

## ACT ONE

### First scene



England, 18th century. Tom Rakewell is courting Anne Trulove outside her father's house in the country. Trulove has doubts about his daughter's proposed marriage and tries to arrange a regular job for Tom as accountant ("The woods are green"); but he resists the idea and, left on his own, declares his intention to live by his wits trusting to good luck ("Since it is not by merit"). When Tom expresses his wish for money, Nick Shadow appears and tells him that an unknown uncle has left him a substantial fortune (quartet "I wished but once"). He then invites Tom to employ him as a servant and go with him to London to sort out his inheritance. **Second**

### scene

Mother Goose's brothel, London. Whores and roaring boys sing in honour of Venus and Mars ("With air commanding and weapon handy"). Shadow introduces his new master to the sleazy aspects of London life and teaches him the real meaning of beauty, pleasure and love. But this reminds Tom of Anne and he becomes uneasy and laments his betrayal of love (cavatina "Love, too frequently betrayed"), yet accepts Mother Goose's invitation to spend the night with her. **T**

### third scene

Meanwhile, back in Trulove's house in the country. Anne sings to the full moon her sorrow and wonders why she has not heard from Tom. She knows somehow that he is in danger, and sets out for London to aid him (aria and cabaletta "Quietly, night, O find him and caress... I go, I go to him").

## ACT TWO

### First scene



**Second scene**

Autumn, evening. The street in front of Tom's house. Anne finds Tom's London house, but does not dare to enter ("Although the heart for love dear everything"). She steps aside only to see him emerge from a sedan chair which also contains Baba, whom he has just married. Tom tells Anne to leave ("Anne, here!"), and as Baba complains about her husband's attentions, he tells her Anne is a milkmaid come to demand the payment of an old debit (terzetto "Could it then"). **Third scene**

Inside Tom's house. Tom is clearly finding his eccentric marriage intolerable, as Baba is a chatterbox with a fiery temper ("As I was saying"). He silences her by throwing his wig over her face, then falls asleep. (Pantomime) Nick enters with a fantastic Baroque Machine and demonstrates how, through the use of a hidden compartment in the machine, it appears to turn stones into bread. Tom cries out in his sleep that he wishes it were true, and waking, finds the machine he has dreamt of. Nick hints that if such machines were mass-produced Tom could become a saviour of mankind and Tom sets out to market the machine, not knowing it is a sham (duetto "Thanks to this excellent device").

## ACT THREE

### First scene

Tom Rakewell's room, in London. The act starts with the auction of the ruined Tom's property by the maniac auctioneer Sellem ("Who hears me, knows me"). The objects for sale include Baba, who has remained immobile since being silenced by the wig. When unwrapped, she resumes her tantrum interrupted in the last scene, now directed at the auction-goers for disturbing her belongings ("Sold, annoyed!"), but calms down when Anne enters. Baba advises her to find Tom and set him right ("You love him"), and warns her against Nick Shadow. Then she announces her intent to return to her life on the stage. **Second scene**

A graveyard, in a starless night. Nick demands Tom's payment - with his soul - for a year and a day of service; but as midnight strikes, Nick offers him an escape in the form of a game of cards, which Tom wins, thanks to the benign influence of thoughts of Anne. Defeated, Nick sinks into the ground, condemning Tom to insanity as he goes (duetto "Well, then... My heart is wild with fear").



### Third scene

In the mental hospital of Bedlam. Tom believes he is Adonis and suggests the shadow of heroes to rejoice for Venus approaching (“Prepare yourselves, heroic shades”). A group of madmen mock him (“Madmen’s words are all untrue” and “Leave all love and hope behind”). Anne visits Tom, who answers just if called Adonis and keeps calling Anne Venus. He asks for forgiveness (“In a foolish dream”) and asks her to sing him to sleep. Anne sings her lullaby (“Gently, little boat”) and Tom falls asleep. Then enters Trulove, Anne’s father, who invites her daughter to leave (“duettino “Every wearied body must”). When Tom awakes and realizes she has gone, he dies (“Where are thou, Venus?”).

### EPILOGUE

Shadow stops the falling curtain and calls back on the stage the principal characters pointing out the simple moral: the Devil finds work for idle hands (“Good people, just a moment”).