



*The stage is a field of human skin, more or less densely forested with megascale hairs which stretch out of sight into the space above. Clinging on to these hairs are enormous lice (*Pthirus pubis*), crafted as accurately as possible. They are considerably larger than the human performers who give them voice, and although there is a suggestion that a human singer might be inside, no part of the human body emerges from the louse body, excepting the mouth and perhaps, should participants be willing, the genitals. No attempt, either, is made to adjust the shape of the louse to accommodate the humans operating it from within.*

The lice sing.

Recitative

LOUSE ONE

Behold, o my brethren, behold, the incomparable beauty of our surroundings!

Under the protecting veil of darkness, as far as eye can see or legs can range, a landscape pleasing and benevolent in every detail, a perfect world!

LOUSE TWO

A perfect world for a haematophagic ectoparasite...

Why, the very ground beneath us radiates a constant nurturing heat. All is made for our pleasure, our convenience and our dominion.

DUET

LOUSE TWO

What wind or storm,
what ice or snow,
shall ever interrupt this temperate bliss?
These stalks of hair are exactly a legspan apart,
precisely a claw's-width thick.

LOUSE ONE

See how these keratin shafts and pegs
on which to climb, cement our eggs
are perfectly spaced for louse's legs.
What providence!
Give thanks!

LOUSE TWO

What need for hunger?
To feed our hunger
we merely extend our mouthparts down
to pierce the capillaries' haemoprotein bounty
flowing through the epidermal ground.
What providence!
Benevolence!
Give thanks!

Chorus

LOUSE ONE

*(moving towards a female on a different hair, then joined
contrapuntally by the others, who sing as they mate)*

Such willing females did he supply
that with his command we might comply:
Go forth, be fruitful and multiply!
What providence!
Benevolence!
Such elegance!
Give thanks, give thanks.

(both male lice mount and mate females)

ALL FOUR LICE

Give thanks, give thanks, for we are loved of God.
Give thanks, give thanks, we are his chosen creatures.
Who doubts that in his image we are made?
We share his higher purpose and his features.

Our every need this Eden will suffice.
For us he built this paradise
and peopled it with anopluran lice.
Give thanks, give thanks!
Providence!
Benevolence!
Providence!