

DANCE BRIGHT GODS - *Synopsis of Main Plot*

ACT ONE

- ▶ **Opening:** *Dance Bright Gods* opens briefly with the comic emergence from a millennial slumber of the play-within-a-play's major character, the Tree God—a 17-year-old with unknown powers who can't remember that he's a god. *The image:* this is a Comedy; with magical-realism characters; set in contemporary Los Angeles; using a playful language of wit-figuration-allusion.
- ▶ **Set-up—leading to—Thunderbolts:** When the play's heroine—and classic screwball-comedy mercurial-wit—who's chief curator at a prominent LA museum (Bete Mathias), deciphers the clay tablet holding the Tree God's story, she jokes (on the square) she looks for no flat-witted god, but a rounded specimen: a Man, and fall in love. Later, the energetic hero—and classic lamb-to-the-slaughter—(Eli Passerin) arrives for the tablet's unveiling in rain-drenched tuxedo he strips off to dry, and declares his Rule Against Love—just before he sees Bete outside in the rain among statues, thinks her a goddess, and falls in love. *The play gets rolling:* a drenched Bete finds a nearly-naked Eli, both unsure if the other is god or mortal, both fall permanently in love, both flee the other.
- ▶ **Loves Me / Loves Me Not:** Bete soon learns why Eli has banned Love: he's dying, given an ALS diagnosis, with yet but minor symptoms. Eli speaks his farewell and leaves; Bete falls to her knees in tears. At a loss on what good she can do a sick man, Bete hears her old friend tell her “not live life in an instant's thought, but let it unspool its own pace”. Unsure, Bete by chance deciphers-forth the Tree God, who reminds her of Eli, and smooths his clumsiness by teaching him to dance. Bete overhears the god say the Sun loves him, sees clearly that Eli loves her, and—with leaping joy—grabs the god for an Astaire-Rogers tap-dance over sand dunes. Bete strides out into the new day to win Eli.
- ▶ **Into The Green World:** All escape into a mythical LA central park: Bete to dream of Eli and plot his overthrow; Eli (who's amended his Rule to allow Love—only never see Bete again) to teach trees and birds to sing Bete's hosannas; and the multitude of characters pairing-off or splitting-apart in this intricate plot. The lovers finally face each other: Eli slinks away but Bete holds him by her wits—to judge if he's a man or god. Yet it's Bete's who is vanquished—that she hides to keep up her plots...
- ▶ **Great Imaginative Leap / Act One Curtain:** Bete seizes on *staging a play-within-a-play* using the Tree God's story, to ensnare Eli a while in the role of the god's brother, scripting them to “make their man”—and pose herself as their model. Eli examines Bete closely, leading (almost) to a kiss that the the Tree God interprets as giving life. The god “kisses” his muddy sandman, who breathes to life and joyously runs away, followed by the god. Eli mimics them with Bete happily in his arms, and they run to explore “uncharted, warm worlds 'tween sheets”, and prove he's no god, but a Man. *Curtain.*

ACT TWO

- ▶ **Enter Villain: Time:** For a fleeting, sweet moment, Bete and Eli “stop the Sun” to halt Illness's approach. Yet when Bete and Eli see the pitiful new-made man yearn for his unknown “she”, they're reminded with full force of their coming separation, ending their idyll. Eli's illness quickly comes and he will leave to die alone—without a word to Bete. In a campfire scene of song and disguise, Eli realizes he owes Bete a face-to-face farewell, as she prepares an ambush to turn his stubborn mind...
- ▶ **All Comes Crashing Down:** But the Tree God's story implodes, via a Fig, and Bete collapses in disbelief to see her schemes fail (how can this be?), as Eli slips away. Eli declares to Bete his love, and as he leaves alone to die, he laments that the new-made man could not find his “she”, and so find undying, perfect love. Astonished at Eli's view of mortal love (grossly mistaken, to her mind), Bete's wheels turn to give her a Grand Idea that will win Eli to her for the rest of his days after all...
- ▶ **Finale: Mortals Triumphant:** Bete creates a way for the new-man's missing “she” to appear, giving him his “perfect love”—but only if Eli attends to assist. Eli agrees, and in a synthesis scene that ties up all plots, the Tree God joins new-man and new-woman, to disastrous results. Bete must learn her own lesson (to keep silent!) so Eli may overhear himself speak aloud what grandeur our mortal impermanence may bestow upon us, then say he will stay with Bete for good. Bete has scripted her play so that everyone (almost) gets a happy end. *Final Image:* Bete's sparkling Apology-Epilogue.