

Dance of the Bottles
by Phil Bock © 2011

A sketch based on the re-gifting and circulation of wine bottles among friends

Place: A room in a house where a party is going on.

Time: The present

On stage, four wine gift bags (color or patterns) with people inside them. Sound from off stage of a party: soft music and conversations (one actor/SM off stage). Each bottle speaks with an appropriate accent.

BURGUNDY

(male, sticks head up, out of bag) Pssst. Pssst! Merlot, is that you again?

MERLOT

(female, head up) Burgundy? Hi! I didn't recognize your bag.

BURGUNDY

Yeah, the old one finally tore. They tried to fix it with tape but it was wrecked.

MERLOT

That one looks good on you. I guess you recognized mine from the Adams party.

BURGUNDY

You'd think the people could afford new bags since they pass *us* around so much.

MERLOT

My label is getting pretty worn. (laughs) Maybe someone will *drink* me soon. The Merlots were real popular a few years ago. Most of my case is gone, but now it's all Malbecs and, ugh, Pinot Noirs.

BURGUNDY

People don't appreciate a good California Burgundy either. I guess that's why we stay in circulation so long. (giggles) One of these days the hosts will recognize me as the bottle he brought to a guest's party.

MERLOT

I'm sure it's happened. Did you hear about the Chablis that went around and around and when they finally opened it, it was *corked*?

BURGUNDY

No! I hope I get drunk before that happens.

RIESLING

(head up, German accent) *Nicht mich!* I want to liff!

MERLOT

Oh, hi Riesling. I didn't recognize your bag. It's been a few months.

RIESLING

Ja! Zey sink of me as a Summer vine, but I am a dry variety, *gut alle jahr*.

BURGUNDY

Don't you want to fulfill your destiny?

RIESLING

Nein! *Ich* still enjoy zee parties. People are funny. Sometimes I'm left in a bedroom und I can hear couples come in und make out in the dark.

MERLOT

I'd be embarrassed. I prefer the times between parties, resting on my side in a wine rack. One time they put me in a fridge and I shivered for days. No way to treat a Merlot. But when it's time to go, I'll be ready.

CHAMPAGNE

(pops up; French accent) *Moi aussi!* I need to be drunk while I'm still sparkling. They keep me for special occasions. I even enjoy zee ice water bath!

BURGUNDY

Bon soir, Champ. I didn't see you back there. Will this be your last party?

CHAMPAGNE

Je ne sais.. People are still coming in, and. . . .

[There is a loud CRASH of breaking glass from off stage.]

ALL

Ohhh!

MERLOT

(pause while she sniffs the air) Not one of ours. It was a Scotch I think.

RIESLING

Or Bourbon. Vat a shame. I vas part of a case that was dropped in a warehouse, but luckily only a few bottles broke.

MERLOT

They'll be unhappy about that whiskey! Say, which of us is the oldest?

BURGUNDY

I'd bet I win if you count from vintage. In the Napa Valley they keep us Burgundies in oak vats for at least six years; that makes me [year minus 6], although I was only bottled last year.

CHAMPAGNE

Ah, oui. Mais les Champagnes, at least the real ones, are bottled right away and then held in the cool cellars in France until their value is recognized. I don't want to brag but my vintage is very famous, and the price goes up every year!

RIESLING

The whole prestige thing is a racket. A clever name, a fancy label and a big advertising budget makes people think they are buying something special. Most wines are blends with extra flavors added to cover some bad taste.

BURGUNDY

(defensive) There's nothing wrong with being a blend. Or having a nice label.

MERLOT

I'm sure it wasn't a grower's idea to call me "**Marilyn Merlot.**" But my label *is* pretty cute.

BURGUNDY

I agree—very cute (winks at her). And Riesling is right: the prestige thing is ridiculous. Only people who don't trust their *taste* go by ratings in magazines.

CHAMPAGNE

Of course, champagne can go with anything, but I've heard the most ridiculous "pairings" suggested by a Somelier in a fancy restaurant. Malbec with fish! Ugh!. Usually they are just trying to get rid of some surplus bottles, and then he compliments the patron with an (snooty voice) "Excellent choice, Sir."

[the bottles all laugh at this; then there is drunken noise from off stage]

RIESLING

Maybe the guests have had enough. I hate it when they fight. Wine should make you happy, not aggressive, the way *bier* does.

MERLOT

I agree. And who cares what age we are? There can be a big difference between successive year, Even if Burgundy is twice my age, we can still be (suggestive) the best of friends.

BURGUNDY

That's right. Then there are those "experts" who give "points" to a vintage, as if most people could tell an "85" from a "91."

RIESLING

People who join wine clubs don't know what they are getting: I think it's a big scam, like the restaurants unloading a lot of inferior stuff.

CHAMPAGNE

Just like most of the wine shops. They talk a lot of gobbledy-gook and people at the tastings lap it up! *Ma foi!*

BURGUNDY

Quiet! One of the people is coming. Who's next to go?

VOICE OFFSTAGE (Australian accent)

Looks like it's my turn, mates. Tell them that the 2009 Shiraz is going.

BURGUNDY

So long, mate.

MERLOT

Bye-bye! Be brave.

CHAMPAGNE

Au revoir mon ami. Courage!.

RIESLING

Gute nacht, mein freund.

The lights dim as the actors draw their heads in their bags.

The End

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