

THE MEDIUM

Composer: Gian Carlo Menotti

Libretto by the composer

Act I

Monica, the daughter of Madame Flora, and Toby, a mute boy living with them, are playing while Madame Flora is away. When she returns, she is furious that they are not ready for the seance she has planned; Monica prevents her from striking Toby. They busily prepare, and when the three guests arrive for the seance, Monica pretends to be the teenage daughter of one and the baby son of another, while Toby works the mechanical devices that control the motion of the lights and the furniture in the room. Suddenly, Madame Flora stops the seance and sends the customers away. She tells Monica she felt a spectral hand clutch her throat during the seance. She suspects Toby at first, but as Monica tries to comfort her Flora hears a voice imitating Monica's performance at the seance.

Act II

A few days later, Monica is watching Toby perform a puppet show for her; then she dances for him. Monica realizes he is trying to tell her that he loves her; pretending to be his voice, she says it for him. She runs off as Flora reenters; the medium tries cajole Toby into confessing that he was the one who touched her during the seance, or that he knows something about it. When he does not answer, she begins to whip him, but is interrupted by the doorbell. The three clients from the previous seance enter; Flora gives them their money back and tries to convince them they have been cheated, even showing them the wires and microphones, but they refuse to believe her. She throws them out, and despite Monica's protests, throws Toby out, too. Monica goes to her room, and Flora, frightened by what she has experienced, drinks herself to sleep. Toby returns; Flora awakes, and Toby hides from her; Flora, thinking he is the spirit she felt, shoots him.