

25 MINI MUSICALS

Very short musicals
(5 - 15 minutes each)
Ideal for class, camps or concerts
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PREVIEW BOOK ONLY

The book with all 25 mini musicals is available from Fox Plays

What Are They?

A mini musical is short, about 5 to 15 minutes long, easy to learn and simple to stage.

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#4 The Human Symphony

This is a body-percussion musical i.e. the music is made by slapping, clapping, stamping, etc.

Characters

Tim, Kate, Terri, Bocker, Trish, Michael and Diane – a group of students/friends. A man and a woman in the park plus numerous others. A compere for a concert.

Setting for Performance

There are two settings. The first could be anywhere – a verandah, school ground, lounge room, etc. The second setting is an outdoors scene in a park. Perhaps have a bench and a sign *Keep Off The Grass* to help set the scene.

Costumes

Everyday casual clothes. The compere may wear more formal attire. There are several uniforms when the students become people in the park. There's a police officer, gardener, ambulance crew, etc. The following props may be useful – prams, umbrellas, walking sticks, picnic sets, rugs, etc.

Getting Started

You need to invent your own musical instruments. There is also a play within a play situation and it occurs when the students perform a concert. Discuss what is meant by 'a play within a play'. This can apply to a film within a film.

Invent your own characteristics for each character although Bocker seems to be a bit of a clown.

The Script

(A sad group of students are sitting around on a verandah or in a lounge room)

Tim It's nobody's fault. It's no good blaming anyone. Besides, everything was insured.

Kate Yeah, but how long before we get the insurance money?

Terri I heard it could be six months.

Others Six months!

Terri We were burgled at home last year and it was ages before the new gear arrived.

Bocker If its six months, I'll forget what a trumpet looks like.

Tim Just imagine a large banana with knobs. *(Some laugh)*

Trish Why don't we borrow some instruments? Somebody might help us out just for a while.
(Plenty of despair. DIANE gets an idea)

Diane Why don't we approach a company which hires instruments?

Terri Same old problem, Di. Hiring costs money.

Kate So let's raise some money.

Tim But twenty-five musical instruments for six months would cost heaps. We might as well face it. We're broke and the band's bust.
(More gloom. There seems no hope. Then BOCKER gets an idea)

Bocker Hold it! Hold everything! Genius at work here.

Michael I think you mean lunatic at large.

Bocker We can raise the cash, hire the instruments and keep the band going till the new instruments arrive.

Katie Bocker that idea died five minutes ago.

Tim No money, old bean.

Bocker *(Still enthusiastic)* We'll raise the dough by putting on a concert.

Others What!

Bocker Let's work up a few numbers, charge a dollar or two and use the money to hire the instruments.
(Slowly the others laugh. They shake their heads at BOCKER'S misunderstanding)

Diane *(Sarcastic)* Great idea, Bocker.

Terri *(Sarcastic)* Best you've ever come up with.

Bocker *(Thinks they're sincere)* Great. So let's get rehearsing.
(More laughter. MICHAEL takes BOCKER aside)

Michael Bocker, listen to me.

Bocker Just a short concert but a good one.

Michael Bocker, shut up and listen. *(BOCKER stops)* How can we give a concert for instruments if we haven't got any instruments?

Trish If we had the instruments in the first place we wouldn't to give a concert to raise the money.

Bocker *(Sad)* I'm confused. *(Others groan)*

Tim *(Gets an idea)* Just a minute. I think Bocker's right.

Others What?

Bocker See, I told you. *(Pause. Confused again)* I am?

Tim We can give a concert without any instruments.

Kate A silent concert, hey. At least we'll all be in tune. *(Laughter)*

Tim We can make music without instruments.

Diane Tim, we're a band not a choir. And our singing's pretty ordinary.

Michael What do we do? Whistle in the key of G? *(More laughter)*

Tim Exactly. We can whistle and clap and stamp. They're all sounds.
(Pause. OTHERS realise this is not such a crazy idea)

Bocker Hey you guys, I can hum.

Terri But what about the music we perform? What works are there for a ... a human symphony?

Tim Great title. *The Human Symphony*.

Kate We could write it ourselves.

Bocker Bags be the symphony.

(Everyone talks at once. The lights fade and a time-lapse occurs. We move to the park which is the setting for the performance of The Human Symphony. A single light comes up on the compere)

Compere And so ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, the students have written their own piece of music and have called it *The Human Symphony*. Their new instruments should be delivered next month but who knows, after this performance, we could have two bands in operation. The first using their trumpets, clarinets, violins and drums, etc, and the second Well, see what you think.

Here is the* school band and *The Human Symphony*.

(Insert the name of your school or theatre group. Light down on compere and up on the park scene. Various people are out and about walking, picnicking in the park. There are families, joggers, couples, young, old, active and passive people. On cue the people break into their performance. It's a concert in the park.*

At about line 7 a man with a dog and a woman carrying a cat enter and start speaking at line 8. There is no cat and dog. They are imagined. The man could have a dog lead with a bit of wire in it. This dialogue begins at line 8)

Man Morning.

Woman Oh good morning.

Man Lovely day.

Woman Yes, beautiful. Not like yesterday.

Man Wasn't it dreadful. Funny though, my dog likes the rain.

Woman *(Protecting her cat)* He's not so keen on cats, is he?

Man *(Pulling on lead)* Oops, sorry about that. *(To dog)* Guthrie, get back. Sit. Sit!

Woman I've only just found my cat. She ran off and *(Imaginary cat breaks free and runs off)* My cat!

Man *(Is suddenly pulled by dog)* Guthrie! Stop!

(Woman runs after cat followed by dog dragging man. Both humans call to their animals. The chase could go round the park and into the audience. All the time the other people keep performing The Human Symphony. By line 15 the animals have been re-captured/controlled and the man and woman re-meet as before. At line 15)

Woman Oh Mister Furtwangler.

Man Please, call me Orphin.

Woman Well Orphin, let's hope the animals get along as well as we do.

Man I'm sure they will. Same time tomorrow?

Woman I'd like that. Goodbye.

Man Bye.

(The man and woman exit in different directions as the piece comes to a close. The ending has everyone in the park pretending to be either a friendly dog or a friendly cat – wagging tails, tongues handing out, purrs, friendly barks, etc. CURTAIN)

Notes on the Score

X = finger snap ⑤ = foot stamp ③ = thigh slap

Each line of music has a number. There are fifteen lines altogether. Perform a numbered line at a time but note that some numbers have more than one line e.g. number 7.

The first piece of dialogue begins at number 8. This dialogue continues into number 9. The second section of dialogue begins at number 15.

Keep the 3/4 parts moving. Not too fast but with a feel of one in the bar. Use a moderate tempo for the 4/4 lines.

Number 14 should build in volume and tempo to a big finale with everyone shouting Bang on the first beat of the last bar. There is then an important pause. Then you begin number 15 with the second set of dialogue. Finish with everyone happy as either a dog or cat. Or both!

Things to Do Afterwards

Music

Home-made musical instruments are lots of fun. There are many books and parts of books devoted to making and playing your own instruments. You could build your own symphony orchestra or bottle band.

Body percussion requires no additional material. How many sounds can you record from (a) home-made instruments and (b) body percussion?

Fund-Raising

Schools are often engaged in raising funds for various projects. Why not a performance of *The Human Symphony*? It could be at a school concert, on tour in tandem with *The Marvellous Melodrama* or even as a highlight at your next school or local fete.

Pets

In this mini-musical a cat and a dog don't seem to get on well together. Is this always the case? Can cats and dogs live happily together? What is meant by the expression, "they fought like cats and dogs"? Conduct a survey in your class or school. Which is the most popular pet? Do boys have a favourite pet? Why? Ask the same questions of the girls? What type of animal is your favourite pet?

#7 Write or Wrong

Characters

Biro, Felt Pen, Fountain Pen (FTN PEN), Crayon, Chalk, Pencil and a chorus of writing implements.

Setting

A shelf, a pencil-box, a desk, a stationery shop - wherever.

Getting Started

Rather than have special costumes, hats with names on the front (a la 1940s reporters) or large name tags pinned to chests of shirts could easily identify the players.

Homonyms and puns. Once these are understood, the play makes sense. Who can list the most homonyms? Who can give the best example of a pun?

The Mini Musical

(The implements bounce in and sing)

Do It With Us

*We come in handy when writing a book
When writing a letter to someone who's crook
When sketching a drawing at which people look
We come in handy, in handy we do.
We come in handy when teaching a class
When making a sign which states "Please keep off the grass"
When taking exams where you fail or you pass
We come in handy, in handy we do.
You write with us, you draw with us
You paint 'n print 'n squint and all with one of us
If you're a budding novelist and think you've missed the bus
Get onto us, oh grab hold of us.
You sketch with us, sign your cheques with us
You work 'n write, invite and it's with one of us
Graffiti's nothing new but you can still kick up a fuss
And do it with us. Write on, write away.*

(The implements are bubbling with excitement. Biro calls for quiet)

Biro Attention everyone. Settle down.

Felt Pen Hey, how come you're in charge?

Fountain Pen Oh come on, no more squabbling, please.

Crayon Let's get this meeting over as soon as possible. *(Others agree)*

Pencil *(Making a speech)* Well thank you my fellow writing implements.

Crayon Hey! Some of us colour in you know.

Pencil I've been asked to deliver a speech on the role we play in society.
(Others groan)

Crayon Well make it a short speech. Very short. *(Others agree)*

Pencil Let me say right from the start, there is absolutely no confusion.

Chalk You said that last time.

Pencil Look, I'll not mince words. It's as simple as the letter A.

Fountain Pen *(Didn't hear)* 'ey?

Pencil Not 'ey. A.

Biro Just a minute. You said there'd be no confusion.

Pencil Right, first the rights of all implements.

Felt Pen Not writes. You mean prints. We prints before we writes.
(Some groan)

Pencil Not writes. Rights.

Biro *(At PENCIL)* You definitely promised there'd be no confusion.

Pencil It's impossible for a writing implement to be wrong. The hand which holds us is always to blame. Even if what they write is wrong, we're not wrong, we're always right.

Biro *(Sarcastic)* Oh that's perfectly clear. Who said anything about confusion?

Felt Pen Is that true with either hand - left and right?

Chalk Left and write! If they're left they can't write.

Felt Pen *(Annoyed)* Not left and write. Left and right.
(They argue. "You're confusing" "No you're confusing" etc)

Pencil *(Over the bickering)* I can explain. *(They settle)* It's true some writers leave but those who are left, write. *(BIRO starts to go crazy)*

Biro Not confusing! If it wasn't so clear, I'd go crazy!

Fountain Pen Yes but is there a future for fountain pens?

Pencil Not really. In fact some reckon the writing's already on the wall.

Felt Pen *(Looking around)* What writing? I can't even see the wall.

Pencil I think I'm right in saying the end is nigh.

Crayon Write in saying! How can you write in speech?

Pencil I said "Right in saying" not "Write in saying".

Biro Oh I simply love this clear thinking.

Pencil I think some of you are drawing conclusions.

Chalk No-one is drawing. Show me someone who is drawing.

Fountain Pen That's right. We haven't even got any paper.

Pencil Oh please, I was using a figure of speech.

Felt Pen This is ridiculous. There's a figure of eight and twenty-three and one thousand billion trillion. Now you say there's a figure of speech!

Biro Well don't look at me. I can't figure it out. *(More groans)*

Pencil I think this is getting out of hand.

Chalk *(Mild panic)* Out of hand! If I'm out of hand, I'm finished.

Pencil Not out of hand; out of hand.

Biro *(Going bananas)* Oh no! Stop this confusion or I'll scream.

Fountain Pen *(At PENCIL)* Listen friend, you've made a real fist of this.

Pencil *(Snaps back)* Don't you point the finger at me!

Biro *(Has flipped)* Oh I'm so glad this isn't confusing.
(More signs of craziness)

Pencil Listen. Everyone who writes has rights. Right?
(Others exasperated)

Fountain Pen Look, can we please put a stop to this?

Crayon Yes, a complete stop.

Felt Pen Is that the same as a full stop?
(Groans all round. BIRO at bursting point)

Chalk Come on, you're splitting hairs. Complete. Full. They're only words.

Others *(Shocked)* Only words! *(CHALK upset at their reaction)*

Chalk That's right - words. Who cares? What's the difference?

Fountain Pen Who cares?

Biro *(Now slightly mad)* What's the difference?

Chalk *(Backing off)* All right, all right. I'm sorry.

Pencil Where I come from, Chalkie, the difference between "complete" and "full" is fifty per cent. My insides go into those letters.

Felt Pen And fifty per cent more letters is a lot more ink.

Pencil And lead.

Chalk Okay, okay. So words are important.

Crayon Important! Words are my life.

Biro *(Gradual return to normality)* And mine. *(Others agree)*

Pencil Only problem with words is the type of people who get to use them.

Chalk You mean, people? *(Others nod and agree)*

Crayon Words are fine, words are beautiful.

Biro And writing implements are okay.

Crayon Yes but we do need replacing, refilling and a bit of sharpening at times.

Felt Pen There are wonderful words and fabulous writing implements. If only we could remove those crummy writers.
(Others agree except CHALK)

Chalk *(Shocked)* Remove the writers! *(Others like the idea)* You can't remove the writers.

Pencil I'd get my own back. I'd rub 'em out.

Chalk You can't rub out writers.
Biro Why not? Give us one good reason why we shouldn't dispense with scribblers.
Chalk Simple. We wouldn't exist. *(This stuns them)* Without writers and artists, we're useless.

(Pause. Stunned silence. They look at one another. That's true. They mutter "Chalk's right" etc then panic. They want forgiveness. They rush about bumping into one another. They call to writers alive and dead. They beg to be used. "Here I am Mr Shakespeare" ... "Take me, Jane Austen" ... I'm yours, Walt Disney" ... etc. One by one they exit all calling at once.. Blackout. Curtain)

Follow-Up Activities

1. The history of the written language is well documented. When did it all begin? Why did people start to write? What about the first writing implements? When did ball-point pens first appear? Try using some basic writing implements - a quill, charcoal, clay, berry juice, etc. What's it like to write with such materials?
2. Learn to write in another style e.g. calligraphy. Calligraphy pens and booklets are freely available and after some practise (quite a bit if you want to be really good) you can produce a beautiful style of writing.
3. Some languages use symbols and numerals unlike the ones you probably use to read and write. Find some examples of these symbols. Try and copy them. Perhaps there is someone in your school or community who could demonstrate some unusual writing.
4. When the implements ran off at the end of the mini musical calling to famous writers, who were these people? What did they do to make themselves famous? Who is your favourite writer? Illustrator? Why do you like their work?
5. Artists paint or draw with different implements and materials. They might use brushes, pencils, oils, water-colours, charcoal, etc. What is your favourite material? Why? What sort or style of paintings or drawings do you like? Why?
6. Some people argue that ball-point pens contribute to sloppy writing. Fountain pens and anything with a nib will cause you to write with a much neater hand. Do you agree? Try writing the same sentence with three different implements (a) a ball-point pen (b) a fountain pen and (c) a pen with a nib you dip in an ink-well or bottle of ink. How did you go?

Blimey. What's an ink-well?

#9 Nursery Times

Characters

Clerk, Little Red Riding Hood (LRRH), Miss MUFFET, Jack, Jill, Humpdee Dumpdee (HD), Wolf and any other characters from nursery rhymes you care to use.

Setting

An employment agency. To one side is a desk with a sign COMPLAINTS. A chair is beside the desk and a clerk sits behind the desk. Centre stage and/or to the other side are several chairs - the waiting-room. The characters are waiting their turn. They read, doze, appear nervous or are unmoved.

Getting Started

This mini-musical depends on a knowledge of nursery rhymes. Perhaps you could run a quiz on some popular rhymes/tales. Some “grown-up” students may think it childish but can they remember the words? Try such tales as Little Red Riding Hood, Jack and Jill, Humpdee Dumpdee and Little Miss Muffet.

Many government departments deal with the public. Often one needs to wait in rooms or in queues. Is this time exciting? Boring? Try and imagine how it must feel to wait for long periods of time.

The Mini Musical

Clerk *(Rings the bell) Next. (LRRH moves to CLERK and sits) Name?*
LRRH Little Red Riding Hood.
Clerk *(Writing) Little ... Red ... Riding ... Hood. Nature of complaint?*
LRRH My life is too dangerous.
Clerk Not another one. *(Writing) Life ... too ... dangerous.*
LRRH It's not safe in the forest, my Granny's learning karate and I hate the colour red.
Clerk Not so fast. *(Writing) Hates ... colour ... red. (Looks up) Okay, we'll look into it. (Rings bell) Next. (LRRH returns to her seat. MISS MUFFET moves to CLERK)*
Miss M Any spiders here?
Clerk Name?
Miss M Look, have you got any spiders.
Clerk *(Getting annoyed) Will you sit down?*
Miss M I can't. I'm scared of spiders.
Clerk` We haven't got any.

Miss M *(Sits)* Oh that's a relief. I can't begin to tell you how I loathe and detest spiders.

Clerk What is your name?

Miss M Oh, sorry. Ah, Miss Muffet.

Clerk *(Writing)* Miss ... Muffet.

Miss M Actually it's Little Miss Muffet.
(CLERK looks up, fumes, crosses out, starts again)

Clerk *(Writing again)* Little ... Miss ... Muffet.

Miss M There are too many spiders in the world.

Clerk *(Writing)* There ... are ... too ... *(MISS M interrupts)*

Miss M And besides, I'm sick.

Clerk Hang on, hang on. *(Writing)* spiders ... in ... the world. Is that all?

Miss M No. I'm also extremely bored with curds and whey.

Clerk *(Writing)* Menu ... driving ... her ... nuts. Okay, we'll be in touch.
(Rings bell) Next.
(MISS M returns to her seat. JACK and JILL hobble over. JACK has head bandage, Jill a crutch. CLERK sees their plight and drags in another chair so both can sit. They do so with difficulty)

Clerk Names?

Jack Jack. *(CLERK writes)*

Jill Jill.

Clerk *(Writing)* Jack ... and ... Jill. I see you're just back from World War Three.

Jill No, we fell down.

Jack *(Indicating head)* I broke my crown.

Clerk On the job I suppose.

Jack Yes it's definitely workers' compensation.
(Insert name of well-known public insurance)

Clerk *(Taking out another form)* Okay, let's have the details.

Jill We went up the hill to fetch a ...

Clerk Just a minute. I'm not a computer. This is a government department.
(Writing) We ... went ... up ... the ... hill.

Jack I'll be off work for weeks.

Clerk *(Writing)* ... off ... work ... for ... weeks.

Jill I kicked the bucket.

Clerk *(Looks up)* Yes, you do look a little pale. *(It's a joke. Laughs loudly. The others are shocked)* Little pale. Kicked the bucket. Pale, bucket. Get it? *(Laughs. Others still shocked. CLERK rings bell)* Next. *(JACK and JILL hobble back to their seats. HUMPDEE DUMPDEE hobbles over wearing lots of bandages)* Not another one.

HD I demand proper medical attention.

Clerk Yes, all right. Have a seat.

HD I refuse to sit on anything. Chairs, benches, settees and especially walls.

Clerk Suit yourself. Name?

HD And I'm most disappointed in the King.

Clerk Complaints come later. Now, what's your name?
HD Humpdee Dumpdee.
Clerk *(Writing)* Humpdee ... Dumpdee.
HD And my major complaint is the town wall is too high.
Clerk *(Writing)* Town ... hall ... is ...
HD Wall. The town wall is too high. *(CLERK peeved, crosses out then continues)*
Clerk Town ... wall ... too high. Okay, take a seat.
HD I told you I'm not sitting on anything. And the King's Men are terrible paramedics.
Clerk Paramedics?
HD They tried to put me together again.
Clerk All right. I've got that. *(Rings bell)* Next. *(HD returns to his seat. WOLF creeps towards CLERK and hides)* Next! *(CLERK doesn't see the nervous WOLF)*
Wolf Psst. *(CLERK looks around but doesn't see WOLF)* Psst. Over here.
Clerk What? *(Sees WOLF)* Over here. Take a seat.
Wolf *(Reluctantly takes seat)* Is it safe?
Clerk Name?
Wolf Is it safe?
Clerk Of course. Now what's your name?
Wolf *(Leans forward and whispers)* Could we speak ... softly?
Clerk *(Leans forward and whispers)* Certainly. What's your name?
Wolf *(Still whispering)* Wolf.
Clerk *(Writing)* Wolf. Now, nature of complaint?
Wolf *(Still whispering)* Ah, I don't like wearing women's clothing.
Clerk *(Writing)* Doesn't ... like ...
Wolf *(Worried)* Shhh.
Clerk *(Softer. Writing)* Doesn't like wearing ... women's clothing.
Wolf *(Whispers)* They make me wear a big frilly bonnet.
Clerk *(Writing)* ... frilly ... bonnet.
Wolf And the nightie has all this pink lace.
Clerk *(Writing)* ... pink ... lace. *(Rings bell. Calls)* Okay. Pay attention. *(Everyone rises and listens to CLERK)* Line up when I call your name. *(Characters move when their name is called)* Ms Jill Dumpdee. *(JILL stands. Buzz from others)* Mister and Missus Jack Red. *(They stand. More hubbub)* Mister and Missus Humpdee Hyphen Muffet. *(They stand)* And Little Miss Riding Wolf. *(WOLF stands and everyone forms a line. MUSIC STARTS)* Now, are you satisfied?
Company *(Happy)* Oh yes.

A New Life

*We want a new life, a new life
A brand new start, we want a new life
A life with changes to dangers we face*

*A life where strangers are put in their place.
We want a new life, a new life, it's well-nigh overdue.
Oh make it right and bright and cute and beaut
Give me a life that's new.*

Curtain

Follow-Up Activities

1. Take a well-known fairy tale or nursery rhyme and invent an ending after the usual ending e.g. What happened to Snow White or to Cinderella or to Hansel and Gretel? Pretend their lives continued after the well-known story said "The End". What happened to them?
2. Who else had reason to complain about their life? If other well-known characters came to the Complaints Department, what might they say? e.g. Goldilocks, the Cow in Jack and the Beanstalk, the Seven Dwarfs, Cinderella's step-mother, Rumpelstiltskin.
3. Make up a short play about a queue. It could be a queue of people waiting for a bus, people waiting to buy a ticket to a show or waiting to get into a department store for the January sales. The waiting could go on and on. How would the people react? What would happen if someone tried to "jump the queue"? You could use a surprise ending e.g. the bus breaks down, the show is cancelled or the store doors won't open. How would the people react?
4. A full-length version of this musical is called *Fairy Tales* and is published by FOX PLAYS. It features many well-known characters from famous fairy tales. The characters decide to swap roles just for the day. Is the grass greener on the other side? It's a musical and a pantomime for the whole family. Preview script at www.foxplays.com

#13 Surprise Spectacular

Characters

Harry/Harriet, Tommy/Tammy plus a cast of singing, dancing showbiz-stars.

Setting

An old, disused theatre/cinema. The action takes place on the stage.

Getting Started

Birthdays. Buying a present for someone can sometimes be tricky. Discuss how easy or difficult it is to buy presents for your family. Birthday surprises. Discuss how some people go to a great deal of trouble to keep a party secret. Has this ever happened to you? Do you like surprise parties?

The Mini Musical

(There are two stars who can be male or female. Change their name according to their sex. Our two actors have been good friends for a long time. They always take one another out for their birthday. Today it's Harriet's birthday. Tommy has thought of a great way to celebrate. It's a surprise. The old theatre is dark. The stage is lit with a single light. When the mini musical begins the stage is empty. We hear voices offstage. Tommy has a small case or bag)

Harriet Tommy, where are we?

Tommy You'll see, you'll see. *(The two friends enter and move DC)*

Harriet *(Being led/helped)* I can't see. *(HARRIET stumbles)* Ow, that hurt.

Tommy Careful, that's the dining-room table. *(It's not of course)* Now stand still. *(Moves to imaginary switch)* I'll get the lights.

Harriet What lights? You mean the room is dark? *(Suddenly more lights come up. Not full lighting just a few more)* Tommy? Where are we? Tommy?

Tommy *(Crosses to her and removes blindfold)* Now do you recognise the place?

Harriet *(Rubbing eyes)* Yes! It's the old Empire Theatre. Oh Tommy.

Tommy *(Puts blindfold away)* The Empire, home to some of the greatest musicals ever staged.

Harriet *(Wanders, reminisces)* What a place. What memories. *(TOMMY drags in two crates or boxes)* Remember those big chorus shows, the top hats, beautiful costumes, the music, the lights ... ah, memories. *(Snaps out of it)* So why are we here?

Tommy It's your birthday.

Harriet I know that, dummy, but why here. *(Points at audience)* Look, the stalls are empty, the orchestra pit's empty. Nothing. Tommy, this place is dead.

Tommy True, but we can still enjoy a little celebration. Please, *(Indicates boxes)* your table awaits. *(Pause. HARRIET smiles then crosses to box and sits. TOMMY "holds her chair" then slips around and sits on the other box)*

Harriet Well, I have to say this. It sure is different.

Tommy But there's more. Be patient.
(TOMMY removes tape player from bag, hits button and old-time music is heard. TOMMY then moves to light switch and lights dim. TOMMY returns to bag and produces small lamp. This creates romantic atmosphere. TOMMY sits. HARRIET is well pleased)

Harriet Tommy, it's lovely. This is the best surprise I've ever had.

Tommy Just relax, it's not over yet. *(TOMMY produces two presents)* Happy birthday, pal.

Harriet Oooo prezzies.

Tommy Well come on, open them. *(HARRIET opens one. It's a top hat)*

Harriet *(Thrilled)* A top hat. Oh Tommy and here at the old Empire.

Tommy Well there's more. *(HARRIET unwraps second present)*

Harriet Well no prizes for guessing what this is. *(Unwraps cane)* You crafty old devil. A top hat and a cane.

Tommy *(Pours drinks which could be mimed)* So let's toast your birthday and the grand old days of theatre. *(They clink mugs)*

Harriet The theatre.

Tommy The theatre and happy birthday. *(They drink. TOMMY stands)* But please, the celebrations must now begin in earnest.
(Helps HARRIET to her feet)

Harriet What's going on? Tommy?
(TOMMY guides HARRIET C, leaves here and pushes/drags boxes offstage. The CD stops)

Tommy *(Tidies up)* Now if you'd be so kind to face front and take your position please.

Harriet Tommy. What's happening?

Tommy Do you remember *The Entertainment Parade*?

Harriet Of course. It's my favourite number. Hey, what is this?

Tommy *(Guiding her C)* Now if you'd be kind enough to face front, I'll pop off and play the piano. You, madam *(sir)*, can entertain your devoted fans.
(TOMMY exits)

Harriet Oh Tommy, I can't. What if someone comes in?

Tommy *(From offstage or almost)* So what? It's your favourite theatre, your favourite song and it's your birthday. Go on, be a devil. Please.

Harriet *(Convinced)* Oh, why not? There's just the two of us.

Tommy *(Announcing)* Ladies and gentlemen, the Grand Empire Theatre takes much pleasure in presenting that wonderful star of the stage, Miss Harriet Duncan!
(The piano music begins immediately. A single spot lands on Harriet and she begins to sing. She sings the verse and chorus and really enjoys herself. Suddenly more lights come up and a troupe of singers/dancers march/tap/dance on and repeat the chorus. These could be friends or hired actors. Whoever they are they enter into the spirit of the birthday surprise and make it a fantastic present for HARRIET.)

She nearly dies when they first appear but then realises what's happening and joins in enthusiastically. TOMMY could even re-enter and partner HARRIET. It's the best birthday surprise ever)

The Entertainment Parade

*Audience, be seated, ushers, disappear
Orchestra are you ready? Curtain time is here.
Lights, start shining, make sure it's just right.
Here on stage the singer sings, tonight's the night.
Song 'n dance, the perfect chance
For the entertainment parade
Here for you something old and new
It's the entertainment parade.
Marvellous little melody, a cute 'n catchy song
Add a hint of harmony and sing-a-long.
In your heart you can be a part
Of the entertainment parade
The entertainment parade.*

Curtain

Follow-Up Activities

1. Next year, Tommy had to think of an even more exciting or unusual surprise birthday present. What was it?
2. Are there any old buildings near your school? Find out the history of one old building. When was it built? What was it originally used for? What is it used for today? Why are some live theatres closed today? Television killed the movies. What does this mean? Is it true today? Discuss.

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