwardly, but she is comforted.

Monsieur

Now, listen. I have a plan...

Félice

OH, MONSIEUR! Why are you so kind to a sad, pathetic woman like me? A scourge who must endure her serious husband's disdain? (*She begins crying again.*) I don't deserve attention! Especially from you! You should be off styling Madame Delacroix! Or Madame LeChien! Or Madame...

Monsieur (*turning her to the mirror and beginning to fix her hair*)

I pay attention to you because I see in you great potential! Now, for heaven's sake, listen!

OH, PEER INTO THE GLASS, MY DEAR,
REGARD THAT GORGEOUS CREATURE?
THE ROMAN NOSE, THE DAINTY EAR!
SUCH GRACE IN EVERY FEATURE!
JUST LOOK AT YOU! YOU'RE À LA MODE!
AND YOU DESERVE THE BEST.
MY DEAR, YOU'RE À LA MODE!
MUCH BETTER THAN THAT PEST!

Monsieur pulls out a snuff box from among the folds of his coat.

Félice

When you say, "à la mode", do you mean, "with ice cream on top"?

Monsieur

No! I mean... Ugh...

I HAVE A LITTLE PLAN, MY SWEET,
WITH POISON DETRIMENTAL.
WE'LL DO IT, AND WE'LL BE DISCREET...

He shows her the poison in the snuff box.

Snuff box?!

Félice

Monsieur

THEY'LL THINK IT'S ACCIDENTAL!
FOR LOOK AT US! WE'RE À LA MODE!
YOUR HUSBAND DOESN'T SEE!
MY SWEET, WE'RE À LA MODE!
AND HE SHALL NEVER BE!

Félice

BUT COULDN'T WE JUST RUN, SIR?
FOR KILLING SEEMS LESS FUN, SIR!

Monsieur

YOU WOULDN'T GET A PENNY, MY DEAR,
IF WE JUST RAN AWAY FROM HERE!
WE MUST KILL!
TO GET ALL THAT MONEY, LOVE!

Félice

WE'LL *KILL*?

Monsieur

FOR *MONEY*, MY DARLING DOVE!

Félice

But... (*realizing*) *Snuff* box...like... *snuff*... *box*. Oh! I get it! Mon dieu!

Monsieur goes to apply the powder to the wig.

Monsieur

Just a little powder in the wig, and when he hugs you...

Félice hits Monsieur away from her head and faces him, imploring. Beat.

Monsieur

A wife inherits her husband's money.

Félice

But! Is it à la mode to kill?

Monsieur

It's à la mode to have money.

Félice (*thinking*)

To have money for... ice cream on... top...

Monsieur (*impatiently*)

Goodness! To be stylish! D'être à la mode! Don't you want to be stylish!? Hob nob with the royals at the royal palaces? Tu ne veux pas aller à Versailles?!

Félice

Oh! Don't speak all hoity-toity; you know I don't understand you!

Monsieur grabs Félice and looks at her squarely.

With the money we could get...
I MAY BE JUST A STYLIST, SWEET,
BUT WE COULD CLIMB TOGETHER.

Félice

Together?

Monsieur

AND OH, THE ROYALTY WE'D MEET
WITHOUT YOUR HUSBAND'S TETHER.
JUST LOOK AT US! WE'RE À LA MODE!
AND WE DESERVE THE BEST.
MY DEAR, WE'RE À LA MODE
LET'S KILL THAT HATEFUL PEST!

Monsieur turns Félice back to the mirror and looks at her there. He resumes sprinkling the powder in her hair. She is still, a bit shocked, but she doesn't stop him.

Monsieur

So, we sprinkle your wig with this powder from my little, innocent snuff box, and when you're feeling particularly venomous, you can hug him vigorously, beating your head violently against his face. Then, we can go to Versailles.

Félice

I... want to go to Versailles.

Monsieur

You'd have to plug your nose, of course. Delicately. So you, yourself don't become poisoned. Do you understand?

Félice

I do, Monsieur. Versailles.

Just then, there is a sound of footsteps outside the door. Félice and Monsieur jump up, ready to hide. They listen, but Félice's bustles make too much noise as they settle.

Monsieur (*whispering*)

Shh!

Félice (*whispering*)

It's my bustles!