

PHILIPPE'S ESCAPE – A FAMILY MUSICAL

Long Synopsis

As early as 1939, France is split between the so-called “free zone” and the “occupied zone”, invaded by the Germans.

One evening at dusk, PHILIPPE and MICHAEL, who share the same dreams, say goodbye to each other in Royan, a French coastal town on the Atlantic Coast. The same night, a wharf character steals Philippe's duffle bag, leaving the fifteen-year-old boy without a penny (*Overture – “Joie de Vivre”*).

BRIGITTE, a waitress at Café de Royan, finds great compassion for Philippe. In the form of a poem which morphs into a prayer-hymn (*“We Shall Not Fall”*), Philippe paints a rather somber picture of France.

Brigitte allows Philippe to perform in the café from time to time. Among the customers is MRS. ASHBERRY, a distinguished lady from America who frequently vacations in France (*“I Love France”*). Her attempts to talk to Philippe are always abruptly interrupted by MAURICE, the café owner, also Brigitte's father, who lives in paranoia and fear as the German troops are getting close.

Brigitte is less and less keen on her job as a waitress (*“Sick and Tired”*), not to mention that her father's involvement in the Resistance movement makes her nervous.

Maurice is not happy either. He reveals his struggles as a child and his dreams as an adult (*“The Sergeant's March”*).

Early one morning, Philippe has a nightmare. He wakes up and stares at the moon-lit ocean, and his mind wanders. He sees people around him, including Mrs. Ashberry, boarding a big ship. Both venture into a dramatic duet (*“Across the Ocean”*). The ship horn echoes at a crucial time.

1940, Newport, Rhode Island – Mrs. Ashberry introduces Philippe to her husband in a tug-of-war duet (*“The Boy We Have Never Had”*). Regrettably, MR. ASHBERRY disapproves. He is selfish, bitter, intolerant, arrogant, repulsive. Also, he drinks too much. Ultimately, he despises Philippe.

MISS HEATHER, the maid, tries to be the conciliator of the house, and Philippe's life may be protected, yet it is far from being complete (*“Will She Be There for Me”*).

Only the tutoring sessions with MR. BELMONT bring a touch of humor and help ease the pain.

1943 – America is at war (*“We’re Gonna Help”*), and the announcement of Pearl Harbor brings out the worst in Mr. Ashberry.

Added to the trauma of the times, Philippe receives a letter from his mother which insinuates sad news about Michael.

Back in France after five years of German occupation, a burst of happiness fills Café de Royan (*“Cabaret Dreams”*), followed by an explosive French can-can. Royan was just liberated.

Late that same night, Philippe and Michael’s silhouettes are seen walking past the ruins of the waterfront, toward Café de Royan”.

(“Tribute to Life” – Theme)