

MOOCH THE MAGNIFICENT

- a Children's Opera in One Act -

SYNOPSIS

The opera takes place in a zoo of robot "animals" in a dome-covered city that is part of a worldwide network of such cities, connected by travel tubes, sealed off from the outside. The time is late twenty-first century, after human beings, afraid of the wilds, have moved indoors.

SCENE ONE: When the curtain rises, we find Orlando tinkering with his robot animals. As he works on them, he sings of his love for these "mechanicals". But he complains that they often break down. A happy-go-lucky Mooch enters, singing. She offers to help maintain the robots in exchange for being able to live at the zoo. Orlando is initially unsure that this young girl would be right for the job, but she manages to convince him. She makes some small adjustments to Lion, who begins to sing of his dissatisfaction at not being able to roar properly. She tinkers with Unicorn, who then sings of her sadness at being made into a silly unicorn, when she is truly a horse. Orlando is impressed with Mooch's abilities. He welcomes her to the zoo and then lies down to take a nap. As he sleeps, Mooch makes further adjustments, making the animals wilder and wilder.

SCENE TWO: Orlando wakes up from his nap and notices that Lion is now beginning to roar. He looks inside Lion's mouth and sees that the teeth are sharper, too. Lion sings of wanting to eat a child, to Orlando's great alarm. Lion and Unicorn sing of their desire to be wild, and Orlando is concerned. Mooch enters with her suitcase, ready to move in. She thanks him for his kindness and tells a story of being raised by a bear out in the wilds. Orlando doesn't believe her, and she finally tells the real story: she is the result of a genetic experiment in a laboratory, and she has never had real parents. Orlando pities her and invites her to stay longer in exchange for doing maintenance on more of the mechanicals. After she works on Unicorn, the beast begins to sing of her origins in nature. Orlando then muses about the sea and sky, remembering them from his childhood. He sings of the wonders of nature that abounded when he lived out in the wilds and then bemoans that they are all gone. Mooch insists that they are still there and that it is safe to experience them, but Orlando is afraid. He admonishes Mooch not to go outside to play. He settles down for another nap, and Mooch goes to work again, making the animals yet wilder.

SCENE THREE: Mooch has worked in the zoo for a month or more, and the robots are now more like animals. She wonders whether she should stay in the zoo, which is now her home, or rather venture out into the wilds. Lion and Unicorn, now relatively wild, are no longer content to stay in the zoo. Orlando threatens to switch them off, but Mooch tells him that this is no longer possible. Orlando realizes that the zoo, as he knew it, has been ruined, but he now thinks of Mooch as his daughter, and he realizes that being a father is more important to him than being a zookeeper. Mooch tells him of her plans for them all to escape, through a secret door. Orlando is initially afraid, but as he remembers his childhood out in nature, he is won over. Mooch leads all the animals outside. Orlando is at first hesitant, and then he, too, steps through the magic door and into the wilds.