

**WHAT “THE FAREWELL CONCERT OF IRENE AND VERNON PALAZZO”
IS ALL ABOUT**

*—no, no don’t stop playing!—even though I see you want to butt in. —Well, you can’t butt in—
you’re not able to butt in except through your playing — so pleeeeeease butt out! —stay
background! Just keep playing! —Like in the old Warner Brother’s films, I want wall-to-wall, fade
in to fade out, music—I want underscoring throughout this whole shebang! —Yes! I want — No!
— I DEMAND! —no dead spots—in this wino riff I’m on!”*

*On a snowy night in Bodoni County, the songwriting team of Irene and Vernon
Palazzo attempt to finish their new and final song — and wait for their long-lost
daughter Billie to return. Playwright Gagliano plunges Lyricist/Faculty wife Irene
Palazzo, into an over-the-edge, wine-induced. monologue of rage, of regrets,
thwarted expectations, self loathing, outrageous and raunchy humor, fear, guilt
and pain; a tidal wave that breaks on a series of shocking discoveries; receding,
finally, to a calming flow of love and reconciliation; and all underscored
throughout by original and standard songs, and by the improvisations of Irene’s
brilliant, unable-to-speak, composer/accompanist husband, Vernon.*

SETTING

In the Den.

A highly waxed baby Grand Piano.

*A wine rack filled with wine bottles,
near a music stand with stool.*

*A wall-sized picture window.
Snow falling outside.*

*Vernon is playing the piano.
He will play the piano throughout.*

*Irene is sitting on the stool, sipping wine.
She is sight-reading some new music.*

EXCERPTS FROM
“THE FAREWELL CONCERT OF IRENE AND VERNON PALAZZO.

PALAZZO EXCERPT 1)

IRENE

—Can you see it from there, Vernon? The snow? From the piano?
—No! don't get up! —No wasted effort!—you'll tire yourself. And no silence!
—No dead spots tonight! Please! — **Don't** stop playing!

. . .Good. —*I* will be your Weather Anchor Person —**except** that I won't *be* anchored—I'll be moving around—all antsy; this rarely-empty wine glass in my hand—the wine rack, close by; filled, of course—with corkscrew at the ready; —**and I'll give you all the snow data you'll need.** —Tell you if they close the schools—the roads—how far and fast the barometer falls—tell you when I spy Billie materializing at the gate, walking up the path to the porch, passing the old swing on the porch— . . ."Creaker" she called it; the creaky metal swing she loved—going to rust; to sit on, she did. . . on those old ratty cushions, for hours. . . to day dream; to listen, out there, to us working in here; making our songs—she loved doing that--remember?—swinging on "Creaker," still there, on the porch. . . — **You just keep playing!**

—breathing the music out—**speaking** through your fingertips—now. . .while, with *my* fingertips—I decork Messieurs Merlot. Bottle number two!

. . .*There!* —And I will also try to. . .—"conjure up and reinforce?"

—*our* new song! —The new song we *will* finish tonight. —**PLAY OUR INTRO—MY WORDS, VERNON! AGAIN!**

PALAZZO EXCERPT 2)

IRENE

— **Am** I . . ."beating the musical allusions to death," do you think, Vernon? — **Which** is what our long-lost daughter, Billie, will say. . .our disappeared-ten-years-ago daughter, Billie, will say. . .Billie. . .God bless the poor child, Billie; —named after Billie Holiday, Billie—at the insistence of papa-daddy Vernon. —Who dived, Billie did, out of our lives, Billie did, ten. . . years . . .ago! — **Ten years!** would you believe!? —And who suddenly, **apparently**, resurfaces— *will*, apparently, resurface **tonight**—will **say** when she resurfaces—and of her mother Irene *in particular*—will undoubtedly say! —when Billie resurfaces and hears *it*—the song—daughter Billie—for Holiday—will say: "*you are beating the musical allusions to death, mother!— as usual.*" — **IF** she hears it—if Billie really does come home— *if* she talks to me at all. . .to her mother at all. . . — **and why is she coming here home, Vernon? —after ten years of only appearing as old Junior High School head shots? —On morning containers of 2% milk?—WHY?.** . . After all that: The police. The private investigators. The money. The energy it all took. The exhaustion. The leads that went nowhere. — *The guilt*—the avoidance of eye contact. . .of body contact, yours and mine. Years of it! Years of avoidance. Years of ache, these aching years! — **Who needs it—Billie coming back!?. . .**

PALAZZO EXCERPT 3)

IRENE

Vernon. We had danced when we first met; and had siamesed our cheeks. Remember?—ANYWAY!

— *What* quality of our life has changed? that makes you want *that* "Billie?" Now? —The bitterness? The regrets?—the pain? — **They** have been our quality of life for ages now! So what's changed? An operation! —A different kind of pain. So what? **IT'S NOT THE END! THEY CAUGHT IT ALL!** —Listen, Vernon— I must tell you—in the hospital—pacing in the waiting room— bivouacking at the coffee machine, all during the operation—dying for a glass of wine—but fighting against it—penance, penance, until you got through it—Yes! I'd get through it all without the wine—penance, penance—without any fortification.—And the torment—your torment, I told myself, was what was excruciating—was what was making me, in veritas, want the vino; . . .but that is **not** what was eating at me—what was at war in me—because, yes!—there was something warring inside me, fighting to burst through the pain of the thought I thought was of losing you; **and then** it did burst through and I knew I knew—. . . that part of me **WANTED YOU TO DIE—YES! HOPED YOU WOULD DIE!—UNENCUMBERED! I'D BE UNENCUMBERED THEN—AT LAST! FREE AT LAST. FREE AT LAST. GOOD GOD ALMIGHTY, I'D BE FREE AT LAST!**

. . .Free from what? **TO DO—WHAT?**—I'd been free from you before—when you'd go away—to your conventions—to your, whatever—and there was always that first rush—freedom! FREEDOM! when at last, at least for a time, I could do—anything, anything,

—And you know what I'd do—would *finally* do—would *actually* do?

—**THE SAME THINGS I'D ALWAYS DONE.** —The housewife things—along with the bitter reminiscences —couldn't write a lyric either. Not one. Without you here, noodling away—without you here suggesting the melodies—I couldn't even come up with a title. Not one! . . .—and then there was the tearing guilt about my baby, Billie. —and I couldn't sleep

because I wanted you—needed you—the heat of you—the smell of you—the sharp stabs of your toenails, and, when you turned, the bruising bangs of your sharp shin. And so if you died, I'd be unencumbered, all right. Forever, all right, that's true. **BUT still I'd be doing the same old things —and drinking myself into my kind of oblivion—**. . .alone. So I prayed for you to make it then. **And you did! And I vowed—it would all change when you got home FROM THE HOSPITAL! I'd work for it to change. . . .and then the good ol BCI fired you —US!—and then I heard that Billie was coming home—*might* come home —and I fell apart and --NO! YOU WILL NOT GO AHEAD OF ME! LEAVE ME AN UNENCUMBERED LUSH!—AND I WILL NOT LET BILLIE THROUGH THE DOOR! *WITH THAT SUICIDE MACHINE!***