

A WONDERFUL WORLD

Synopsis

A WONDERFUL WORLD is a play with music. It tells the story of the characters who reside at Shorewood Knolls, a place for those with certain kinds of mental problems are treated. The patients have an exciting time living imaginary lives; to them it is indeed, a wonderful world.

Here are the characters.

At the beginning of the play Max, a patient, is escorting Andy Martin and his sister Sylvia on a guided tour of the Shorewood Knolls facilities.

Andy is potentially a new patient. He is president of Martin Enterprises, a major manufacturing company.

Sylvia is a woman with a plan of her own. When Andy enters Shorewood, she will replace him as president of Martin Enterprises. She then will have him confined permanently.

Henri, a patient, is Pollyandrea's husband. Once a truck driver, he is now a French chef. His latest recipe is Baked Twinkies Sprinkled with Catsup.

Fortescue, a patient, was an accountant. Now he is a Shakespearean actor who loves to quote the Bard. He too is a husband of Pollyandrea. Unfortunately, Henri and Fortescue hate each other.

Pollyandrea is a patient at Shorewood. While we do not know much about her early life, we do know that her heart is broken: her third resident husband has just been released. How can she survive with only two husbands? She now is looking for a nice, cultured Italian gentleman to become number three.

Mrs. Forbes, a patient, is an elderly woman. She reminds everyone that she is really quite wealthy. Patients snicker over the thought of a wealthy Mrs. Forbes.

Billy and Bob are two patients who are forever hatching plans to escape from Shorewood and start new careers in burlesque.

Roxanne is a lovely young woman who is unable to venture outside the doors of Shorewood.

Finally, we meet Dr. Sprayragen, the head of Shorewood Knolls.

At play's end everyone is happy and content.

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INTRODUCTION TO WONDERFUL WORLD

Let me introduce you to *A Wonderful World*. To appreciate the plot of the play you should be familiar with the characters. From them you will understand better how the plot develops. First, the setting. The play is located at Shorewood Knolls, an institution for those with mild mental disorders. Roxanne, our heroine is one of the patients.

Roxanne

Roxanne suffers from acrophobia and subsequent insecurity. At this point we do not know what brought on this affliction, but she sees Shorewood Knolls as a haven from the terrors of the outside world. Nevertheless, she is not completely happy. She has all the yearnings of a normal girl and realizes her life is incomplete.

Pollyandrea

Pollyandrea's problem, although she would not call it that, is that she is madly in love with men. In fact, at the beginning of the story she has three husbands, all patients at Shorewood Knolls. They are Bellissimo, Georges, and Fortescue.

Fortescue and Georges

Bellissimo, whom we never meet, is Pollandria's husband on Wednesdays and Saturdays; Georges is on Tuesdays and Fridays; Fortescue is on Mondays and Thursdays. (They all have Sundays off) Tragically, for Pollyandrea, Bellissimo has just been released from Shorewood Knolls. How can Pollyandrea find a nice, Italian husband to replace him?

Unfortunately, there is a built-in complication: Georges and Fortescue hate each other. Georges was a truck driver before he came to Shorewood Knolls and Fortescue was an accountant. Georges fancies himself a French chef. Unfortunately, his recipes make all of his fellow patient's gag. Fortescue thinks of himself as a Shakespearean actor. Too bad. He is not very good. Their hatred for each other runs very deep.

Will Pollyandrea, find a new husband to replace the departed Bellissimo? We will find out. But to continue the story.

Dr. Sprayragen

Dr. Sprayragen is the head of Shorewood Knolls. A wonderful, compassionate man, but a dunce in financial matters and is easy pray for what happens to him and the institution. Shorewood is in deep trouble.

Billy and Bob

Then there are Billy and Bob. I fear their elevator does not go to the top floor. They are sort of a Laurel and Hardy duo. They fancy themselves as vaudevillians and are forever planning to escape from Shorewood Knolls to return to Broadway and bring back Burlesque.

Andy and Sylvia

We haven't met Andy Martin. Andy is president of Martin Enterprises. He has little care for power and money and his sister, Sylvia, has conned him into entering Shorewood Knolls as a patient. Anyway, Andy meets Roxanne and immediately falls in love with her. That's the beauty of musical comedy: It doesn't take long.

Mrs. Forbes

Mrs. Forbes is at first depicted as a somewhat addled, nice old lady, not really in touch with the real world. Her specialty, she imagines, is finance. She is constantly reading financial publications. But we soon find out that she is a lot sharper than our first impression allowed us.

Dr. Max

Max is not really a doctor, but she likes to think of himself as one. He is a patient who in an earlier life was a hairdresser. His specialty is analyzing the mental ills of his fellow patients. The funny part is, he is pretty good at it.

The play opens with Fortescue reciting Shakespeare's "Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow." Georges can't stand it and he interrupts, shouting for Fortescue to stop! He is playing Solitaire and doesn't want to be disturbed; the other patients are playing Monopoly (of course, Mrs. Forbes is winning; the other can't understand how she has three hotels on Boardwalk and everybody lands on her property). Roxanne wonders how Pollyandrea can attract so many men and she so few. Pollyandrea tells her how she came to have so many husbands in her song "When I was a Young Maiden." Roxanne, alone, sings "Apples, Peaches, Pumpkin Pie."

Andy and his sister Sylvia enter and are introduced to the other patients. The patients have a tradition: When a new patient arrives, they sing their welcoming song, "A Wonderful World." Sylvia, Dr. Sprayragen, and the patients exit leaving Andy and Roxanne alone together. After a while Roxanne exits and Andy, who has fallen in love with her, sings "Roxanne." After he exits, Roxanne, Pollyandrea and Mrs. Forbes enter. They sing a trio, "How do you Know You're in Love," which concludes Scene 1.

Scene 2

Six months or so later Sylvia and Dr. Sprayragen are in dialogue. Recall that Doctor Sprayragen doesn't have a real grasp of the financial end of running an institution like Shorewood Knolls. As such, he is easy prey for Sylvia. Here she reveals her real intention, to have Andy permanently committed at Shorewood, which will allow her to take over Martin Enterprises. She has bought all mortgages held by others. She now threatens to close Shorewood and throw everyone out on the street if Andy is not permanently committed. Sprayragen is in a bind. How can he be loyal to Andy, a patient, if it results in the closure of Shorewood?