

4EVER! — PRE-SHOW WARMUP

Eight Wandering Meaning • Mercy • Mirth Triplets

The pre-show has already begun.

Before the audience recognizes anyone as a performer, all twenty-four singer-dancers enter the room as **eight wandering triplets of Meaning, Mercy and Mirth**.

They aren't there primarily to entertain people who are waiting for the show to start.

They're there to encounter them.

The room operates more like an Indian wedding than a conventional Western theater. Guests arrive, find one another, eat, talk, laugh and settle in while music surrounds them. There's no hard line separating "before the show" from "the show."

4EVER! is already happening.

THE EIGHT MMM TRIPLETS

The twenty-four performers divide into eight groups of three:

MEANING • MERCY • MIRTH

These aren't fixed personality types. They're functions within an encounter. Roles can breathe, overlap and reverse as circumstances invite.

Each triplet wanders among the tables offering its own form of **table magic**.

That may mean conversation, harmony, a tiny dance, an actual bit of close-up magic, a playful question, helping somebody with a chair, engaging a child, noticing someone who hasn't been noticed, improvising around something happening at the table—or occasionally recognizing that the merciful thing to do is simply smile and move along.

The governing rule is:

Read the table.

The triplets bring possibilities, not routines that must be inflicted upon everybody.

Meaning gives an encounter somewhere to go.

Mercy makes room for the people who are actually there.

Mirth opens possibility through delight.

And none of those functions belongs permanently to only one performer.

THE MABUHAY STORY ENCOUNTER

At an appropriate moment, each triplet approaches a table and offers the same basic invitation:

“Welcome. And now that it’s all gotten started at your table tonight, we’d like to share a little story that’s much like the story you’ll see writ large and fabulous tonight....”

Then the triplet begins ***Sophion, Uncle Humph and The First Glimmering of Grace.***

The language is intentional.

“Now that it’s all gotten started” quietly echoes *Mercy Has No End*. No explanation is offered. Guests may recognize the connection later—or never.

Either is fine.

The little Mabuhay Story at their table is a miniature of something they’ll eventually encounter **writ large and fabulous** throughout 4EVER!.

THREE PERFORMERS. THREE CHARACTERS.

The storytelling uses a simple relay.

When **Uncle Humph** speaks dialogue, **Sophion** narrates.

When **Sophion** speaks dialogue, **Uncle Humph** narrates.

The two therefore continually exchange the roles of character and witness. Neither becomes merely “the narrator.”

The third member waits for **Patch**.

Patch’s arrival changes the geometry.

Patch enters the story as **Mirth**, takes responsibility for the dramatic-question prop, and begins opening what had been an encounter among characters outward toward the people sitting at the table.

The story continues only far enough for the table to **encounter Patch**.

Then we stop.

Not because the story has been completed.

Because the encounter has.

HERE’S YOUR SIGN

Patch completes the invitation.

Something in the spirit of:

“And if you’d like to find out how this story ends... here’s your sign.”

Patch reveals or indicates the QR code.

That QR opens the next threshold: **the first Glimmering of the Mabuhay Stories.**

But it can do more than that.

The same threshold can also carry a link into the **online 4EVER! playbill and notes**, allowing guests who want to know more to explore what they're encountering as the evening unfolds.

And it can open whatever interactive wizardry we've cooked up for **InTheWhack.com** for that particular evening.

The phone doesn't become a second show.

It becomes another threshold into this one.

Guests might eventually use it to explore a Space, answer a dramatic question, leave a glyph, respond to an Enigma, discover something hidden in the performance, or contribute something that another receiver-giver may encounter later.

The possibilities can evolve.

The essential rule remains:

Offer the doorway. Don't require anyone to walk through it.

After presenting the QR, the triplet moves on.

Don't hover.

Don't watch to see whether anyone scans.

Don't turn curiosity into a conversion metric.

The gift has been offered.

What happens next belongs to the receiver.

LEAVE ROOM FOR MIRTH

The opening, story architecture, Patch entrance, dramatic question and QR handoff provide the repeatable structure.

Everything needn't happen identically.

Especially Patch.

Leave room for a little extemporaneous Mirth. A table may give Patch something wonderful to play with. A child may answer unexpectedly. Someone may make the better joke. Something may happen in the room that deserves acknowledgment.

Take the gift.

Give something back.

Then keep moving.

Standardize the invitation.

Don't standardize the encounter.

EVERY TABLE BEFORE THE SHOW MOVES FORWARD

There is one firm operational rule:

Every table gets an MMM encounter before the formal show is cued forward.

We don't sacrifice the last few tables because the clock says it's time to begin.

The encounter determines the threshold.

The eight triplets should therefore keep circulating until the company has confirmed that **every occupied table has been visited**.

Some encounters will naturally be shorter than others. Some tables will invite a little more play. Some may be perfectly happy with the simplest version. Read the table—but complete the circuit.

That means the transition into the formal performance must remain **elastic**.

If the MMM encounters are still underway, we may need to **camp the entrance tunes for a bit**.

Musicians, music director and especially the **sound team should expect this**.

The introductory music isn't simply a fixed countdown to a predetermined GO cue. It provides musical territory in which the room can remain while the final encounters are completed.

If necessary, extend, repeat, vamp, loop or otherwise hold appropriate entrance material according to the musical plan established in rehearsal.

Don't rush the humans to satisfy the track.

The room moves forward when the final tables have been encountered and the appropriate company/stage-management cue has been given.

Sound crew: **be ready to camp**.

The apparent looseness is intentional.

Underneath it, the handoff must be disciplined.

THE ENIGMAS — FOR THE ENCORE 🤔

Each Meaning • Mercy • Mirth triplet is also entrusted with a supply of **Perpetual Enigmas of Grace™**.

But don't distribute them merely because people have arrived.

Don't put one on every place setting.

Don't turn them into favors or swag.

Throughout the evening, the MMM triplets are getting to know their tables. They're noticing people. They're creating little relationships.

And all along they're carrying something they'll eventually be able to give.

The Enigmas are for the encore.

When **YOU ARE THE ENCORE** arrives, the twenty-four performers can return to the relationships they've already begun building throughout the room.

Only now do the Perpetual Enigmas of Grace™ begin passing **person to person**.

The physical Enigma isn't the completion of anything.

It's another threshold.

The receiver-giver may keep it.

Taste it.

Read it.

Scan it.

Puzzle over it.

Give it away.

Make something because of it.

Return something of their own.

Or do absolutely nothing.

Free will remains part of the design.

Because the MMMs have already encountered these people before giving them anything, the exchange can carry the simplest possible subtext:

We met you.

Now this is yours.

What happens next belongs to you.

The Perpetual Enigma therefore becomes the physical baton in the handoff from performer to receiver-giver.

The encore doesn't belong to us.

YOU ARE THE ENCORE.

WHY ALL 24 PERFORMERS DO THIS

This isn't an opening act assigned to eight little entertainment teams.

This is the whole cast's warmup.

Before singer-dancers perform *for* anyone, they encounter the people **with whom** they'll perform.

Before the cast discovers the audience from the stage, the cast discovers them table by table.

And before the audience knows these twenty-four people are the cast, they know some of them simply as the three people who visited **their table**.

Later, when those wandering strangers emerge inside the larger performance, recognition can happen:

"Wait. That's them."

Or, better:

"Those were our three."

Eight triplets therefore create eight simultaneous networks of small human relationships throughout the room before the formal theatrical architecture becomes visible.

When the twenty-four finally assemble as a company, they aren't walking onstage before a roomful of strangers.

They're reappearing among people they've already met.

And because we don't move forward until every table has been visited, nobody is intentionally left outside that first circle of encounter merely because they happened to be seated at the wrong end of the room.

THE PRE-SHOW RULE

No one announces:

THE SHOW HAS NOW BEGUN.

It already has.

Food is moving.

Music is playing.

People are talking.

MMMs are wandering.

Table magic is happening.

Mabuhay Stories are being shared.

Patch is appearing.

Dramatic questions are being encountered.

QR thresholds are opening.

The playbill is waiting for anyone who wants to go deeper.

InTheWhack.com may already be doing something peculiar.

Somebody across the room is laughing because something completely unplanned just happened.

Somebody else may have missed almost all of it.

That's permitted too.

But **no table is skipped**.

If we need another few minutes, the music breathes with us.

The entrance tunes camp.

The sound team holds the threshold open.

Because the clock doesn't decide when the encounter is finished.

The people do.

Little by little, these intimate encounters scattered throughout the room begin gathering into something larger.

The people who visited the tables become singer-dancers.

The little story becomes a story **writ large and fabulous**.

The hidden musical language becomes recognizable.

The invitation becomes performance.

The performance becomes prayer.

And eventually the prayer turns around and faces the people who've been part of it all along.

Then comes the encore.

The MMM triplets return.

The Perpetual Enigmas of Grace™ pass into other hands.

And the people who arrived thinking they were coming to eat brunch and watch a show are given one final possibility:

receive something, and become a giver of something else.

Only then may they fully discover what has been true since the first triplet appeared beside their table:

The show didn't start when the performers took the stage.

It got started at their table.

And now that it's gotten started —

Mercy Has No End.

