

Synopsis:

Scene I:

The chorus is sitting around doing nothing in particular, when Torvus signals the arrival of King Na'ama Malak, who is much beloved by all his subjects. Unfortunately, Malak is rather paranoid, and mistakes praise for revilement. Torvus scolds the chorus for having irritated the King after he storms off, but two chorus members, Jaffe Lael and Ahafti Gama, point out that Malak's paranoia would cause him to see bad in anything the chorus does or does not do. Torvus explains the origin of Malak's paranoia. The government of this place is actually a democracy, but as Malak continued to be reelected, people stopped voting, and eventually the elections were lost altogether. Malak took the lack of votes for him as a sign that the chorus doesn't want him around anymore, but without any competitors, he is stuck in his position. Torvus, Jaffe and Ahafti develop a plan. They will stage elections, Jaffe and Ahafti running as competitors. As everyone loves Malak, Malak will win, and his confidence will be renewed. And if the plan fails, Jaffe and Ahafti are not displeased at the prospect of unlimited despotic power.

Torvus goes to inform Malak of the impending elections, taking care to emphasize the incompetence of Jaffe and Ahafti, as even though the two do not come off as idiotic, Torvus wants to maximise votes for Malak. Unfortunately, Malak takes this as a sign that the people really do want him gone, (why else would they suddenly call for elections with such idiots as competitors?), and hastily appoints Torvus his successor before resigning.

Scene II:

Torvus is thoroughly depressed. As the elections are already underway, there is no way he could get enough votes to stay in power, and so, Jaffe or Ahafti will be elected king, and that is a frightening prospect. Torvus informs them that Malak has resigned, and hopes that they will call off the elections, but this just encourages them further, as now one of them will definitely win, and appoint the other his successor.

Malak arrives, and talks (or rather, sings) to Jaffe and Ahafti, relating to them how stressful it is to be a king. This puts Jaffe and Ahafti off, and they decide to call off the elections. Unfortunately, the elections have been over. Jaffe and Ahafti contemplate their situation, and come to the arrangement that Ahafti will burn Jaffe's ballots. Which he does.

Upon counting the ballots, it is found that Ahafti won by a considerable margin, but Ahafti slyly reveals that he burnt Jaffe's ballots, and is immediately removed from power. The imperial office thus defaults to the last king, Torvus.

Libretto:

Scene I:

Curtain opens to exterior scene, female chorus lying around relaxed, doing nothing in particular, not unlike the opening of Patience, Iolanthe or Utopia (Ltd.) Not that anyone knows what those are anymore.

Chorus: From dawn to noon we sit resigned
From noon we sit till eventide

It doesn't bother that we must
In point of fact sit dawn to dusk

At dusk we turn to the next item
We sleep, our schedules beside 'em
From dusk until the sky is blue
We sleep until the sun is due

Soloist: We indulge in pleasures varying
Eating drinking sleeping tarrying
Such is life
Free from strife
Life is rife
With strifeless life
We enjoy
Our employ
Coyly ploy
The joy we cloy
Such is life here on this isle
Such the hours away to while

Chorus: Such the hours away to while
From dawn to noon we sit resigned
From noon we sit till eventide
It doesn't bother that we must
In point of fact sit dawn to dusk

Soloist: It's quite routine the way we live
This harmony to us we give
(Of course, with credit due to Na'ama
Our emperor--)

Torvus (offstage): Tarantara!

(Enter male chorus)

Men: The trumpet brays
The trumpet signaling that
Coming from a ways
Is King Na'ama Malak

The trumpet sound
Is signaling That king Malak
Is coming round
Yes King Na'ama Malak

King Malak the bold
Malak the wise
Malak the one of many titles

Malak the brave
Malak the strong
Malak for whom is this recital

And so we sing
In preparation for the coming
Of our King
It's King Na'ama Malak

We realize
The harm to overzealeously
Idolize
Our King Na'ama Malak

So sound the brasses and the drums
To greet King Malak when he comes
The brasses drums for when he comes
Our King we'll strive to greet

It's no surprise that he's revered
Despite his despot power feared
For he's revered although he's feared
For he is an elite

So get the brass-
-es and the drums to greet Na'ama
When he comes
The King Na'ama Malak

For he's revered
And we'll revere him in spite of his
Power feared
The beloved King Malak!

(Enter Torvus)

Torvus: The emperor Na'ama Malak
Is coming here with his own small ac-
-ting retinue

The retinue is to ensure that

No violence our king should endure at
This public view

For though his long reign you've enjoyed
Our King, he is quite paranoid
And quite fearing being destroyed
This throng he has sought to avoid
(And camera's too) ¹

He has him a righteous suspicion
That those with a palace admission
To rid him view

Though they, by a sense of loyalty
Do not, with morality faulty
Intend to do

So during this long introduction
King Malak has had a deduction
And ordered a valid instruction
To now undergo a reduction
His retinue! ²

(Enter Malak, looking very depressed)

Chorus: Hurrah! Our chief is here! We cheer!

Malak: They jeer!

Chorus: We smile!

Malak: Revile!

Chorus: Applaud!

Malak: Downtrod!

I rule this land supreme
But with sorrow does it teem
For my subjects act as one
And it seems they want me gone
For you see their vile grin
And the malice that's within
Yes it seems they want me gone!
See they drown me out with jeers
(Quite as much as in my fears)

¹ You see, while *Utopia (Ltd.)* encourages people to take out their cameras halfway through the first act (Although of *Native Maids the Cream*), this opera discourages it.

² This last verse, by eliminating Malak's retinue, who were originally in the libretto, but served no purpose other than to allow me to rhyme "Malak"... anyway, by eliminating them, allows for the conservation of cast and costume should this ever actually be performed on a stage. Not that I considered that when writing this, however.

And I know my subjects all
All are plotting now my fall
For they seem not to it do
When they see it I see through
And so now they plot my fall

For I'm a monarch, ruler, king
Emperor, despot
And peasants go his knell for to ring
Their monarch leave for naught
Oh how sorry of a thing
Is the woe that is a king
Whose subjects leave for naught

(Chorus tosses him flowers, which he makes a big deal of putting on gloves before picking up. During these next seven lines, they start to file into lines to shake his hand)

These flowers cost their fees
And excite my allergies
So I'm sure they would not buy
If to tell me they'd not try
It's a sneaky kind of fate
Allergens assassinate
Surely they to tell me try
Lines to shake my hand they file
With their eyes quite full of guile
Which is why these gloves I wear
To avoid this tactic scare
Yes I do it, I'm compelled
Though I feel to it repelled
It avoids this tactic scare

For I'm a monarch, ruler, king
Emperor, despot
And peasants go his knell for to ring
Their monarch leave for naught
Oh what a sorry thing
Is the woe that is a king
Whose subjects leave for naught³

(Exeunt Malak)

Torvus: Ye fools!

How dare ye thusly mock our king

³ This is the obligatory patter song, which is why it makes considerably less sense than the rest of the show.

Ye fools!
This will only great sorrow bring
You musn't in his presence stand so dignified
And it would help a great deal if you simply tried
And so I stand
Throughout the land
To say "your king's defied!"
Defied!
To say "your king's defied"

Jaffe: Now see!
Be rational I pray to you
Now see!
That nothing is quite hard to do
Were we to stand like so (*pose*) to look undignified
Malak would think we do not care and leave our side
At least he thought
Our wrath he'd wrought
And so our king, he tried
He tried!
and so our king, he tried

Ahafti: It does
not matter what we say to him
It does
not matter that he thinks it grim
If there's a way to take our king and make him see
That all his subjects deign to wish no harm to he
And that I vow
Would be just how
Our king could be set free
Set free!
Our king could be set free

Torvus: There is
A way in this autocracy
There is
As this is a democracy⁴
Our king, beloved by all, we kept on re-electing
Unanimous it was, so from our votes defecting
We then forgot

⁴ *As there is some question as to whether or not what is described here is a democracy, I should say that it is too much of a democracy, in that the people decide when elections are held. Government underestimates how apathetic people can be.*

And so he thought
That he we were rejecting
Rejecting!
That he we were rejecting

All: It is

A plan quite formed and it shall work
It is
A great idea, so we won't shirk
We'll stage elections and the king shall win quite plain
This will the confidence instill in him to gain
And so we shall
These people all
Inform to act humane
Humane
Inform to act humane

Torvus: Do you

Jaffe: Jaffe Lael

Torvus: And you

Ahafti: Ahafti Gama

Torvus: Wish to perform imperial elections

And run as candidates, as false contenders
So that our king, quite free from all defections
Will be recast and free from all offenders

Jaffe and Ahafti: We do

(Aside) And all the same, despotic power does appeal to us

Torvus: I'll see the king, my trumpet ring

Say "to the court square go you!
See, no defect, they will elect, they do not overthrow you!
There's no contest, you are the best
And so you'll win for certain,
See now at last, election's past
And all before the curtain!"

JAT: "See now at last..."

Jaffe: I'll run against, my foe condensed

For the imperial office
And none of us, will win and thus
Ingenious this stuff is

Ahafti: This plot you see, will guarantee

Our king no longer cower
(If it not work, 'twould be a perk
this full despotic power)

Jaffe & Ahafti: If it not work....

Torvus: "See now at last..."

Jaffe: (*Interacting with chorus*) An emperor !!

This position I gladly accept
I'm rather inept
And surely much worse than our king
With wings I will fly
Without pause to the top of the tree
Come subjects to me
That patriot songs may we sing

JAT: The future near, quite eagerly

We do not fear, but wait to see
The king we cheer the king will be
The perfect king for you and me

Ahafti: (*Interacting with Chorus*) An emperor !!

Though perhaps there are better who'd be
The position that's me
(And our current king is the best!)
And so I will try
For to rule as a monarch supreme
My eyes are a gleam
For I may, as a king, be addressed!

JAT: The future near...

Torvus: (*Aside*) A emperor he!

And I fully intend that he'll stay
A king too, this way
For they (*Indicating Jaffe and Ahafti*) will not get very far
So Malak on high
Will continue to rule as a king
His trumpeter sing
Tarantararararar!

JAT: The future near...

(*Exeunt all but Torvus, Enter Na'ama Malak*)

Torvus: My king, I have some news to share with you

Malak: Torvus, Tell it me now, and tell me true

Torvus: My king, you have feared assassination

Malak: Torvus, Should not a king fear sedation?

Torvus: My king, In your favor will bode this tide

Malak: Torvus, Get to the point, this news confide

Torvus: My king, the peasants elect to elect

Malak: Torvus, Your message I do not connect

Torvus: My king, Instead of killing you with force

Malak: Torvus, Which I'd suspect they'd do, of course

Torvus: My king, They vote for a new king (or you)

Malak: Torvus, And is all that you say quite true?

Torvus: It is! And I am certain these elections you shall win, for your foes are but mere half-wits!

Malak: *(Aside)* If the peasants would be willing to nominate two half-wits, *(Aloud)* Then I resign!

Torvus: Resign?

Malak: Resign!

Torvus: But as of yet, you have no successor.

You may not resign lest your office fall

To those infernal idiots you'd face

Would you have stayed to be elected king

Malak: You make a good point, and I consider

And find the answer clear to me quite plain

It's true that now I've not a successor

But now, that office I appoint to you!

Torvus: To me?

Malak: To you!

An emperor ye!

And I'm sure you'll be quite a success

With the power you possess

And you'll be quite a hit with the throng!

And emperor ye!

So for you in the future I see

Quite politically

A reign in which there is no wrong

(With Torvus) An emperor ye!...

Torvus: *(With Malak)* An emperor I!

Such a twist I could never expect

This mistake I'll correct

And make everything as it was!

An emperor I!

And I hope with my power supreme

Deus ex machine

(The solution as well as the cause)

(Exeunt Malak, leaving Torvus looking astonished)

(Intermission, to allow for costume changes)

Scene II:

Curtain opens to Torvus sitting, slouched, dressed in a costume of a similar style to Na'ama

Malak's costume in Scene I

Torvus: How sorry is the lot
Of a king who oughtn't be a king
So leaving me to rot
Is this horror of a thing
Tormented with the prospect of this occupation
This exalted rank of emperor
I'd willingly be subjected to degradation
(For these politics I do deplore)
Ah me
For me to be a king who reigns supreme
It will not do
And what for do I now assume this scheme?
I know not who

A king despotic I
Though I did not presume to seek it
Jaffe and Ahafti
Seek elected for to speak it
Tormented with the prospect of their predilection
Their desire to be such a king
Soon they'd find the ballots of the elections
One will be a king and one take wing
Ah me
For either of them to rule this land
It will not do
So I will fight in hopes to stay their hand
Yes through and through

(Torvus retires upstage. Enter Jaffe & Ahafti, dressed in their Scene I costumes, but with light robes over it. Don't ask me what their Scene I costumes were. I don't know)

Jaffe & Ahafti: Henceforward we sing
Our songs as duets
How strange of a thing
Would be the upsets
Will one of us be
A despot, till then
An individual we
Inseparable men

Sing a duetto
Sing agitato
Sing in falsetto
Sing with vibrato

We have agreed
That for which one will rule
The other will succeed
In the political pool
So it really doesn't matter
Which of us you vote for
For one and then the latter
Will be emperor

Sing a duetto...

Torvus: Hark men!
The emperor Na'ama Malak has resigned
And appointed me as his successor
And so in light of this unlikely event
You may resign!

Jaffe: You wish us to give up despotic power?

Ahafti: I should think not

Jaffe: No way!

Ahafti: The elections will be over on the hour

Jaffe: Count the ballots!

Ahafti: Good day!

Jaffe & Ahafti (*Angrily*): Henceforward we sing
Our songs as duettos

Torvus: I make it a trio!

Jaffe & Ahafti: Duetto!

Torvus: A Trio!

Jaffe & Ahafti: Agitato! Agitato!

All: Vibrato!

(*Exeunt Torvus, angrily*)

Malak (*Offstage*): A peasant am I!
La la la la la...

Jaffe: Hark! Who may that be? Singing so far from the score?

Malak (*Offstage*): A peasant am I!...

Ahafti: Hark! Tis Na'ama Malak! Our former emperor!

(*Enter Malak*)

Jaffe: Good day, good sir. And how do you enjoy your lowly station?

Ahafti: Please give your answer with an explanation.

Malak: An hour ago

As well you know

Your emperor was I

And now I trail

At the bottom of the scale

How time really does fly

As a king I had a fear of sudden death

(If a monarch is disliked, his subjects take his breath)

But a democracy this now

And as peasant I'm in bliss now

For the paranoia lifted

(And with Torvus ruling gifted)

I can let out a much long awaited sigh!

For as a king

It's just the thing

To bear responsibility

But I could not do

What the position asked me to

I just didn't have the ability

So when hearing I was challenged, I resigned

As a long awaited break, since I've had peace of mind

Now you run to be elected

So from monarchy rejected

I now work for Monarch Torvus

Who I'm sure, though very nervous

Will do well when serving politically

(Malak retires stage right, Enter Torvus)

Jaffe & Ahafti: Hark, Torvus!

The former emperor Na'ama Malak

Has confided to us the sorrows of his appointed position

And so in light of this event

We resign!

Torvus: You wish to give up your despotic power?

I should think not!

No way!

The elections have been over for an hour!

Count the ballots!

Good day!

The ballots are in, and so

The results of the election you ought to know

You each have all the same virtues and flaws
The election has thus resulted in a draw! ⁵

Jaffe & Ahafti: Dear me!

This is most unexpected

Torvus: The recounted ballots shall be in soon enough!

You have an hour!

Good day!

(Torvus retires stage left)

All: Quite a conundrum we have here

Who shall in what office act?

This will, a quality, I fear

From this government detract

Malak: Who shall rule and who shall serve?

To whom shall which office fall?

Will each get what he deserve?

Who will come out with it all?

Torvus: I must, at this point, remain

In this office that I hold

As a sovereign I'll deign

To make myself fit in this mold

Jaffe: Shall we think of such a plot?

If you've any thought, then name

Shall I then burn my ballots?

Yes, and send them up in flame!

Ahafti: To burning ballots he has turned

That would put one off one's head

If he wants his ballots burned

I shall burn them in his stead!

All: And so we all should now go to

Make and perform a master plan

And thus defeat the dreadful foe who

For that office ran

(Exeunt all. Music plays. Chorus comes flooding on, led by Malak and Torvus.)

Chorus: The ballots announce

Will Torvus, his position renounce

⁵ I realized while scoring this, that it might come to one's mind that, should the election result in a draw, leadership should revert back to the last king, in this case, Torvus (since Malak resigned). To work around this, I invented this excuse: Since the election resulted in a draw, there would be a reelection. But as Torvus was not part of the draw, he is disqualified, thus elections will continue until either Jaffe or Ahafti wins. The way I conclude the piece has every contender be disqualified for various reasons before leadership reverts to Torvus. Yes, that's a spoiler, but the whole synopsis is at the very beginning of this document.

Or will he perhaps win
In the hour that he was given?
He'll probably not
And Gama or Lael take the spot
Well let's make it brief
And tell us who now is the chief?

Malak: The elections are over!

Clear stover
For clover
The metaphor is clever
But never--
--mind, Whatever!
Who will be a marquis
Either Jaffe
Or Ahafti
Or perhaps, if inconclusive
Or reclusive
It's conducive

Chorus: Now tell us lief

Make it brief
Who's our chief?

Malak: Upon recounting all the ballots

(As per my lowly occupation)
I shall now tell you, with much balance
Who will rule the monarch's station
But half of you voted (astonishing to me)
But none for Jaffe, and all for Ahafti!

Chorus: Hurrah!

Ahafti: Silence my subjects all!

Jaffe: He's something to say
About his ruler's fall

Ahafti: In methodical way
Jaffe and I had a draw

Jaffe: Our votes were the same
Ahafti worked on a flaw

Ahafti: In the political game
Ballots of my foe I burned

Jaffe: Leaving him for to win
As we had recently learned

Ahafti: What Malak had been
Neither of us should be king

Jaffe: So to have mollified

He cheated his way through the thing
Ahafti: I am disqualified!

Torvus & Chorus: An emperor {I / He}
This position {I'll / He'll} gladly accept
{I'm / He's} rather adept
(At least much more so than the rest)
An emperor {I / He}
And {My / His} subjects serve under the rule
Of a despotic school
(For that kind of school is the best)

Jaffe & Ahafti: Henceforward we sing
Our songs without motive
Let honesty ring
You will find us quite votive
With dignity we leave
From the political game
(Which is good, for we believe
That this country we would maim)

Malak: (*Motioning to Torvus*) So he's the king, It's just the thing
(*Motioning to Jaffe & Ahafti*) Those two have learned their lesson!
To celebrate, The turn of fate
Let's eat delicatessen! ⁶
So that's the plan, For every man
Of that I am quite certain
That point defend, This is the end
So if you please, the curtain!

Chorus: That point defend, This is the end
So if you please, the curtain!

Curtain

⁶ *This is probably my favorite lyric in the piece. I have no idea why.*