

IDEA FROM A FRIEND

A Play with Songs

by

ALLAN STEVEN

Music by

MARK SMITH

SchoolPlay Productions Ltd

15 Inglis Road, Colchester, Essex CO3 3HU

IDEA FROM A FRIEND

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CAST LIST

THE ADULTS

Mrs. Melly, *a teacher*

Jack, *a man*

THE 'BAD' KIDS

Karen Potter

Sheila, *her friend*

Babyface

Sharon, *her friend and a big girl*

Gail

Jackie

Janice

Sandra

Terry

Anne-Marie

Others, *as required*

THE 'GOOD' KIDS

Hermione

Jane

Barbara

Sally

Georgina

At least 3 others

OTHERS

[Some doubling is possible between The 'Good' Kids and the parts below].

1st Shepherd

2nd Shepherd

3rd Shepherd

1st King

2nd King

3rd King

PRODUCTION NOTES

The play can be performed in any environment, as long as tables and chairs are available.

The original version played within a box set, with two doors and one window. A later, touring, version used giant caricatures of teachers, made from foam and chicken wire, suspended around the acting area; flashing, light-emitting diodes were fitted to the eyes of the figures.

In one production Mrs. Melly marched on to *Wir Fabren Gegen England*, an old S.S. marching song, and went through the furniture straightening 'business' to this accompaniment, including the entry of 'The Bad Kids', whom she "smacked" in turn with her metre rule. This then segued into the opening number.

There are also several other points at which a Director may wish to introduce musical extracts.

It is recommended that the play be performed without interval.

Should any director wish to play Jack as a woman, he/she should feel free to do so, with alteration to those lines only which reflect gender.

The original, shorter, version of the play was first performed at the Godolphin School, Salisbury in July 1989. This published version, with an approximate running time of 80-90 minutes, was first performed at the Godolphin School in March 1990, prior to going on tour in France.

Allan Steven.

This play is dedicated to Brenda Gibson.

IDEA FROM A FRIEND

by Allan Steven

SCENE 1

We move from house lights to darkness and the sound of a Carpenter at work is heard: hammer, saw, drill etc. This continues intermittently throughout the whole of Scene 1. MRS. MELLY is revealed standing at her teacher's desk. With a care verging on mania she is emptying her briefcase and placing its contents in absolute regimental order on her desk. Now and again she moves to a pupil's desk and chair and fussily straightens them (there are eight sets in all) each time she returns to her desk a figure emerges from the shadows, picks up that child's desk and chair and silently moves them to the perimeter of the 'room'. The figure then sits on the floor. Eventually eight figures will be sitting there. They are the 'Bad' kids. With the exception of one child their costume must bear no resemblance to school uniform. Leather, bright colours, short skirts, jewellery and make-up are the order of the day. When the sixth desk and chair are moved we should hear the faint tramp of marching feet. Ultimately this builds to a crashing crescendo for the 'Good' kids to enter going into the opening number. At that point all the 'Bad' kids throw themselves face down, spreadeagled on the floor. The 'Good' kids enter marching and, brilliantly uniformed, including cloaks, straw boaters, matching bags and hockey sticks, they sing:-

Good Kids: *We're the elite!*

We're the elite!

Life for us is oh so sweet.

A rosy future lies before me,

Marching along to university.

Following the one true path,

Shepherded from class to class,

Fighting the academic fight

Bathing in the glorious , sacred light

Chorus: *Assessment, assessment, assessment*

At 7, 11, 14 and 16!

Assessment - EVALUATION!

Striving to keep the record clean.

*Assess, assess we're never depressed.
The passport is a string of shining A's
Assessment of our dress sense
Assessment of our presence
Giving us the fix that we all crave.*

*To be elite!
To be elite!
Zooming down the well-lit easy street.
And when we reach the crowded crossroad
We'll fight off the mob and we'll forge ahead.
Overtaking all in sight,
Without a maybe or a might,
Looking neither to the left nor right,
Just bask in the pure, official light*

*Chorus: Assessment, assessment, assessment
At 7, 11, 14 and 16.
Assessment - EVALUATION!
Open to the members of the team.*

(They continue with additional part of the Chorus four times, each time getting weaker as the 'Bad' kids rise from the floor singing four times and getting stronger:)

Bad Kids: *Profiles, profiles, give us a break,
Why can't we go out and get a job?
Rejected for our dress sense,
Looked down on for our absence
Denied the fix we also crave.*

(The tempo and style of music changes, and goes into the opening bars of 'Blueberry Hill'. The 'BAD' KIDS sing - 'I found my thrill on Blueberry Hill' The music peters out with them shouting "Hold it wrong plonker" etc. at an INVISIBLE PIANIST)

Karen: *Okay, from the topa one. . . .a twoa one, two, three (They launch into their part of the song as a blues number)
We face defeat!
We face defeat!
Because we can't march to the beat.*

*We're hangin' round on easy street.
Told we don't know wrong from right,
Kept out of mind and out of sight,
Hidden in the shadows of the night. (X2)
(Eight beat intro. to 'Head bang' to.)*

*Chorus: Can you make it? Can you make it? Can you make it?
At 7, 11, 14 and 16.
No excuses, you're a failure!
There's no place for losers on the team.*

(The music picks up the original tempo and the 'GOOD' Kids sing "Assess. assess" Chorus X2); whilst the 'BAD' Kids repeat their "Profile" Chorus X2. Each 'GOOD' Kid takes a 'BAD' Kid by the collar and seat of the pants and marches them off finishing with the chant "Assess, assess" The 'GOOD' Kids form up into two lines facing Mrs. Melly's desk. Mrs. MELLY stands before them beaming. When she is satisfied she signals with her metre rule that they are to sit. KAREN, in part uniform bursts into the room)

Mrs. Melly: Karen Potter you're late.

Karen: Sorry Miss.

Melly: Mrs! Where have you been?

Karen: To the bog Miss.

Melly: Mrs! Where?

Karen: The toilet Miss.

Melly: *(even louder)* Where?

Karen: The lavatory Miss.

Melly: Thank you. And how many times must I tell you, it is **MRS.** Melly, not Miss. Join the others Karen. *(KAREN does so, but makes a quiet point of sitting differently from the rest)*

Melly: *(brandishing her metre rule, pointing and prodding)* Now then, our first rehearsal. I take it that you have all read through your scripts, as instructed. So let's begin with Joseph and Mary riding into Jeru. . . *(sniggers)* er Bethlehem. Hermione, Jane, step forwards and begin. *(two girls step out and look lost)* Well?

Hermione: Please, Mrs. Melly, I don't have a donkey.

Karen: *(shouting)* Use a chair stupid.

Melly: *(sharply)* Thank you Karen. *(Pause)* Hermione dear, please refrain from making stupid remarks. You are an intelligent girl, unlike some others I could mention. *(looks at KAREN).* Use your imagination! *(JANE who is MARY*

adopts a curious half-standing, half-sitting position)

Jane: Mrs. Melly how do I sit? May I sit like this? When I'm riding my pony Pippa I always sit like this because it's more ladylike.

Hermione: Mrs. Melly would Joseph walk beside Mary, or lead the donkey?

Melly: For goodness sake girls. Just . . . Just give me magic. I want magic not realism. *(she claps her hands)* Innkeeper and Innkeeper's wife please - Barbara, Sally. *(the two girls wander out)*

Sally: What do I do Mrs. Melly?

Karen: *(shouting)* You're in your kitchen, stir a pot.

Melly: Be quiet Karen! *(smugly)* And one stirs the CONTENTS of the pot. Sally, I have an idea. Strike an attitude of prayer.

Karen: *(sotto voce)* In the kitchen?

Melly: Right Hermione, begin.

Hermione: Knock, knock, knock!

Karen: Use your foot dimmo.

Melly: Karen Potter, stand up! *(she does so)* Just because you lack substance between the ears, it does not mean that we all have to be dragged down to your level. Have you no imagination child? Must we see everything through mundane eyes. *(Pause)* Sit down girl. Hermione dear, once again please, and I think that a little mime would be appropriate. *(HERMIONE is puzzled for a moment. She starts to mime with her fist, stops and then mimes with her foot)*

Innkeeper: Yes? *(The ensuing Joseph and Mary at the Inn Scene should be acted excruciatingly)*

Jane: Do you have a room for the night? I'm going to have a baby.

Innkeeper: Wife!

Sally: Do I carry on praying Mrs. Melly?

Melly: Be - natural dear. *(the dialogue is delivered in a stilted fashion)*

Sally: Yes, husband, what is it?

Innkeeper: This woman is pregnant . . . *(the kids giggle)*

Melly: Don't be smutty.

Karen: Kids!

Sally: Then she must stay here for the night.

Innkeeper: But all the rooms are full.

Sally: I know. What about the stables?

Jane: That will do splendidly. Thank you for your kindness. Good night.

Melly: Excellent! *(she leads the applause)* Stable scene, Shepherds and Kings. *(a number of children set up a tableaux following the instructions from their scripts)* That's right, put the chair in the centre of the stage Mary, and Joseph stand behind it.

Karen: 'Scuse me Mrs. Melly, can I offer a suggestion? *(she is tilting her chair)*

Melly: FOUR LEGS! Yes, what is it?

Karen: Did they have chairs in stables?

Melly: *(peremptory)* It would have been a bale of straw, but that's rather inconvenient. Now . . .

Sheila: *(KAREN'S none-too-bright friend)* I can bring you some straw Miss from our farm.

Karen: Yeh!

Melly: No! It will make our nice clean stage untidy.

Karen: *(not listening)* Eh Sheila, you could bring a cow as well.

Sheila: Yeh! and a pig and some ducks.

Karen: And Sandra Wilson's dad keeps pigeons. *(the rest of the group is becoming fidgety)*

Melly: Karen! Sheila! Be quiet! We are not having animals in this production.

Sheila: *(whispering)* Except for Sally Rat.

Melly: Pardon Sheila?

Karen: She said apart from the cat. She thinks we're doing Dick Whittington.

Melly: That's quite enough. Now where were we? *(speaking to a shepherd)*
Georgina, where's the dolly?

Georgina: Here, Mrs. Melly *(she gets it from her bag)*

Melly: *(wearily)* Shepherds, where are your towels?

Georgina: Shall we put them on Mrs. Melly?

Melly: Yes! *(The shepherds take towels from their bags and wrap them around their heads)*

Melly: Now Jane, put the dolly under your pinafore.

Karen: *(sniffing throughout)* Excuse me Miss, can I make another suggestion? Only my sister does child care, and she told me that when . . .

Melly: I don't think we want to hear any more thank you, and stop sniffing. Smile Mary! Smile Joseph!

Sheila: You can see her traintracks.

Melly: Her what?

Karen: Her brace.

Melly: That's very rude.

Sheila: But they didn't have braces in them days.

Sally: Can we carry on Miss?

Melly: MRS! And why may I ask, Karen Potter, are you sitting there? *(a puzzled pause)*

Hermione)

Jane): Kings on stage!

Karen: Which side Miss?

Barbara: This side.

Karen: Wouldn't it be better if

Melly: Karen Potter, I don't want to hear any more from you. Just give your present to Joseph and Mary so that we can get on.

Sheila: (*smirking*) To Jesus actually.

Melly: (*pitch rising*) Kneel down Karen, kneel down!

Karen: I'm not stupid.

Melly: Give her - him the gold.

Barbara: She's got myrrh Miss.

Melly: I know, I know! - and it's MRS.

Karen: Miss, did they have plastic plant pots in those days? And anyway shepherds come first. My dad says so and he's a vic

Melly: OUT! That's it, get out.

Sheila: That's not fair.

Melly: And you, both of you. Go and sit in 3F with the rest of them.

Karen)

Sheila) (*Turning in the doorway*) Yes, MRS. Melly (*they exit*)

Melly: We'll go back to the beginning and start again. I've had one or two ideas that I'd like you to include. Hermione dear, I want you to use a chair for your donkey, and when you knock at the Innkeeper's door stamp your foot. Innkeeper's wife, while you're in the kitchen how about stirring a pot . . .

The lights fade to Black as she 'commands' the room, prodding girls into starting positions with her metre rule.

SCENE 2

The lights come up on a 'different' classroom occupied by the 'BAD' Kids. The desks and chairs are now haphazard around the room, and they are all lounging about generally doing things they shouldn't be doing, e.g. dancing, whistling, painting nails, reading mags.

Sandra: Stop whistling will you.

Terry: Get lost. (*she carries on*)

Jackie: (*dancing*) Get a load of this. (*she dances an intricate step*)

Sandra: Pathetic!

Terry: (*to JACKIE*) Pack it in, I'm trying to concentrate.

Jackie: (*continuing*) A great artist must practice constantly. (*three girls enter, and deliberately jostle JANICE who is painting her nails*)

Janice: You clumsy cow. They took me ages. (*they start to interfere with her makeup which is spread on a desk top*) Keep your paws off. They cost me a fortune. (*There is a short, but noisy game of piggy-in-the-middle, with JANICE trying to recover some makeup. The three kids quickly lose interest, and sit down in a corner playing cards and rolling their own ciggies.*)

Sandra: I wanna sit there.

Gail: Stuff off!

Sandra: Do you wanna fight?

Gail: Yeh, okay. (*they start scrapping with each other, the others roar them on. SHARON enters leading a crying Babyface by the hand*)

Terry: Eh up, it's Little and Large. (*she sings*) "Humpty Dumpty sat on the wall"

Sharon: Watch it rat 'ead. (*Pause*) Poor kid. She's wet herself again.

Terry: Ahhh, poor Janey-Waney. Done it again have we?

Janice: You could've cleaned her up Sharon.

Terry)

Jackie) (*together*) Janey-Waney, baby-waby.

Sharon: Stop picking on her, or I'll clean somebody's face up for 'em. (*BABYFACE goes to sit down*)

Janice: Don't let her sit down. She'll rot the chair. (*GAIL pulls the chair away and they all laugh*)

Sandra: (*pointing in horror*) Er, she's trickling.

Terry: Don't panic, the Italian Nightingale swoops to the rescue. (*she kneels in front of BABYFACE and sings*) "Hopelessly devoted to urgh!" (*KAREN and SHEILA enter*)

Sandra: 'ello, 'ello what 'ave we 'ere. I thought you two were at rrrrehearsal?

Sheila: Got chucked out. (*wild yelling and applause*)

Gail: What for?

Karen: Because our Mrs. Melly-with-the-rather-large-belly doesn't like suggestions.

Janice: You know what she's like. You should keep your mouth shut.

Jackie: (*dancing*) Shouldn't have gone in for it if you actually wanted to say something.

Terry: (*to SHEILA*) What did you get thrown out for?

Sheila: She said I wasn't precipitating properly.

Sandra: Participating, dimmo!

Sheila: Same thing.

Sandra: So how's the annual NAT-ivity play going? All the other little gnats doing what they're told?

Gail: Another tea towel job for the shepherds is it?

Karen: Yeh, blue and white stripes. Georgina Moss got hers from Habitat. Oooh, sooper!

Terry: (*Bursting into song*) “‘Cos she’s hopelessly devoted to blue!” *Everyone groans*)

Sheila: I heard that Anne-Marie tried to get a part.

Janice: That little rat. You must be joking. What did Melly say?

Sheila: Said no didn’t she. Anne-Marie threw a wobbler. She ripped up a pile of books on Melly’s desk.

Jackie: God she’s a nutter. I wouldn’t say no to Anne-Marie about anything. She’d kill you.

Karen: I overheard Melly saying that she’s sick in the head. What happened to her for tearing the books?

Sheila: She just got thrown out like the rest of us. They’re frightened of her. Anyway, she’s just like us thrown out again. Hopeless, that’s us.

Sandra: I’m not hopeless. I don’t want to get involved with that snotty lot doing their kids play.

Gail: (*mocking*) But if you did Sandwa, Jane Dobson would be your best friend, and you could go for wifes on Pippa her pony.

Sandra: Bit surprised at you Potter. Nobody blinks when we get thrown out of class

Gail: Frequently!

Sandra: (*points at BABYFACE*) Or even Wet, Wet, Wet here, but you’re supposed to be brainy?

Karen: None of your business is it.

Gail: If you’re going to join our select little band, we want to know all about you. Interview time girls! (*GAIL and SANDRA set up an ‘interview’ with KAREN*).

Gail: Janice dear, show Miss Potter in. Er, just a moment Janice. A word about your skirts. I’m afraid we can’t tolerate this, please ensure that you come to work properly dressed. In future your skirts must be much - SHORTER! (*she pinches JANICE’S bum and JANICE ‘mugs’ at the audience*)

Janice: This way please Miss Potter.

Sandra: Do sit down Karen. I may call you Karen?

Karen: (*plays up to it*) Oh absolutely. I’d be thrilled.

Sandra: Your reports say that you are a bright girl.

Karen: (*simpering*) I try my best.

Gail: I’m sure you do.

Sandra: Top in Maths, Physics and English. Excellent.

Gail: Captain of the hockey team I see. I’ll bet you look very fetching in navy blue hand wash only at a low temperature woollen knickers.

Sandra: (*smacks GAIL*) Forgive me for asking - Karen. There are one or two question marks over temperament. Would you care to explain?

Karen: (*mock ashamed*) The thing is I get I get

Gail: Don't be shy, you're with friends.

Karen: I get IDEAS! (*sharp intake of breath from everyone. SANDRA and GAIL fall off their chairs. Knockabout stuff as they get up*)

Sandra: Ideas! Good God!

Gail: Do you mean ideas of your own?

Karen: Er, yes.

Gail: Pervert!

Sandra: A team Miss Potter. We are a team. By all means have ideas

Sandra)

Gail:) (*together*) BUT KEEP THEM TO YOURSELF!

Janice: (*from nowhere*) I'm bored.

Sandra: I'm always bored. (*There is general agreement, then a few moments of lethargic silence*)

Janice: (*mock American*) Hey you guys, I've got an idea. Let's do a Nativity Play. We can do it in the barn!

Sandra: Oh, shut it. (*Pause*)

Karen: We could though.

Sandra: What?

Karen: Do the Nativity play.

Gail: Oh, oh - sunstroke.

Karen: Why not?

Gail: Because it's a dumb idea.

Karen: (*craftily*) Ah, but not just any old play. We could do our version.

Terry: (*excited*) Yeh, an' I could sing.

Jackie: (*excited*) An' I could dance.

Janice: They didn't have dancers in those days.

Jackie: For your info. they had dancers in Greek times, and that was before Jesus was born.

Janice: (*sneering*) Well, Miss Religious Freak 199- (*alter year as appropriate*), for your info. they didn't have dancers in stables.

Babyface: (*innocently*) You mustn't dance in the stable, Mary would have a miscarriage.

Terry: That wouldn't matter, because you're playing Mary.

Sandra: An' it looks as if the waters have broken. (*They jeer*)

Babyface: Well Sandra you can be Mary. 'Cause all pregnant women have greasy hair, and so have you.

Sandra: I'll wring you out Babyface.

Sharon: Leave her, or I'll sort you out.

Sandra: What is it with you and her?

Gail: Yeh, why does a big lump like you hang about with a squirt like that?

Sharon: (*uncertain*) Just leave us alone that's all. Interviews are over for today.

Babyface: You're just jealous because you haven't got a friend.

Sandra: Shut it you, or

Terry: Come on, this is boring. Let's do the play.

Jackie: (*singing and dancing*) "Fame, I'm gonna live for ever, I'm gonna learn how to fly"

Janice: I'm gonna be the Angel Gabriel.

Sheila: You're not angelic, especially behind the bike sheds.

Janice: And you are fat, so you can be preggy Mary.

Gail: I'm Joseph, 'cause I'm tallest.

Sheila: An' you look like a man. (*GAIL flips her a digit*)

Jackie: Well if I can't dance I'm not in it.

Gail: (*to SHEILA*) You're so fat, you can be the THREE kings. (*Conversations and arguments start to overlap. The noise level builds and builds.*)

Sandra: (*pointing to BABYFACE*) There's baby J!

Gail: More nappies. Mothercare here we come. (*BABYFACE turns away*)

Terry: (*to JACKIE*) Only if I can be the singing shepherd.

Janice: I'm not being the donkey.

Karen: (*at the top of her voice*) AND I AM THE MAIN PART!

Everyone: WHAT! (*BABYFACE screams. They look in her direction. BLACK OUT*)

SCENE 3.

The lights come up on the same room. All the girls, except BABYFACE are flat against the 'WALLS'. BABYFACE is frozen in front of a YOUNGISH MAN who has appeared. He wears overalls and carries a tool box. After a moment BABYFACE breaks away and hides behind SHARON.

Man: It's all right. I've just

Karen: What do you want? What are you doing here?

Sheila: You're not one of our teachers; you're not allowed.

Sandra: You shouldn't be here. This is private property. (*Pause*)

Man: I've come to mend that blackboard.

Sharon: That's Fred's job.

Man: Oh yeh, Fred's had an accident. He'll be off work for some time, so they've brought me in. Just temporary.

Sharon: But I saw

Man: Er, my name's Jack.

Jackie: It's Jack the Ripper.

Terry: Or Fred the Flasher.

Jackie: That's it, he's the Flasher.

Terry: Eh mister, are you the flasher who's been 'angin' round?

Gail: Na, he hasn't got the mac. *(Pause)*

Janice: He's not bad looking is he?

Jackie: He's got good legs. I wonder if he can dance? If he can he can stay.

Karen: Why don't you say something?

Babyface: P'raps he's frightened.

Sandra: Don't be stupid, he's not a weed like you he's a man. *(JACK sits crosslegged on the floor examining bits of blackboard.)*

Sheila: 'Ere, what do you think you're doing?

Jack: I've got to mend this. I'll get into trouble if I don't.

Sandra: Well you can't do it now. We're busy with our project. You'll disturb us.

Sheila: Yeh, you can't stay 'ere.

Janice: *(eyeing him)* Why can't he? He's not doing any harm.

Jackie: Yeh, why not, he's a good dancer.

Karen: You're not from around here are you. Where do you come from mister?

Jack: *(smiling)* Jack!

Karen: *(tentatively)* Where are you from Jack?

Jack: What were you all arguing about? I heard you arguing.

Babyface: About the play. We

Sandra: Shut up! He's on their side. We don't tell them anything.

Jack: Who's side is that?

Gail: Teachers!

Jack: You find teachers a bit of a problem do you?

Terry: Why do you think we're in here?

Janice: *(takes him by the arm)* Let me give you the guided tour.

(Music starts - she introduces him to the girls)

She's a 'smart alec' (Terry)

She's 'a drip' (Jackie)

She wets herself (Babyface)

They're frightened of her (Sharon)

This is 'Little Miss Awkward' (Gail)

This is 'a very rude girl' (Sandra)

She asks too many questions (Karen)
She's slow (Sheila)
And me - my clothes are not appropriate.
In short - we do not get along with our teachers.

SONG - ALPHABET ZOO

Teachers, teachers, teachers, teachers, teachers!
Teachers hate us, Teachers hate us,
Teachers, Teachers, Teachers! X 2

(Then as a TEACHER, one of the kids, steps forward they rap together) -

Who's there?
Who's there?
Who's there from the Alphabet Zoo? X 2

Bob: *(rapping)* *I'm Bob, I'm Bob with a gob like the Channel Tunnel*
I like to roar at the classroom door with the force of a ferry
funnel.
Some simple questions for you cats of a scientific bent.
You girl sitting over there with the dress like an outsized tent.
H2O and Ohm's Law,
Answer now, or I'll get sore.
Jill be nimble, Jill be quick,
I knew it, you're all bloody thick!

(THE KIDS pick up the "Who's There?" Chorus X 2 and advance on BOB)

Kid's Chorus: *(rapping)*
Hold it bro' we know your game,
Humiliation is it's name.
'Cause we can't cut it when you say,
You push right past and shout, "Make way
For those kids who can read the map,
And drink the knowledge from my tap"
Admit it man, you don't give a rap,
You treat us like a load of

Kids *(segue into)* *Who's next?*
Who's next?
Who's next from the Alphabet Zoo? X 2

(A complete change in the style of music. We should see lights and stars as it

goes into a Romantic/Sentimental mood . Another 'TEACHER' comes forward)

Maureen: (with feeling)

*I'm Maureen, yes it's Maureen whose heart goes out to you,
Feeding poets and playwrights to enrich your cultural point of
view.*

I burn with passion,

I blaze with fire,

To raise you from the muck and mire.

My babies wipe away your tears

I long to hear your trouble and your woe.

(rapaciously and clipped) -

Is it boyfriends?

Is it sexual?

Is it drugs and drink?

Come and tell your Aunty Mo.

(THE KIDS pick up the "Who's There" Chorus [X 2] and advance on MAUREEN)

Kid's Chorus: (rapping)

Whoa there sis' we know your bag,

Feeding off the tongues that wag.

You'll shoot us all a line of nonsense,

To satisfy your social conscience.

Old Willy Shakespeare's mighty fine,

For those who can afford the time,

But lady burn this in your mind,

We're headed for the production line

(KIDS segue into -

Next please,

Next please,

Who's next from the Alphabet Zoo? [X 2]

(Underscore with the sounds of Cash Registers etc. - The music changes to a hearty Camp-fire number. As the 'TEACHER' enters the KIDS chant -

It's Dottie, It's Dottie,

It's Dottie, Dottie, Dottie!

It's Dottie, It's Dottie!

It's potty, potty, Dottie!

Dottie: *(very jolly)* **Oh my name is Dot and I'm on the spot for
P.E. and Hygiene.**

**Play up. play up the game of life and
Always keep it clean.**

**When I was a girl it was a gay old world,
But now it's all obscene.**

I blame those nasty foreigners on the European scene.

*(The music slows and DOTTIE sings from the heart with the GIRLS humming
in the background)*

**Remember gals we're English,
Pull the chestnuts from the fire,
"Backs to the wall" ; "The Dunkirk spirit"
That's why we're so admired.**

(Bang back into original tempo)

**And you will be jolly decent sorts,
The perfect English rose,
Marching backwards to the future
On your private roads.**

(The RAP background re-enters strong and menacing)

Kids Chorus: *(Rapping)* **Just hold it there we heard enough,
Can't say we dig this crazy stuff.
Don't mind you got your point of view,
But we got our opinions too.
You lock our minds up in the clink,
Release us now and let us think
So we can learn to really see
The picture of reality -**

(Getting louder and louder and ending in a shout)

**Reality. reality, reality,
Reality, reality, reality
THE PICTURE OF REALITY!**

(A short silence follows.)

Jack: What sort of play were you thinking of doing?

Babyface: A Nativity *(everyone groans)* Well I like him.

Jack: Do you need any help?

Karen: What sort of help?

Jack: I don't know really. *(Pause)* I suppose you all know the Nativity story

backwards. *(They look at each other uncertainly)*

Karen: Sort of

Jack: Where does your play start?

Karen: We were going to have the Angel Gabriel visiting Mary.

Sandra: Ey, we haven't agreed on that.

Gail: And we haven't agreed to tell him anything.

Jack: Okay, it's nearly my breaktime anyway. I guess I'd better be off. *(JANICE and JACKIE link his arms and hold him)*

Janice: Don't be in such a rush.

Jackie: No, maybe he can help. You can choreograph my dances.

Sandra: He's got to promise not to interfere and start bossing us around.

Gail: If you start acting like Mrs. Melly you're out.

Karen: He's included then is he? *(A general murmur of agreement. He sits on the floor working and watching. The GIRLS relax and lounge about)*

Jack: What shall we do first?

Karen: Don't you know that? You've got to give out the parts first.

Babyface: Please don't make me the Baby Jesus. I don't tinkle that often.

Jack: Who's going to be Joseph?

Gail: Me! I'm the tallest.

Jack: That alright with everyone else? *(general mutters)*

Terry: Can I be the Angel Gabriel? I could sing the message to Mary.

Sandra: I want to be Gabriel.

Gail: What about me? I could do both parts. They're not in the story at the same time. It's Mary's message. *(SANDRA and GAIL are on the brink of another fight)*

Jack: Whooa! Let's think, what do you need to be an angel?

Karen: Good speaking voice.

Sheila: Prezzies.

Jack: *(gently)* Presence. Who do you think would be best for the part? *(long pause)*

Sandra: *(quietly)* Karen could do it.

Jack: Okay with everyone? *(Pause)* Good. So, who wants to be Mary?

Babyface: I do!

Everyone: No, oh no - she'd trickle.

Sheila: She'd trickle on the donkey, then we'll have to wash it.

Janice: Sandra could do with a wash. She could be the donkey.

Jack: *(quickly)* Why don't we give what's your name?

Babyface: Jane.

Jack: Why don't we give Jane a chance as Mary? Just to see how she gets on.

Everyone: Okay, yeh, etc.

Gail: But no trickling.

Jack: Let's start. (*SHARON propels BABYFACE to the middle of the room; she lays her down on the floor, and arranges her hands - palms and fingers together - beneath the side of her face in contact with the floor in the cliched sleeping position. Meanwhile KAREN has been conspiring in a corner with SHEILA. They burst out laughing, and KAREN enters*)

Karen: (*prods BABYFACE, and in a West Indian rapping voice*)

*I am the Angel Gabriel,
I am the Lord's main man.
I carry all his messages,
You've got a telegram.
You're goin' to 'ave a baby,
That's right, you're up the duff!
But I tell you it weren't Joseph
Who went and strut his stuff.
You'll call the baby Jesus,
He'll be born in Bethlehem.
He'll do just what he pleases,
Which won't please his fellow men.*

(During this some girls form a backing troupe, and it's finished off as a razmatazz show number. Only JACK and BABYFACE don't react.)

Sheila: (*to JACK*) Brilliant wasn't it!

Terry: Be great if we can do it all like that. Really modern.

Babyface: It's stupid, you've spoiled it.

Karen: If you don't like it then someone else can be Mary.

Babyface: Why can't we do it like it's always done?

Karen: 'Cause it's pathetic that way.

Sandra: 'Cause it wouldn't have happened that way. With a nice clean stable, and Mary in a blue Laura Ashley outfit.

Karen: If we're gonna do it we want it to be real.

Gail: No flapping wings and water parting. That's just fairy stories for the likes of you Babyface.

Babyface: Well I still think it would be Oh, I've got to go. Sharon, come with me.

Sandra: Terry, Jackie, - stop her, quick! (*they do so*) Now then Babyface, just cross your legs.

Jackie: Yeh, we can't have you running in and out all the time. We'll never get anything done. I haven't done my dance yet.

Gail: What gives with you squirt? It's about time you grew up and controlled your

bladder.

Sharon: I'm warning you. Get out of her way.

Sandra: No, we're warning you. It's kill or cure for her this time.

Jackie: We're fed up with her ponging out the room.

Terry: It might not bother you, but we've had enough. Come on Babyface what's the problem?

Gail: You're just lazy aren't you!

Sharon: Always poking your noses in aren't you. *(She loses her temper)* Alright, I'll tell you what's wrong.

Babyface: No don't, they'll only laugh.

Sharon: *(ignoring her)* It's her uncles isn't it.

Terry: What?

Sharon: They come to stay with her mum.

Terry: So what?

Sharon: "UNCLES" thicko - one after the other. *(Pause)* She shares a bedroom with her mum and *(Pause)*

Babyface: *(quietly)* I get frightened see. They make noises in the dark and sometimes they hit her. I just get frightened. I can't help. *(Pause)* I wish everything was nice. I think of nice things - like the play and gentle Jesus. I bet God didn't let Mary dress in rags. *(Pause)* I think about nice things all the time. Then people shout at me. Teacher says I don't pay attention, and then I I *(SHARON leads her out)*

Janice: *(a bit half-heartedly)* Come on, she is dumb though. Can you imagine? I bet she thinks that when Mary told Joseph she was having a baby, and that it wasn't his, he just turned round and said: "Oh, that's nice dear. Get packing while I feed the donkey. He'd better be born in Bethlehem, if the Angel Gabriel says so!"

Terry: God, it makes you think though doesn't it. You should have heard my dad when he found out. I thought he was going to kill my mum.

Jackie: What you on about Terry?

Terry: My mum, Jackie, she was having our Ben, but he's not my dad's.

Sheila: *(gawping)* Was she having an affair?

Terry: Nooo, it was the Holy Ghost! What do you think dimmo.

Jack: I'll bet your mother was very upset.

Terry: *(flippant)* Not 'alf as much as my dad.

Jack: Really?

Terry: *(pause)* No, not really. *(softly)* She was in a right state.

Janice: God, imagine it. How would you tell your husband?

Karen: And all that time, keeping it a secret.

Jack: Terry, what do you remember about that time? Was there anything unusual

about your mother . . . before you all found out she was pregnant?

(TERRY is standing alone somewhat distracted. Every eye is on her. Her speech is the output of her subconscious. Gradually, she is left in a small pool of light. She becomes her mother undergoing a deep emotional crisis. She occupies herself miming a mundane task, e.g. peeling the spuds. The voices that follow should be the other girls speaking around her in the darkness. This reinforces the idea that they are in her mind.)

Terry: *(muttering)* What am I going to do, he'll kill me?

Distant Voice: Marrry!

Terry: *(touching her stomach)* I could get rid of it

Voice One: *(nearer)* Ma-ry

Terry: No! No, I could never do that.

Voice One: Mary.

Terry: *(startled)* What?

Voice One: A child!

Voice Two: *(echo)* A child!

Voice Three: *(echo)* A child!

Voice One: A son

Voice Two: A son

Voice Three: Son

Voice Four: Of GOD.

Voice Five: A son!

Terry: *(disorientated)* Go away, alone, *(pause)* leave me

Voice One: To you

Voice Two: And Joe

Voice Three: Together

Terry: *(frantic)* No! Not minenot his

Voice Four: Yours

Voice Five: and ours

Voice Six: and everyone's!

(The VOICES begin to overlap and rise to a cacophony)

Voice One: *(repeating eight times)* a son a son

Voice Two: *(repeating seven times)* Jesus Christ Jesus Christ

Voice Three: *(repeating six times)* For everyone for everyone

Voice Four: *(repeating five times)* In Bethlehem in Bethlehem

Voice Five: *(repeating four times)* Peace peace

Voice Six: *(repeating three times)* Love Him love Him *(at the climax TERRY screams, and we return to full lighting. GAIL steps forward as Joseph. She places a hand on TERRY'S stomach. They embrace. Silence, then applause. JACK is sitting on the teacher's desk. Without thinking they all sit*

at his feet, except JACKIE)

Jack: Great! If you're all happy with that we can move on to the next scene.

Karen: Happy? That was brilliant. I bet that's just how it happened, all inside Mary's head.

Jackie: Come on then, let's do the next bit. What is it?

Jack: This is where Joseph and Mary look for a place to stay in Bethlehem.

Jackie: *(excited)* And they go to the inn, and there's drinking, and singing AND dancing girls!! *(Everyone groans)*

Janice: Don't be so stupid. There were no dancing girls.

Jackie: Of course there were. We've talked about this already. Look, I've been sitting here for half-an-hour while my bum's turned into a metal plate, and now you tell me there aren't going to be any dancing girls. *(SHARON and BABYFACE re-enter catching the end of the speech)*

Babyface: *(misunderstanding)* but they didn't have dancing girls!

Jackie: Shove off Janey. If there's no dancing, I'm not in it.

Babyface: Good.

Jackie: Oh, be quiet.

Jack: Look, if the play is going to be modern you could think about including a dancer?

All: No, no we don't want one it won't make sense she just wants to show off!

Jackie: *(stubborn)* Then count me out.

Karen: Fine, suits us. You can just watch along with everyone else. *(Chorus of agreement)*

Jackie: Oh yeh, and who might everyone else be? *(Puzzled silence)* Who do you think's going to come to see you?

Sandra: *(uncertainly)* Ermums and dads

Gail: Brothers and sisters

Sheila: Our families. *(Chorus of support)*

Jackie: Well mine won't come if I'm not dancing. Anyway, you haven't got anywhere to do it. *(Silence)*

Sharon: We can use the school hall. *(Some uncertain support)*

Jackie: Don't be thick, Mrs. Melly's group will be doing theirs in the hall. Nobody's interested in your play. *(Depressed silence)*

Jack: I can arrange something. I know some very important people who'll enjoy it tremendously.

Jackie: *(sneering)* You, you're just a joiner. You don't know anyone important. You're just interfering.

Sandra: No he's not. Shut up.

Sheila: Push off Jackie.

Gail: If you don't like it, then don't do it. But don't spoil it for the rest of us.
(JACKIE stands there defiantly; everyone facing her.)

Jack: But you can join in if you want to. You'll be welcome. Right now - any time.
 Okay girls? *(General acceptance of the principle)* Well Jackie? *(For a moment it looks as though she might. Pride gets the better of her and she stalks off into a corner. She pulls a magazine from her bag, and with feet up on the desk she ignores them.)*

Babyface: What shall we do next?

Jack: We've decided to look for a room in Bethlehem.

Janice: But we'll do it modern; like the last scene.

Sandra: *(really excited)* It's great this. I bet ours will be better than Melly's group.

All: Course, bound to be etc. etc.

Jack: Does that matter to you?

Gail: You bet!

Jack: Why?

Gail: Because we're second-best. The useless lot.

Jack: I see.

Janice: *(sarcastic)* The gals in 3A are more important than us. They're prim, proper and have bags of potential!

Jack: and you can't stand them?

Janice: Right!

Sandra: Er no - no one said that. They can be a bit stuck up when they're together, but out of school

Gail: We hang about together down town

Sandra: Look, we never get to show anything that's all. So let's get on with it eh.

Jack: Just a sec. So you're going to show them are you?

All: Too right we will, etc. etc.

Jack: It seems to me that you're not enjoying this very much.

Karen: *(puzzled)* Of course we are. It's the best time I've had in school for ages.

Jack: Then does it matter what they think? Does it matter if their play succeeds as well? *(Pause)* You wouldn't be jealous of 3A would you?

Sharon: A bit. After all, they get first crack at everything.

Gail: We're just as good as they are.

Sharon: I'm not thick *(jeers)* I'm not! It just takes me a bit longer that's all.

Jack: But you do envy them?

Karen: Not really. *(tries to explain)* I suppose we do, but we don't hate 3A, or anyone like them.

Babyface: It's not their fault. *(Pause)* They're frightened too.

Karen: So all we want to do is our play. Come on, let's do it. *(She takes the lead.)*
 Gail, Terry - you're Joseph and Mary. The rest of us into two's. Two people

to a house. Set up. *(Each pair finds a space for their 'house'.)* Right, Joseph. and Mary call at each house, and we have to think of modern ways to treat them before we turn them away. Okay?

All: Sure, yeh, yeh, etc. etc. *(For the three pairs of 'householders' use the girls who can best handle the impersonations)*

Joseph: *(knocking)* Let's try this place. 'Salty Towers' ! Anyone at home?

Pair One: (a) *(as MIGUEL from 'Salty Towers')* Si?

Joseph: Have you any rooms to let?

Pair One: (a) Ah, fine room . I call Mr. Salty. Mister Salty! Mister Salty!

Pair One: (b) BASIL SALTY: Yes what do you want?

Joseph: Have you a room available?

Pair One: (b) Miguel make yourself useful. Go and shave Mrs. Salty. Now, what was it? Oh yes, a room in this fine establishment.

Mary: I'm having a baby you see.

Pair One: (b) *(pause)* I'm sorry?

Mary: Pregnant.

Pair One: (b) The sign says hotel, not maternity unit.

(He slams the 'door'. They move on)

(THE KIDS hum the "Allo, Allo" theme)

Joseph: *(reading, then knocking)* "Cafe Artois"!

Pair Two: (a) 'Ello, 'ello, Madame Edith, proprietress at your service, 'Ow can I 'elp?

Joseph: Do you have any rooms to let?

Pair Two: (a) It is possible zat you could share ze room of my mother.

Joseph: Great, we'll take it.

Pair Two: (a) Un moment s'il vous plait. What is zat bump in ze girl's tummy?

Mary: I'm pregnant.

Pair Two: (a) *(shouting)* Rene! Vien ici! *(He appears)* What is ze meaning of zis outrage? *(pointing)* *(Pause)*

Pair Two: (b) You stupid woman.

(He slams the 'door'. They move on)

Mary: Please, won't someone help us?

Joseph: Let's try here. 'The Queen Vic' Public House'! *(He knocks, and perhaps the other KIDS could la, la the Eastenders theme tune)*

Pair Three: (a) *as Angie from 'Eastenders':* 'Ello my darlin'. What can this chirpy, kind-'earted East End landlady do for you?

Joseph: We're homeless. We need a room desperately.

Pair Three: (a) Course my darlin'.

Mary: My baby's almost due.

Pair Three: (a) Baby! Denis Watts come 'ere. *(He does and she prods Mary's*

belly) Are you responsible for this?

Pair Three: (b) *as 'Dirty Den'*: Leave it out Angie. Luv a duck! Stone the crows!

Pair Three: (a) Sorry darlin'!

(She slams the 'door'. There is a moment's silence, then JACKIE breaks into slow, sarcastic handclapping)

Karen: Keep your nose out Jackie.

Jackie: That was just about the most pathetic thing I've ever seen.

Jack: What was the idea in doing it that way?

Jackie: They were just messing about.

Karen: No we weren't. *(struggling to explain)* Look, we decided to make our play modern, didn't we?

Jack: Why?

Sandra: Well, people don't really understand what it was like thousands of years ago, so they never get the point when it's done the traditional way.

Janice: You see, people have to have something they can recognise, something familiar. That's why we used something off the telly

Others: Yeh, us too!!

Jackie: But you just made it comic. Nobody would get the point because they'd all be laughing at your impressions. *(A VOICE from behind the blackboard, which is propped against a table throughout)*

Anne-Marie: They'd get the idea alright. Keep it simple for the thickos. *(An angelic looking girl emerges in perfect school uniform)*

Sandra: *(scared)* It's Anne-Marie, she's been there all the time.

Janice: *(nervously)* Hi Anne-Marie! Alright?

Anne-Marie: Are you talking to me, you little tart?

Janice: Just being friendly.

Anne-Marie: Yees. Well one must be careful about one's friends. *(She points at JACK)* Who is that? Won't someone have the good manners to introduce us?

Gail: You've been listening haven't you, behind the board?

Anne-Marie: A formal introduction please.

Babyface: This is Jack - he's been helping us with our play.

Anne-Marie: Are you a teacher?

Jack: No, I'm a carpenter.

Anne-Marie: Fascinating! Why don't you stick to what you know?

Babyface: He's good; he knows what he's doing.

Anne-Marie: Who asked you, you wet puddle!

Sharon: Shut it Anne-Marie! You don't scare me. I'm bigger than you, and if you don't lay off I'll flatten you.

Gail: Yeh, get lost toffee-nose.

Sharon: You think you're something special, but you're not - Jerk!

Sandra: (*mocking*) Oh yes, Anne-Marie's mummy shops at Sainsbury's. And you should see those adorable, sensible skirts from 'Country Casuals'. So elegant, so smart, so much better than any other.

Gail: (*joining in*) Do tell us, Anne-Marie. How can we make friends and influence people, just like you?

SONG: 'BETTER THAN YOU'

Anne-Marie: *What shall I tell you?
What do you want to know?
The heartrending story of a sick psycho!
I've a raging temper like a dog with distemper,
And my bite is worse than my bark.
So don't try to be pally,
Don't expect me to rally to the call of the common herd.
'Cause it's true, yes it's true that I'm better than you.
With my cut glass diction
And my crystal clear complexion,
I have found my true vocation in life
I'm the cream and I rise above you all.*

Chorus: *Oh Anne-Marie, oh Anne-Marie
Where do you get the feeling that you're better than me?
Can't you see that all this friction -
Is a calculated fiction -
To divide and rule, while we're still at school
Just to keep us under your thumb!
Why d'you always have to be the number one?*

Anne-Marie: *Just listen to yourselves,
You common little plebs,
You've got Tracey's, you've got Sharon's
But you've got no Debs!
Mummy is quite right when she says you're not our type,
(Aside) Even Daddy is not up to the mark!
You sound like trendy preachers
Or your scruffy left-wing teachers,
Who really are the lowest form of life,
Just accept that it's true
That I'm better than you*

*With my cut glass diction and my crystal clear complexion,
I have found my true vocation in life
I'm the cream and I rise above you all.*

Chorus: *Oh, Anne-Marie, oh, Anne-Marie
..... the number one.*

Chorus: *Can't you see that Anne-Marie: 'Cause it's true
..... the number one. I rise above you all.*

(At end of the song ANNE-MARIE takes BABYFACE'S bag and empties the contents on to the floor.)

Jack: That wasn't very friendly. I think you should pick those things up for Jane.

Sandra: *(urgently)* Don't Jack, she'll go berserk.

Terry: She gets into these paddies. She's dangerous.

Jack: You wouldn't hurt me, would you Anne-Marie? *(She steps right up to him and starts to breathe heavily through her nose. Her face fills up and starts contorting; she keeps clenching and unclenching her fists. JACK is immovable, and as suddenly as she started she stops and walks away as if it never happened)*

Anne-Marie: Soil my hands on you. You common little man! *(Silence)* Don't let me interrupt your little play. Carry on. I need amusement. *(She retreats to the corner where JACKIE has been, and like JACKIE she pretends not to notice.)*

Jack: No room at the inn! Let's think for a moment. Why are Mary and Joseph looking for a room?

Jackie: It's about being homeless, and nobody caring isn't it.

Jack: Wouldn't people understand that nowadays?

Babyface: Not really, everyone has a home don't they?

Jackie: No they don't.

Terry: Oh yeh, but there's only a few of them without, and anyway my dad says it's their own fault 'cos they won't work

Sharon: And they spend all their money in the boozier and the betting shop.

Jackie: *(very angry)* Very clever! If they don't work where do they get ALL this money from?

Terry: My dad says we should give them less dole money

Anne-Marie: They've all got jobs on the quiet anyway.

Babyface: They're shitless my mum says. *(Everyone puzzled)*

Karen: *(twigging)* SHIFTLISS!

Jackie: I suppose that applies to Joseph and Mary too.

Babyface: Ah you're wrong see, 'Cos they're in the Bible so they must be good.

Jackie: (*exploding*) You stupid, ignorant lot

Sandra: Shut up Jackie. No-one asked you to interfere.

Anne-Marie: What do you know about it? Have you ever been homeless?

Jackie: As a matter of fact yes. (*A stunned silence; then quietly . . .*) Mum and dad slept rough at first we couldn't find anywhere you'd have thought someone they took me away I didn't see (*Silence. She wipes away her tears*) You want to know what it feels like? Terry - you be my mum; Gail - you're my dad, and Janey - you be me. (*Everyone watches her curiously. She sits behind a desk and indicates that her 'family' should approach*)

Jackie: (*as a housing official*) I'm sorry Mr. Peters, but the housing list is governed by strict regulations.

Gail: (*picking up her cue*) But what about need. We're homeless. If you won't help us what are we going to do?

Jackie: (*unctuously*) You must understand, it isn't a question of won't help. If it was within my power to do so (*She spreads her hands*) but it's more than my job's worth.

Terry: So we can sleep on the streets can we? What about the child? (*ANNE-MARIE has moved in. She touches JACKIE on the shoulder and takes her place.*)

Anne-Marie: We can make arrangements for your daughter madam. I'm bound to say that in your circumstances a temporary care order is inevitable anyway.

Gail: (*after the initial shock*) But my wife can't sleep rough in her condition. (*ANNE-MARIE raises a puzzled eyebrow.*)

Terry: I'm pregnant. (*The lighting changes, slowly focussing onto this group.*)

Anne-Marie: Well I'm bound to say Mr. Peters, I can't understand you leaving a perfectly good home to end up in this condition. It appears to be of your own making.

Gail: We came South to find work. I've got a job now, but I can't afford to buy a house at these prices.

Anne-Marie: Yes, well as I say, there's very little I can do for you at this time. Now, if you'd excuse me I have other people waiting. (*The 'family' move away disconsolate. JANICE appears.*)

Janice: (*as a social worker*) Hello, I'm Janice your social worker. Nothing to be concerned about. Let me explain. This is a temporary care order for Jane. I think you'll find it straightforward. This is the address of the hostel she'll be living at. When you are able to supply us with proof of permanent address we can consider re-uniting the family. Come along Janey. (*TERRY and GAIL*)

alone)

Gail: Let's try down here. *(They 'knock' on a door. SANDRA appears)*

Sandra: Yes, can I help you?

Gail: We're replying to your advertisement. Flat to let.

Sandra: Of course. It's still free. The rent is £120 per week, exclusive. No pets, no children.

Gail: Erm, my wife's pregnant. That'll be alright won't it?

Sandra: Oh, I'm afraid not dear.

Terry: But by the time the baby's born we'll have found something more permanent.

Sandra: Well there you are dear. I lose out both ways. You find another place and I've got to go through this whole rigmarole again. If you don't, I'm stuck with a baby screaming blue murder all night. No. I'm sorry dear. *(The 'door' closes and they trudge on. They 'knock' on another 'door' and SHARON answers.)*

Sharon: *(B & B landlady)* Yes, can I be of assistance?

Terry: We were told that you do bed and breakfast?

Sharon: *(plummy)* That's right. Sixteen pounds fifty pence per night. Full English breakfast, choice of two cereals, fruit juice optional, sheets changed on Friday, television lounge and reading room for guests staying longer than one week.

Gail: We'll take it.

Sharon: You'll pardon me for asking. You are in full-time employment aren't you?

Gail: Oh yes.

Sharon: I shall need references. *(GAIL nods)* And forgive me asking, but do I detect a little treasure on the way?

Terry: I'm eight months pregnant.

Sharon: One more thing poppet. I'm sure you won't mind me asking, but you seem to have mislaid your wedding ring?

Terry: You know how it is. My fingers have been getting a bit swollen.

Sharon: *(very dubious)* That's as maybe. *(she thinks for a moment)* I'm sorry, but I keep a respectable house, and this is a respectable neighbourhood. Perhaps you could try somewhere else. *(She closes the 'door' and they trudge on. In the surrounding darkness the other girls sing: "In the bleak mid-winter, frost and wind made moan, Earth stood hard as iron, water like a STONE". GAIL and TERRY have become Joseph and Mary.)*

Gail: Come on Mary, don't give up hope. Someone will help us. Let's try at this inn. *(They 'knock' and SHEILA answers.)*

Sheila: What do you want? Hurry up I've got customers to serve.

Gail: My wife and I are in Bethlehem for the registration. We need a room. She's

about to give birth.

Sheila: Not a square inch to be had chief, sorry.

Terry: Please, you must have something?

Sheila: I'm sorry lady. I could stable your donkey, but that's about it.

Terry: We could share with the animal

Gail: No

Terry: There's no choice.

Sheila: It'll cost you. (*GAIL hands over money until the INNKEEPER is satisfied.*)
Round the back, turn right, and it's straight in front of you. (*She closes the 'door'. During the previous sequence the other Children should be quietly making up a stable out of the classroom furniture. The light then transfers to this area as JOSEPH and MARY approach it. It is already partially occupied by SHEPHERDS. They enter.*)

Gail: Look at the place. It's filthy and it stinks!

Terry: I've got to sit down. (*She sees the SHEPHERDS and gasps.*) Who are you?

1st Shepherd: Shepherds, Mrs., sheltering. It's a rough old night out there.

Gail: There must be some mistake. We've rented this stable. You 'll have to leave.

2nd Shepherd: (*laughing*) Sharp lad old Isaac. How much did he sting you for? It cost us a packet.

Gail: I'll give you your money back if you'll leave. My wife's about to have a baby, we don't want you here.

3rd Shepherd: We aint goin' nowhere, not on a night like this. You just thank your lucky stars you've got a roof over your head.

Gail: (*about to argue*) Look

Terry: (*cries out*) Joseph, Joseph it's starting!

Gail: (*confused*) What do I do? What do I do?

(*There is a pause. The SHEPHERDS gather and whisper.*)

3rd Shepherd: We can help. if you want us to?

Gail: How?

3rd Shepherd: We've delivered lambs many a time

Gail: No

Terry: (*in pain*) Let them, please let them. (*They gather round her and assist with the Birth. Outside THREE KINGS arrive, they are shivering.*)

1st King: Let's get the horses unsaddled, and then get inside. I'm freezing.

2nd King: It's coming to something when even a King can't be excused registration. Damn Romans!

3rd King: Hey, what's going on over there?

Gail: (*rising*) Begging your pardon sir, it's my wife. She's having a baby. (*A baby's cry is heard and he looks.*) A boy sir, a baby boy! (*They all gather*

round.)

3rd King: Bless me, so it is. Caspar, look at this, in a stable.

2nd King: A gift! A traditional gift for the child. What do you say?

1st King: Why not. Here, something for your son. For luck. *(Each KING gives something. Then everyone is still. The general light is low. JACK is silhouetted by a bright shaft of light coming through the U.S. doorway.)*

Babyface: Was that all right Jack?

Jack: *(quietly)* Fine . . . that's how it was . . . *(Silence. The light returns to full over the entire room.)*

Babyface: Jack, what will we do about costumes?

Anne-Marie: Just a minute. Didn't you think I was marvellous as that odious little council official?

Sharon: *(grinning)* Terrific, yeh.

Jackie: How did you know that that was what it was like?

Anne-Marie: *(nastily)* None of you have ever met daddy have you? *(gleefully)*
Now, how do we fit it into the finished story?

Karen: With difficulty!

Jackie: I can't see where we can include it.

Terry: Sorry Anne-Marie, no go.

Anne-Marie: *(Brows starting to darken)* You - Jack - tell them. Go on!

Jack: It's got to be their decision; it's their play. If they don't think . . .

Anne-Marie: *(angry)* But you're the boss; you've shown them how to do it. I've been listening. They could never do that on their own. You're the teacher, tell them! *(There is silence. She starts the physical build-up again of breath, fists etc. She explodes kicking over tables and chairs, emptying bags. She storms out. The dust settles.)*

Jack: Come on, no real damage done. Tidy everything up and we'll go back to the beginning. *(They tidy. After a moment BABYFACE approaches JACK.)*

Babyface: So what about our costumes?

Jack: *(arms around her neck)* If you turn your collar up . . . *(Mrs. MELLY is in the doorway with ANNE-MARIE who is pointing at JACK. She gets the wrong idea.)*

Melly: Who are you? What are you doing? Janey call security.

Babyface: *(pulling away from JACK)* No Mrs. Melly, I won't call security.
(Cheering)

Melly: Janey, you have that worried look on your face. Go to the toilet at once.

Babyface: No thank you Mrs. Melly. I do not need to go to the lavatory.

Jack: *(moves towards MELLY)* Er, this is my fault. You must be Mrs. Melly. I'm the . . .

Melly: Don't you dare touch me. I'll call the police. Karen Potter, cover your

stomach up. *(She pushes JACK)*

Karen: Don't you push our Jack around.

Jack: I can explain everything

Melly: You have some explaining to do, and it had better be good *(there is uproar and the GIRLS mill around her shouting. JACK fades into the background, pauses, then leaves. After a time the GIRLS realise he is gone. They become still and silent.)* Thank goodness he's gone. *(Silence)* It's just typical of you all. Why didn't one of you come to me, and tell me there was an intruder? *(Silence)* Really, you're incapable of doing anything unless I'm standing over you.

Karen: Shut up! He's gone, isn't that enough for you?

Melly: I beg your pardon. I think you'd better watch your tongue young lady. You're all in sufficient trouble as it is. *(Pause)* You will all wait here while I get some paper. I'll put an end to your idleness. Nobody's going home until you've all completed an essay. Your stupidity must be punished. The title is "RESPONSIBILITY". *(She exits. Without thinking they all start to lay out the tables and chairs in neat rows.)*

SONG: A FRIEND

Babyface: *We'll never know now,
If we could show how
To use the gifts that we got
When we reached out our hands
To be touched by our friend.*

Sharon: *Can we be sure now,
That we have learned to
Believe that trusting each other
Is more than a dream
That will fade in the end?*

Company: *(Chorus)* *We will tell the doubters,
Move aside my friend.
They can't beat us, or defeat us,
If we stand hand-in-hand.*

(Instrumental)

Company: *You can be certain,*

*That we have learned to
Believe that sharing this life
Is the right way to find out,
Who are your friends.*

Company: *You will know then,
The way is open
To fill the world with your laughter
To shatter the anger
That separates friends.*

Company: *(Chorus) We will tell the doubters
Move aside my friend.
They won't beat us,
If we stand hand-in-hand.*

(Instrumental)

(JACK re-appears in the background and sings Verse 4. The GIRLS then finish with Verse 3 with the last line repeated. The song ends and they sit in their seats. - SANDRA, GAIL, TERRY, JACKIE, JANICE, SHARON, BABYFACE, KAREN.)

(SHEILA keeps watch by the door. Each GIRL has her bag on the U.S. side of her desk.)

Jackie: I knew that no-one would ever get to see it. *(Silence)*

Babyface: I wonder who Jack's important friends are?

Sheila: Sssh. Melly. *(SHEILA exits by the other door)*

Melly: *(entering)* Right, get the tables and cha. . . .Goo. . . .*(She decides against praising them, and walks through the rows to her desk.)* Get your pens out. *(She turns, they are all looking at her, pens poised.)*

(Play-out music. Bring in TINA TURNER singing "THE BEST". Start from the Guitar riff near the end, and play to the end. Fade lights to a Spotlight on the Teacher's desk. MRS. MELLY is holding her metre rule. She picks up a screwdriver JACK has left behind. She weighs it in her hand, then drops it in the bin. Fade to Black).

CURTAIN