**French drama:** *A Flea in Her Ear*

by Georges Feydeau (1862–1921)

*A Flea in Her Ear* by Georges Feydeau

Set in Paris at the turn of the twentieth century, *A Flea in Her Ear’s* main plot revolves around the beautiful Raymonde Chandebise and her husband’s sudden lack of romantic interest in her. Not realizing that Victor Emmanuel’s lack of virility is due to a nervous condition, Raymonde suspects him of infidelity and seeks the advice of Lucienne, her dearest friend, who suggests a way to entrap him. In Lucienne’s handwriting, they pen an ardent letter to Victor Emmanuel from a fictitious mysterious admirer requesting a rendezvous at the Hotel Coq d’Or, an establishment with which they erroneously believe Victor Emmanuel is familiar. Intending to confront him there, Raymonde and Lucienne head for the hotel. When the faithful Victor Emmanuel reads the anonymous love letter, he believes that the invitation was meant for his best friend, Tournel, a handsome bachelor who, unbeknownst to Victor Emmanuel, lusts after Raymonde. The libidinous Tournel, not one to decline such an offer, quickly exits to make the appointment with the mystery woman. The amused Victor Emmanuel then shows the letter—which he has kept for posterity—to Lucienne’s husband, Carlos Homenides de Histangua, a stereotypically passionate Spaniard. Recognizing Lucienne’s handwriting and assuming his wife is trying to start an affair, Carlos storms off to the hotel vowing to kill her. Victor Emmanuel pursues him in an attempt to prevent the murder. Meanwhile, Camille Chandebise, Victor Emmanuel’s young nephew and secretary, has his speech impediment corrected by an artificial palate from Dr. Finache. In a celebratory mood, he and Antoinette, the flirtatious household cook, run off to the Hotel Coq d’Or. They are followed by Etienne, Antoinette’s domineering husband. Dr. Finache also decides to head to the hotel for some fun of his own.

The gathering at the Hotel Coq d’Or causes a huge disruption for Feraillon, the hotel proprietor, and further misunderstandings. Carlos, attempting to kill Lucienne, aims his pistol at anything that moves. Victor Emmanuel sees Raymonde with Tournel and believes they are having an affair. Adding to the commotion, Victor Emmanuel is mistaken for Poche, an alcoholic hotel porter—and his exact physical double—and is believed to have gone insane. The confusion persists after the main characters assemble at the Chandebise residence. Things begin to clear up only when Carlos discovers a draft of the love
letter written in Raymonde’s hand. Then the hotel proprietor stops by to return something left behind at the hotel and identifies Poche as his hotel porter. When Raymonde finally tells Victor Emmanuel about the flea in her ear, he promises to “squash that flea, tonight!”