



STAGE MOTHERS

Where 2nd prize is 1st prize for losers

By Cenarth Fox
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Stage Mothers has a backing CD.

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Stage Mothers 2

Synopsis

Five women gather in the waiting-room of a theatrical production company. There's a new musical *Rosie* opening and young girls are required to star in the show. The five women are there to make sure their brilliant offspring gets an audition time for tomorrow. One of the mothers is a grandmother so she represents her granddaughter. Each woman has a unique back-story yet all are united in their dedication (some would say fanaticism) to promote their child and have her get the leading role. The kids have no say in the matter. For the stage mothers, winning isn't everything; it's the only thing. Tension builds and warfare looms large. Their mantra is simple; second place is first place for losers.

In Act 2, it's time to meet the auditionees, the budding stars, aged 10, played by their mothers (one's a gran). Really? Really. Costume changes may be interesting but does the apple fall far from the tree? Are the little 'uns miniature versions of their mothers?

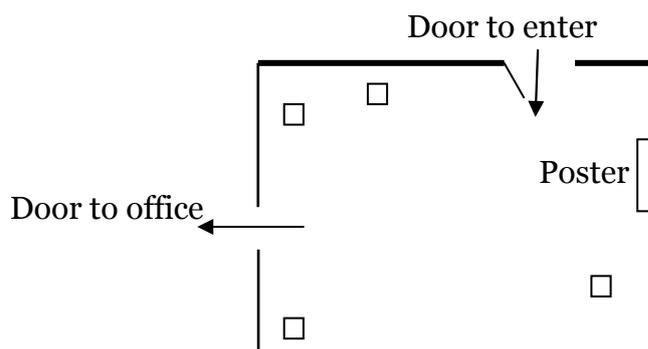
Despite Noel Coward urging otherwise, there are millions of Mrs Worthingtons active today.

Setting

A reception room/waiting room in a building where the theatre producer has his/her business. The room becomes the venue for auditions in Act 2 meaning the basic set is decorated during interval.

One mother brings her twin baby boys so there needs to be space to push a pram. A few chairs in Act 1 enable the women to sit and wait for instructions for the auditions. The changes to the set in Act 2 are basic. Different lighting helps. The *Rosie* poster in Act One could be topped by a *Rosie* banner in Act Two. There needs to be space for dancing.

Here's a floor plan of how your set might look.



Notes

The words *Mum* and *Mummy* can be changed to *Mom* and *Mommy* depending on where the show is staged. Likewise there is the odd place name which can be changed to one in the area where the production is taking place.

The show calls for five females but more can be used as chorus mothers/kids.

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Characters

The parents

Zara

(Daughter is Moondust)

Lives in posh suburb, has money but no class, poor education, is all fur coat and no knickers. She takes a week to put on her face and everything that goes with it. Her husband is a flashy real estate salesman. They are new money. Zara is a Barbie doll, OTT, false everything, middle class - just. Has spent a fortune on plastic surgery and dresses her daughter to look just like her.

Debbie

(Daughter is Kylie)

Lives in working-class suburb, poor education, tats, overweight
Debbie was a teenage mother and now has three kids, her daughter and two twin baby boys. The twins and the daughter have a different father. Debbie has never been married and her current defacto is not the father of any of Debbie's three kids.

Thi

(pronounced tea)

(Daughter is Thao, rhymes with cow)

Asian, her daughter's name means 'respectful of parents' in Vietnamese. Thi is well-educated. Comes from a conservative family but is keen to adopt Western ways and thinks a theatrical performing career for her daughter is the way to go.

Val

(Granddaughter is Nevaeh - Heaven backwards, pronounced Never)

Grandmother from an ordinary middle-class suburb, worldly-wise.

Val's daughter has abandoned her daughter and Val has adopted the little girl. Val is determined that her failure to keep her own daughter on the straight and narrow will not be repeated with her granddaughter.

Bev

(Daughter is Susan)

Suburban housewife, middle class, husband is a carpenter, wants something special for her daughter. Bev had lonely childhood brought up in care. When they were teens, Zara stole Bev's then boyfriend because she could. They've rarely haven't spoken since.

The auditionees

Moondust (Zara)

Kylie (Debbie)

Thao (Thi)

Nevaeh (Val)

Susan (Bev)

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Reviews from first performance

Thank you so much for bringing "Stage Mothers" to STAG. I had a wonderful night. Enjoyed the script, laughed a great deal and I was tapping my feet with the wonderful music.

I think it's the best you've written.

Could not believe the outstanding quality of the performers.

To me a musical has to have big chorus numbers and a love ballad – Stage Mothers ticked all the boxes.

Really enjoyed Stage Mothers last night.

It was a terrific show and it was amazing the cast were so polished.

The song by the Vietnamese lady was beautiful and beautifully sung.

I felt the tunes were TOO good because I haven't been able to get ANY of them out of my head!

The five of us were very grateful and all loved every minute of the play. There was much to talk about on the way home and we all agreed that the music and songs were a brilliant addition to your perceptive and skilful playwriting. You provided us with such a happy and entertaining night which ended all too quickly.

I really did like Stage Mothers, in particular the music.

Musical Numbers

Act 1

1. Overture
2. *Living Vicariously* (Zara and Company)
3. *All Hail, Mrs Worthington* (Debbie and Company)
4. *Is She a Bitch?* (Val and Company)
5. *Second Prize is First Prize for Losers* (Bev and Company)
6. *Who I Am* (Thi and Company)
7. *Thank God I Had a Daughter* (Company)
8. *Thank God I Had a Daughter* (Instrumental)

Act 2

9. *Entr'acte*
10. *Pushy Stage Mother* (Moondust and Company)
11. *I'm the Understudy to the Scarecrow* (Kylie and Company)
12. *Plastic Smile* (Nevaeh and Company)
13. *The Sunny Sunshine Rag* (Thao and Company)
14. *Just Like Ma* (Susan and Company)
15. *Curtain Calls* (Company)
16. *Playout*

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Act 1

Song No. 1 Overture

(Instrumental)

(The short OVERTURE begins with the house lights up. The lights start to fade as the OVERTURE is almost over so when it finishes, the theatre is black. Curtain rises or lights come up on waiting room in posh(ish) theatre producer's office. It's where the mothers of the wannabe stars gather to obtain an audition time and hear the audition requirements. The room is empty. There's a banner/poster proclaiming the forthcoming show, with posters of shows on the walls. Chairs to the sides otherwise the space is clutter free. It's daytime but it's always show time in Theatreland)

FX Door knock
(Silence. Pause)

Zara *(Calls from outside)* Hello. *(Pause)* Is this the place for the auditions?
(Another pause. Door opens slowly. ZARA speaks with door partly open. Still can't be seen)
Hello.

(She pokes her head into empty room) Great, I'm the first. *(Enters, closes door and wanders. She looks at poster)* Wow. That's the show where my baby becomes a star.

FX Door knock
(ZARA freezes. Silence. Pause)

Debbie *(Calls from outside)* Hello. *(Pause)* Is this the place for auditions?
(ZARA hurries upstage and against the wall behind where door will open)

Zara *(Disguises voice to old crone)* No. Wrong room. Go away. It's for staff only.
(Another pause. Door opens slowly. DEBBIE speaks with door partly open. Still can't be seen)

Debbie Hello. *(She pokes her head into room and doesn't see ZARA behind opened door. DEBBIE thinks room is empty, enters pushing pram with hidden twins and closes door. She looks at poster)* Wow. That's the show where my baby becomes a star.

Zara *(Let's rip with a terrifying scream)* Ahhhhh!
(Debbie almost dies of fright. She turns clutching her heart. ZARA is insincere, super polite)
Oh I'm so sorry. Did I scare you?

FX Babies cry

Debbie *(Angry)* What the hell are you doing?
(DEBBIE fusses in pram and FX fades)

Zara It's my warm-up. *(Goes into warm-up routine)* Me, me, me. *(Sings arpeggio)* Ah

Debbie You woke my babies.

Zara *(Nasty)* This is a producer's office, not a crèche.

Debbie I left me daughter with me Mum but she finds the twin boys a bit of a handful.

Zara And I see you've got the Egyptian flu.

Debbie *(Doesn't understand but knows she's not sick)* I'm not sick.

Zara *(Duh, pats her belly)* You're going to be a Mummy.

Debbie *(Sniffs, offended)* No, I'm not. *(Sensitive)* I'm just a bit overweight.

Zara A bit? *(Turns away speaks softly)* Hello Miss Porky.

Debbie *(Settles bubs)* When do we get the times for the audition?

Zara Do I look like a producer?

FX Door knock

Zara *(Whispers)* Don't answer it. *(Moves to behind door and makes shush sign and sound)*

Debbie *(Whispers)* Why? It's probably a stage mother like us.

Zara *(Whispers - angry)* Because more kids makes it harder for my kid to get the lead.

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Thi *(Calls from outside)* Hello. *(Pause)* Is this the place for auditions?
(Another pause before door opens slowly. THI speaks with door partly open. She isn't seen)
Hello. *(She pokes head into room and sees pram and DEBBIE. Enters and closes door. Bows)*
Hello. My agent told me to come here.

Debbie So did mine.

Thi I've come to arrange an audition for my daughter.

Zara They're full up. *(THI turns, discovers ZARA)*

Debbie No they're not. Don't listen to her.

Thi This is my first time for an audition.

Zara Well quit while you're ahead, sister. No experience equals no work. They want kids who've been stars for years - just like my baby.

Debbie No they don't. *(To THI)* You stay, love. You've gotta be in it to win it.

Zara *(Under her breath towards Debbie)* Bitch.

Thi Thank you for your help. I think I'll stay.

Debbie Good for you. What's your little girl's name?

Thi Thao. *(Thao rhymes with cow)*

Zara Thao? What, as in rhymes with cow?

Thi In my ancestors' language Thao means 'respectful of parents'.

Debbie My little girl's called Kylie and in my ancestors' language it means ... *(Has to think)* Kylie.

FX *Door knock*
(Silence. Pause)

Zara *(Whispers)* Keep quiet. They'll go away.

Val *(Calls from outside)* Hello. *(Pause)* Is this the place for auditions?

Thi *(Pause then decides to answer, almost calls)* Yes, please come in.

Zara *(Angry)* This is ridiculous.

Val *(Enters breathing heavily, looks at others)* Hello. *(Closes door)*

Zara *(Pointing)* The Bingo's next door.

Val God, I'm knackered. Why are these places always on the bloody top floor?

Thi *(Indicating)* Please, take this seat.

Val *(Sits, puffing)* Phew. *(Fans herself)* Thanks, love.

Debbie Are you sure you're in the right place?

Val Auditions for little girls in the new musical *Rosie*? Yes?

Thi Yes, that is correct.

Zara Eight to ten is what they want.

Val Well if we've only got one kid each, they'll all get a part.

Zara Not eight to ten performers - *ages* eight to ten.

Val Perfect, mine's nine. *(This shocks the OTHERS)*

Debbie *(Super impressed)* Wow.

Thi You have a little girl who is only nine? That is amazing.

Zara *(Scoffs)* Bloody IVF.

Val *(Annoyed at ZARA)* No, bloody granddaughter.
(OTHERS twig)

FX *Door knock*
(Silence. Pause)

Zara *(Annoyed - still)* Somebody lock the door.

Bev *(Calls from outside)* Hello. *(Pause)* Is this the place for auditions?

Others *(Loud, even ZARA has given up and joined the team)* Yes!

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Bev *(Enters worried at the raucous welcome)* Thank goodness I've found it. *(She closes door)* I've been walking up and down looking for a sign about the show when I should have been looking for the name of the production company. *(She exhales)*. I couldn't bear going home without an audition time for my little girl. Phew. *(OTHERS stare at her)* Hi, I'm Bev.

Debbie Debbie.

Thi Thi.

Val Val.
(ZARA says nothing. OTHERS look at her. BEV and ZARA look at one another)

Bev Well, well, well - if it isn't the lovely Zara. I'm sorry, I don't know your latest married name. What number husband are we up to now - four or is it five?

Zara Jealously always suited you.

Bev I see you're still wearing the same outfit - all fur coat and no knickers. Long time no see.

Zara Not long enough.

Bev Rumour has it your daughter takes after you, poor little thing.

Zara And your daughter refuses to take after you - smart little kid.

Val *(The elder stateswoman)* Righto, ladies. We bitch about each other but not our kids. All right? *(Uneasy pause/silence. Why do ZARA and BEV hate one another?)*

Thi I would like to ask a question, if I may.

Val Ask away, love.

Thi I have never had my daughter audition before. Can you ladies please tell me why you come here?

Zara Because our agent told us to. Fill in the audition application and get a time.

Thi No, I mean, why does your daughter audition?

Debbie Oh with my Kylie, it's because she loves to perform.

Val Same here. My granddaughter's called Nevaeh and she ... *(pronounced Never)*

Zara Nevaeh? What sort of a name is Nevaeh?

Val Her mother chose it.

Zara *(Throwaway)* Obviously on drugs.

Val *(That stings VAL because it's true. She recovers)* Nevaeh is Heaven spelt backwards.

Zara Backwards? What, describing the mother perhaps?

Val *(Ignores ZARA)* I take her to auditions because, just like me, I want her to have a career in showbiz.

Debbie *(Impressed)* Wow! You were in showbiz?

Val *(Shrugs)* Sort of.

Bev My daughter's Susan and I take her to every audition because she's so talented.

Zara *(Yells)* Lies!
(Pause. Sudden silence as OTHERS look at ZARA)

Thi *(Confused)* Lies?
(MUSIC BEGINS)

Zara You're all lying.

Debbie *(Angry)* No we're not.

Zara We do this because we failed as performers so we pretend we're back on stage via our little darlings.

Song No. 2 Living Vicariously

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Zara *Never any good, I was never any good
Couldn't sing, couldn't act, couldn't dance.
Never got a place, sure it must've been m'face
Couldn't win, couldn't take a single chance.
Never a surprise that I couldn't win a prize
With a mother like no other, didn't care
But now that I've a daughter, you can bet that I have taught her
To win and so her glory will be shared.*

*I've/We've made of my/our kid/s a substitute
I'm/We're living vicariously
When she/they strut/s her/their stuff it's never enough
I/We take her/their success oh, so seriously
She's/They're never alone we're so strong as a team
I/We push her/them to follow our dream
I've/We've made of my/our kid/s a substitute
I'm/We're living vicariously*

(OTHERS reprise Chorus as even THI now knows what drives the Stage Mothers. Song finishes and women relax although tension is always bubbling close to the surface. THI wanders upstage and finds pile of Audition Application Forms)

Bev Does anyone know what the producers are looking for? Do they want a certain look for the lead?

Debbie They never say. I reckon they know but never tell you.

Thi What are these? *(Reads)* Audition Application Form.

(The race is on. OTHERS head to THI and each takes a form and moves away to start filling in an application. THI is confused)

Bev At last. This is why we're here.

Debbie How do you spell Rosie?

Val *(Writing)* R o s i e. *(VAL looks at THI)* Get a form and fill it in.

(THI does just that. They're all scribbling)

Zara *(Scribbling)* Looks. *(Pause. That's all she says)*

Bev *(Stops scribbling)* What about looks?

Zara *(Scribbling)* That's what the producers are looking for.

Thi Excuse me. Are you saying that talent is not important?

Zara *(Scribbling)* If you've got the face and the body, you win. Simple as. Always was and always will be. Sex appeal wins. *(Finishes writing)*

Thi *(Alarmed)* Sex appeal? My daughter's only a child.

Val *(Stops scribbling)* Take it easy, girlie. *(Finishes writing. Can't remember her name)* Sorry, what's your name again?

Thi Thi.

Val Listen Thi, *(Indicating ZARA)* there speaks a bitter stage mother. Whenever her daughter doesn't get a part, her type grabs an excuse. It's never because the winner is a better singer, actor or mover, but always because of looks.

Zara Garbage.

Val *(Mimics a bitter ZARA)* "What do you expect? They picked the pretty one."

Zara *(Defiant)* It's true, damn it. And you know it is.

Debbie *(Finishes writing)* But there are smaller parts so if my daughter doesn't get the lead she might get one of the support roles.

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Zara That's brilliant, settle for second. Just makes it easier for Moondust to get the lead.

Others (*Shocked*) Moondust?

Zara (*Pause. Defensive*) What?

Debbie Did you call your daughter Moondust?

Zara Yes, Moondust Poppyseed.

Bev (*Finishes writing*) You're kidding.
(*Once each application form is complete, each woman puts it in her bag/pocket*)

Val And you scoffed at Heaven backwards.

Zara It's a great name for a star - which she is already.

Thi My daughter is not a star but I hope she will be one day. (*Produces a photo on her mobile phone*) I have a photo if you would like to see. (*DEB and BEV show an interest*)

Debbie (*Looks*) Oh she's beautiful.

Bev (*Looks*) Wow, talk about drop-dead gorgeous.
(*THI takes phone to VAL out of respect for the woman's seniority*)

Val (*Looks*) Don't show it to Moondust's Mum, she'll blow a gasket.

Zara She won't have the talent of my baby.
(*BEV, VAL and DEBBIE scoff*)

Bev You just said it was looks that gets the part.

Debbie Looks not talent, you said.

Val (*At ZARA*) And if the kid in that photo can perform, you and Moonseed Poppydust (*sic*) are deadest runners-up.

Zara (*Fumes and snarls in a soft but threatening voice*) Never.

Val (*Cheeky*) That's my granddaughter.

Thi (*Worried, puts away phone*) I didn't mean to upset anyone. I think it is important to be beautiful on the inside too.

Debbie I agree and my little girl has a lovely personality.

Bev Which sadly counts for nothing in show business.

Zara Exactly.

Debbie I tell my Kylie to always smile and that will make her beautiful.

Zara But keep you poor. (*THE OTHERS look at ZARA*) Aw, come on. Showbiz sucks. For every job there are a million wannabe stars and to survive, you need a really tough skin.

Debbie I know that and get my courage from Mrs Worthington.
(*Pause. Silence*)

Bev Sorry? Who?

Debbie Mrs Worthington. She's got a daughter who's not very pretty.

Zara (*Scoffs*) Not very pretty? She's overweight, sings like she's being strangled and squints.

Debbie (*Annoyed*) My Kylie doesn't squint ... (*Softer*) very much.

Thi I do not know this lady. What is Mrs Worthington's daughter called?

Zara (*Imitates casting director, calling*) Next!

Debbie Whenever I think Kylie should give up, I remember Mrs Worthington and on we go to the next audition. Mrs W is my guiding light, my inspiration and the patron saint of stage mothers everywhere.
(*MUSIC BEGINS*)

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Song No. 3 *All Hail Missus Worthington*

Debbie *When people said “you can’t”, she said “I can”
When people said “you shan’t”, she had a plan
When they scoffed and mocked with scorn
And her hopes were dashed, forlorn
When twas darkest fore the dawn then she took heart.
Took heart.*

Others *When producers said, “your girl she cannot act”*

Debbie *Oh dear*

Others *And directors said, “my dear I fear you’re sacked”*

Debbie *Bye, bye*

Others *Came the mother who refused, to succumb to bad reviews
She put her daughter in the queues to start.
To start*

Debbie *All hail to thee, Missus Worthington
Missus Worthington of thee we sing
It is so sad your shorter daughter
Is quite plain and plump and oughta
Stay at home and venture nowhere near the stage.
The stage. Ah*

Others *But you were brave and kind, persistent as well
Your name and fame we’ll forever tell*

Debbie *All hail to thee, Missus Worthington
Missus Worthington, all hail.*

*(The women disengage with DEBBIE checking on her unseen twins. BEV makes a stand)
(Takes out application) I’m going to hand in my audition application in person.*

Val *They’re not till tomorrow.*

Bev *Yes but when? I want a time for my daughter. (Starts to exit) I’ll go and ask.*

Zara *Didn’t your agent tell you? You don’t go to them, they come to us.*

Bev *(Stops at exit) What’s wrong with asking?*

Zara *The one thing a pushy mother must never be is pushy.*

Bev *(She hesitates, looks at OTHERS) Well I don’t care. (Exits RC)*

Zara *(Working her nails) She’ll get yelled at.
(THI moves to admire DEBBIE’S twins. VAL checks her phone. BEV screams offstage)*

Bev *(Enters, upset, closes door and freezes) They yelled at me.*

Zara *Told you.*

Bev *They swore at me. Can you believe that? They told me to ...*

Val *Yes all right. Time to toughen up, Princess. We’re the talent, the nobodies.*

Bev *Why do they treat us like dirt?*

Zara *Because they can.*

Bev *I can’t take the rudeness. If it wasn’t for the talent, they wouldn’t have a show.*

Val *It’s called power, darling. The employer outranks, outweighs and out-punches
the workers.*

Bev *I wasn’t cut out for this cut-throat game.*

Zara *Then leave.*

Bev *Oh you’d like that. Only way your daughter’ll win is if mine retires.*

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Zara In y'dreams.
Bev My Susan goes to ballet.
Zara My Moondust can dance your dopey daughter outa town.
(BEV is furious and goes at ZARA)
Bev Don't you call my daughter dopey.
(They grab each other's hands and fight thus keeping their hands free from slapping and scratching. They yell over the top of one another)
Zara Like her mother.
(THI screams. OTHERS are upset and move to break up the fight)
Bev You bitch.
Zara You snitch.
Val Hey! Knock it off!
(DEBBIE and THI each grab a contestant)
Thi Yes, please stop.
Debbie That's enough.
(BEV is escorted/dragged towards DEBBIE's pram)
Zara *(Calling)* You always were pathetic. Loser.
Bev *(Calling back but being restrained)* You always were a bitch. Poser.
Val *(Angry)* I said, 'Knock it off!'
(The pugilists settle, the OTHERS settle. Pause)
Thi I have to say this, ladies, I am in shock. This is my first time at the auditions and I did not expect to see the mothers fighting.
Debbie That was nothing.
Thi *(Stunned)* Nothing? But they were fighting.
Zara What do you expect? We're stage mothers. It's part of our DNA.
Val You've got a lot to learn, girly. *(She's forgotten THI's name again)* What's your name again?
Others *(Not quite shouting)* Thi.
Val *(Angry at their rudeness)* Yes, all right. You lot wait till you're my age.
Zara What, two hundred?
Val You need to understand, Thi. These women are super competitive. To them winning isn't everything. It's ...
Others *(Except THI)* ... the only thing.
Val Stage Mothers live for success. They do two things - spend time and money on their daughter, and sabotage the competition.
Thi *(Shocked)* Sabotage?
Val You better believe it.
Zara I don't need to sabotage anyone.
(OTHERS except THI scoff)
Bev There speaks the world's greatest liar.
Val Dirty tricks, mind games, you name it. We cheat, steal and yes, we fight.
Thi I have made a big mistake. *(Leaving)* I should not be here.
Val *(Calls)* Hang on. *(THI stops)* Do you want to put your daughter on the stage?
Thi *(Pause, thinks)* Yes. *(Stronger)* Yes, I really do.
Val Then go join the School of Hard Knocks.
Thi I don't understand.
Val Come here.
(THI moves to VAL and sits beside her)
FX *Babies crying*

Debbie The twins need a feed.
Zara *(Ordering DEBBIE out)* Not in here you don't, and certainly not in stereo.
Debbie *(Pushing pram out, BEV opens and holds door)* Come on boys, it's tucker time.
(FX fades. DEBBIE exits with pram and BEV follows and closes door)
Zara Some rabbits breed like humans.
Val *(To ZARA)* Hey lady, y'know something, you're a psychologist's dream. Shrinks adore you.
Zara *(Leaving)* Speaking of shrinks, I need a drink. *(Exits)*
(Lights could dim as VAL "educates" the newbie)
Val Listen, stage mothers can be strange ... *(She's forgotten THI'S name again)*
Thi Thi.
Val Gotcha, Thi. When you get to my age, it's easy to ... ah ...
Thi Forget?
Val That's it. So I use word association to help me remember names and for you it's cuppa.
Thi *(Has no idea)* Sorry?
Val Cuppa tea.
Thi *(Thinking but still doesn't get it)* Okay.
Val Now the first thing to know about stage mothers is we're insecure. We put on this big show of confidence but underneath we're dead-set scared.
Thi No. That I do not believe.
Val It's true. And we respond to this insecurity by pushing our kid into competitions, like here getting a role in this musical. If my kid gets the part, I feel better, but all this OTT behaviour stems from our insecurity.
Thi *(Puzzled)* OTT?
Val Over the top. Crazy, loud, argumentative behaviour. *(Pause)* You copy?
Thi *(Nods)* I think I copy. But I cannot believe that you Val are insecure.
Val Oh yes, insecure and guilty.
Thi Guilty?
Val *(Unhappy memories)* I made a dog's breakfast of raising my daughter and she went right off the rails - drugs, divorce, debt, dick of a partner - you name it. They took my granddaughter away from my daughter which is why I'm now her mum. And why I sure as hell won't make the same mistakes again.
Thi Mistakes?
Val When I was your age, I was too busy for my daughter. She ... lost her way.
Thi *(Afraid to ask)* Is your daughter okay, now?
Val *(Sigh)* Dunno. I haven't heard from her in quite a while.
Thi She will be happy if your granddaughter gets a part in the show.
Val *(Sad)* She will. *(Snaps out of her lethargy)* But you, *(Works through her routine)* Cuppa ... *(Brightens)* Thi, if you want to be a stage mother, you need to learn a few things and the first involves being able to separate the nice mothers from the nasties.
Thi *(Shocked)* No.
Val Oh yes. You have to be able to pick a bitch.
Thi *(Shocked)* Pick a bitch?
Val There are two types of stage mother - nice and pretend nice. The nice ones help you while the pretend nice ones pretend to help but instead stab you in the back. Mind you, they smile as they shaft you.

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(MUSIC BEGINS)

Thi Shaft you?
Val When they say “break a leg”, they hope your darling snaps a cruciate.
(OTHERS return with pram pushed to one side)
Thi *(Concerned)* I don’t understand.
Val It’s simple.

Song No. 4 *Is She a Bitch?*

Val *Just because mothers are nice to you
Ask, are they sincere?
Just because mums give advice to you
Check, should you have fear?
Just because cheap is the price for you
Wait, is it bent gear?
Some flatter with patter while hoping you’ll clatter and splatter on
stage on your rear.
She tells you your daughter is simply divine*

Others *(Not THI) But but ...*

Val *Is she a bitch?
She says your tiara will others outshine*

Others *(Not THI) But but ...*

Val *Is she a bitch?*

Others *(Not THI) Ahhh.*

Val *She sweet-talks and soft-soaps, your praises are sung
And claims you look gorgeous, eternally young
But lying is easy, some speak with forked-tongue*

Others *(Not THI) But but ...*

Val *Is she a bitch?*

(Dialogue during song. They joke amongst themselves. Slowly THI catches on)

Bev I say, I say, why did God create stage mothers?

Zara So used car salesmen could feel better. *(Laughter)*

Debbie How can you tell when a stage mother is lying?

Val Other stage mothers become interested. *(More laughter)*

Zara How many stage mother jokes are there?

Bev One. The rest are all true. *(More laughter)*

Debbie What’s the difference between a stage mother and a trampoline?

Zara You remove your stilettos before you jump on a trampoline. *(More laughter)*

Bev How do stage mothers normally greet one another?

Others *(Even THI) Hi. I’m better than you. (Biggest laugh)
(Singing resumes with THI well ensconced in the team)*

Company *She tells you your daughter is simply divine*

Thi *But but ...*

Company *Is she a bitch?*

Thi *She says your tiara will others outshine*

Thi *But but ...*

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Company *Is she a bitch?*
Ahhh

Thi *She sweet-talks and soft-soaps, your praises are sung*
And claims you look gorgeous, eternally young

Company *But lying is easy, some speak with forked-tongue*

Thi *But but ...*

Company *Is she, is she, flippin' heck well is she*
A bitch?

(They return to the places with THI now a part of the team)

Bev *(Fetching screed from her bag)* Speaking of nice stage mums, for your information, ladies, I've prepared a CV for my daughter.

Debbie A what?

Bev A CV. I think it stands for *Competitions Visited*.

Zara *(Scoffs)* Competitions visited? Why do you advertise your ignorance?

Debbie So what does it stand for?

Zara *(She doesn't know and tries to cover her ignorance)* It's ... ah, Latino.

Val You mean Latin, and she asked what it stands for.

Zara *(Doesn't know and hopes the others don't)* Something like, ... "Let the buyer beware".

Thi *(Pause)* It stands for *Curriculum Vitae* and roughly translated means "course of life". It's a list of someone's experiences and achievements.
(Pause as OTHERS are shocked /impressed with THIS intelligence)

Zara *(Under her breath)* Bitch. *(Louder boasting)* I knew that.

Thi Some call it a résumé.

Bev Well this is my little Sue's résumé. *(Indicating screed)* These are all the shows she's been in and here, these are all the competitions where she's won a prize.

Thi That's wonderful.

Zara How many firsts? How many lead roles? Come on, give us a figure.

Bev *(Ignores ZARA)* A lot. She started when she was only three.

Zara *(Scoffs)* Oh big deal. My Moondust started when she was only four.

Bev *(Delighted)* Ah, so Susie started *before* Moondust.

Zara *(Being a bitch)* Sorry, did you say three?

Bev Yes, she'd just turned three.

Zara *(Pretend ignorance)* Oh three *years*. No Moondust started when she four *months*.

Bev *(Under her breath)* Bitch.

Debbie I started Kylie when she was only zero.

Others Zero?

Debbie Yeah, I was pregnant and in an ad. They say my bub or bump *(Debbie's only gag)* behaved beautifully. *(OTHERS amused except ZARA who is gazumped)* You can see it on YouTube.

Zara *(Under her breath)* Bitch.
(Pause. The tension about audition times is rising. They're talking now to calm their nerves)

Val Look, being the senior mother here ...

Zara You mean old. *(OTHERS unhappy with ZARA)*

Thi In my culture, the elderly are given a very high status. They are highly respected. *(THI bows to VAL who smiles)*

Bev You were saying Val.

Val I reckon we can learn from losing.

Zara *(Scoffs)* Ha.
Val Losing tests your resolve, it puts steel in your spine. When you lose, you find out just how serious you are about getting better.
Zara Yes but you're still a loser.
Val Maybe we put too much pressure on kids today; pressure to compete and to win, and if they don't win, they suffer.
Zara And so they should; no pain, no gain.
Bev Give it a rest, Zara.
Val This win-everything approach, can be dangerous. The kid loses and feels they're a failure. They feel they've let us down, and maybe that damages them.
(Pause. VAL is speaking wisely)
Thi I never want to harm my daughter.
Debbie Me too.
Bev And me.
(They look at ZARA. She stares back)
Zara *(Defiant)* Toughen up, Princess.
(Change of topic. VAL has made her point and ZARA will never change)
Bev I'm feeling confident about this audition. This time I reckon my Sue will get the lead.
Zara No chance.
Thi After so many auditions, Bev, I think you deserve it. *(THEY stare at her. She worries)*
What? Oh please do not think that I am a *pretend-nice* Stage Mother?
Debbie I don't.
Val I *know* you're not.
Zara Well pretend or not makes no difference, Honey, because my daughter's a shoe-in.
Bev *(Defiant)* No she's not.
Zara Oh yes she is.
Bev Oh no she's not ... *(Blurts out her secret)* because I've bribed the director.
(Big shock to OTHERS although ZARA seems unusually calm)
Debbie You what?
Thi Is that allowed? Is that legal?
Val *(Shaking her head)* Silly, silly girl.
Bev *(Losing it)* I don't care. I'm sick of coming second. I'm always second. *(She's desperate)* And I'm desperate.
Zara And dumb.
Bev *(Now angry)* You're jealous. You're angry because I thought of it before you.
Zara You've done y'dough, kiddo.
Debbie *(Thinks she understands)* Oh no! Zara's paid a bigger bribe.
Bev What!? *(At ZARA)* You evil bitch. You can't even let me win at cheating.
Zara Not true, I haven't paid a cent.
Bev Ha! Then my baby *will* win.
Zara *(Super calm)* No, because you used bribery whereas I used blackmail.
Others Blackmail!
Zara *(Smug)* There's more than one way to screw a director.
Debbie I don't believe you.
Bev *(Shattered)* I do.

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Zara He's a man of power and sure, he wants cash. But since the #MeToo movement, he's desperate to keep his good reputation. He gives Moondust the part or I start singing.

Thi You're a *pretend-nice* bitch.

Bev (*Lets it all out*) Of course, you've slept with him; you've slept with everyone, (*Angry*) including my first boy friend.

Zara All's fair in love and showbiz, ladies. (*At BEV*) Suffer.

Debbie What have you got on the director?

Zara Oh please; it's because I keep quiet that Moondust will get the lead role.

Val Not quite.

Zara (*At BEV*) Nice stage mothers come second - again. (*Changes attitude and speaks to VAL*) What did you say?

Val (*Pedantic*) Not quite.

Zara (*Tinge of concern*) Meaning?

Val Blackmail may beat bribery but both are beaten by bonking.

Others (*Stunned*) What?

Bev (*Doesn't believe VAL*) Bonking? You? No way.

Thi Please, what is bonking?

Debbie You shagged the director? You?

Zara I didn't know he was blind.

Val Hard to believe an old sheila can still ... put it about.

Thi Put what about? Please, what is shagged?

Zara (*Disgusted*) That is gross.

Val Just call me Val Viagra.

Debbie (*Emotional and sincere*) Oh I'm so happy. (*OTHERS stare at DEBBIE*) There's hope for all us big girls.

Bev Val, what have you done?

Val Now that would be telling. Suffice to say I'm the director's alibi for anything the lovely Zara cares to claim, (*Speaks at her with fake kindness*) darling. (*Pause. ZARA breathes heavily. VAL spits sarcasm, mimics ZARA*) Suffer. (*Pause as OTHERS take in what has just been revealed. BEV breaks the impasse and is angry*)

Bev That's it, that's the last straw. After a lifetime of losing I finally get to win by cheating only to be stiched up by the director and not one but *two* stage mothers. So much for honour among thieves. Well thank you very much, ladies - (*Bitter*) thanks for nothing.

Val Suck it up, Princess.

Thi What is the collective noun for bitches?
(*MUSIC BEGINS*)

Zara A vicarious of bitches.

Debbie A Worthington of bitches.

Bev A gazump of bitches.

Val A stage mother of all bitches.

Song No. 5 Second Prize?

Bev *Second prize is first prize for losers*

Others *Losers*

Bev *Runner-up is worse than coming last*

Others *Coming last*
Bev *You're so near and yet so far*
Someone else becomes a star
You're so close yet no cigar - you're outcast.
Others *Outcast*
Bev *Podium but not the gold medallion*
Others *Medallion*
Bev *Will I alwaysd see my kid typrcast?*
Others *Yes ma'am!*
Bev *Second prize is first prize for losers*
Others *Losers*
Bev *Runner-up is definitely the worst.*

You wait for the results to be announced
You do not want an honourable mention
The placegetters are all that now remain
You feel and touch that awful tension
Here it comes, the winner's name
Is it glory, is it shame?
Have you just been sold a pup?
Yes you have, you're runner-up

(QUINTET repeats the chorus. At end of song, all five are crying and muttering ad lib. "I'm a loser", "I came last", "I came second" etc)

(Pause as the women contemplate the news. BEV, ZARA and then VAL have all dropped bombshells. Why bother to stay, the result is already known)

Debbie *(At pram) After all that's happened, the bribery, the blackmail and ...*
Val *The bonking.*
Debbie *Yes, that, especially that, I'm going to leave.*
Thi *No, Debbie, please stay.*
Debbie *I haven't got the money to bribe, the balls to blackmail or the body to seduce.*
Bev *You're forgetting one thing, Debbie, (Pause. OTHERS look at her) your daughter. It's not about us but about our girls.*
Debbie *(Thinks) Really? (OTHERS nod) Well, maybe.*
Bev *If you quit, the only real loser is your Kylie.*
Debbie *(More thinking) Perhaps. (Decides to stay) Okay, I'll stay.*
Thi *Good for you, Debbie.*
Bev *Besides, we could all have been lying. (OTHERS react) Although I wasn't.*
Zara *Why would I lie? I don't need to lie.*
Val *I could be lying. (OTHERS stare at her) But even if I am, it was worth it to see the look on the face of (Indicating ZARA) Madam Plastic Parts.*
Zara *(Returns fire) Ha. Word is Grannie, you blew it with your daughter and here you are, thirty years later, still making the same old mistakes.*
(Pause. VAL rises and it looks like she's about to go to ZARA and get physical)
Bev *Don't, Val, she's not worth it. (Pause. Tension strong) Trust me I know.*
(VAL resumes her seat. ZARA smirks)

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- Thi** I have to say, ladies, this is not what I expected at the auditions. There is so much rudeness and anger. Are you all *pretend-nice* stage mothers?
- Val** I did warn you, Cuppa.
- Debbie** Cuppa?
- Val** (*At DEBBIE*) Tea. Some stage mothers crawl over broken glass to win. Common sense, principles and morality get dumped in favour of their daughter winning. We'll do anything.
- Thi** But not you? Please, not you.
- Val** (*Being honest. Shrugs*) Sorry Kiddo, even me.
- Thi** (*Shaking head*) I really have made a big mistake. I cannot let my daughter audition. If your daughters are like you, it will be terrible for my child.
- Zara** Then you know what you can do.
- Thi** (*Nodding*) Yes, I think so.
- Zara** Get lost.
- Bev** No.
- Zara** We don't want your type anyway.
(*Wow. That stops the traffic. Pause*)
- Thi** (*Genuine confusion*) My type? What is my type?
- Bev** Shut up, Zara.
- Debbie** Yeah, shut up, Zara.
- Zara** I'm doing her a favour.
- Val** A favour?
- Zara** I heard they're not looking for foreigners.
- Bev** Another lie.
- Thi** Foreigners? Who is a foreigner?
- Val** (*At ZARA*) You're confused lady. First it's beauty, then it's talent and now it's race. You wanna make up your mind, sister.
- Thi** Is there a rule about ethnicity? Do they only offer parts to a certain skin colour?
- Others** (*Not ZARA*) No.
- Bev** Ignore her, Thi. She's worried because your daughter's a real threat to Moonbeam.
- Zara** Moondust.
- Debbie** Bulldust.
- Zara** Moondust Poppysseed.
- Bev** She just wants you to quit.
- Thi** (*Pause. THI decides to stay*) No, I won't be pushed around. I will stay.
- Debbie** Yeah, stand up to the bully and watch her back off. I did and I speak from personal experience.
- Zara** When did you ever stand up to anyone?
- Debbie** (*Defiant*) I've been practising.
- Zara** Hasn't exactly worked, has it? Different kids, different fathers. You wouldn't know how to say no. I bet you're living with another loser right now. Well?
(*DEBBIE is about to cry. ZARA is right*)
- Bev** Ignore the bitch, Debbie.
- Val** (*To ZARA*) So, Ms High-Maintenance, in this day and age, what's with the racist crap?
- Zara** I'm trying to help. This new musical, *Rosie*, is all about modern-day society.
- Bev** Which is full of people from different backgrounds.

Zara Yes, but ...
Debbie Yes but what? We all speak English.
Zara Not as a first language. You can tell when kids have parents who speak another language at home.
Val *(Sarcastic)* Oh, now you're a linguistics expert.
Zara Producers and directors have a certain image, a certain type they want and anyone who doesn't fit that image is wasting their time.
Thi How does my daughter not fit this image?
Bev Yeah, you've never even met her.
Zara I'm not the casting director. I'm just telling you how they work.
Thi May I ask where Moondust Poppysed was born?
Zara Not that it's any of your business but here of course.
Thi So was my daughter.
Zara Yeah but I was born here too.
Thi So was I.
Val *(At ZARA)* Not looking good, lady. Quit now and you'll avoid the tag of "*complete moron*".
Zara In this country, my family goes back five generations.
Bev Which means your ancestors were migrants.
Debbie Your family is the same as Thi's.
Zara *(Stumped at first)* Yes but my family came from the old country.
Val What, Disneyland?
Zara The Old Dart, the British Isles, England. We speak English here and my great-great-grandparents migrated from England.
Bev Congratulations.
Zara They came from Glasgow and I'm proud of my English ancestors.
Val And you reckon they're English?
Zara That's what I said.
Val Well don't try telling a Glaswegian they're English or you'll finish up looking like a deep-fried Mars Bar.
Thi I sometimes have people tell me to go back where I came from and I ask, "Do you mean Footscray"? *(Inset name of local suburb)*
Bev Good answer, Thi.
Thi I understand being different but there are some things I cannot change, no matter what I say or do.
(MUSIC BEGINS)

Song No. 6 *Who I Am*

Thi *Blame me for being dishonest
Blame me for telling a lie
Call me a fool,
Point out I'm cruel
Blame me for failing to try.
Blame me being impatient
Not caring or giving a damn
Point out my sin but leave out my skin
Don't blame me for who I am.*

Thi

*Blame me for being unhelpful
Blame me for choosing to hate
Blame me for gossip and rumours untrue
Rudeness and crudeness and bad manners too
Blame me for losing my temper
For cheating and being a sham
Mock my pursuits but never my roots
Don't blame me for who I am.*

*See it every day and see it every way
The P word
See it any time never reason never rhyme
The spite.
Feel it in a flash or feel it in a clash
The dislike
Feel it like a scar, in your face or from afar
The fight.*

*Blame me for being unfaithful
Blame me for failing to care
Highlight my fibs, my corny ad-libs
When I've been selfish and never would share.
Blame me for stealing and cheating
Promoting a sting and a scam
Sneer at my jokes but never my folks
Don't blame me for who I am.*

(Song ends and chatter is limited. They check their phone for texts. They know more about each other and about their daughters. It's almost time to get that important audition time)

Bev

You know, I don't care what time my Susie gets for her audition.

Debbie

Same here.

Zara

Good, you can all go first.

Thi

Why should anyone go first? Is that an advantage?

Zara

There's a rule - first to audition, first to be cut.

Bev

You just made that up.

Thi

(Thinks it's a physical cut) They cut you? Literally?

Debbie

(Explains to THI) No, it means they reject you.

Zara

Moondust will be the last or second last person the director sees, and the one they remember. Her brilliant audition will destroy those who auditioned early.

Val

When you audition means nothing.

Zara

(Sarcastic) Oh, Methuselah speaks.

Val

First, last or inbetween, makes no difference. They know what they want and when that someone appears, you're picked or given a callback.

Thi

What's a callback?

Val

They reckon you're good for the part so call you back for a second audition.

Zara

Sometimes a third.

- Bev** But once the auditions start, we're helpless, it's out of our hands. All that work, all that blood, sweat and tears you spilt for your daughter comes down to one lousy audition. (*Mock prayer*) Oh theatre gods, shine your light on me.
- Thi** (*In shock*) Did you say blood, sweat and tears?
- Bev** You betcha.
- Thi** *Real* blood, sweat and tears?
- Bev** Of course. For any serious stage mother that's an absolute minimum.
- Zara** You're not a stage mother 'til you've given your life for your darling.
- Thi** (*Still in shock*) Your life?
- Debbie** I worry about my twins. If the authorities ever find out how much time and money I spend on my Kylie, they may take away the boys.
- Thi** (*Distressed*) But that's terrible.
- Debbie** True but I'd let them. Kylie's that important.
- Thi** (*Distressed*) No, you can't, that's wrong.
- Bev** No, that's life, Thi, total commitment. You surrender your social life, family life, even your career in the service of your daughter's success.
- Thi** That cannot be true. (*OTHERS amused at THI's ignorance*)
- Others** (*Pantomime like - not THI*) Oh yes it is.
- Bev** Listen lady, I drive my Sue to ballet class, tap class, singing lessons, piano lessons, swimming, yoga, Pilates, hair appointments, dressmaker, acupuncturist, dermatologist, manicurist, nutritionist, optometrist, orthodontist, publicist, and psychologist.
- Zara** And she's a *lazy* stage mother.
- Thi** (*In shock*) You take your ten year old daughter to a psychologist?
- Bev** Yeah, she sits in the waiting-room while the shrink sorts me out.
- Thi** (*Can't believe it*) I don't know what to say.
- Val** You might have to lift your game, Cuppa.
- Zara** That's nothing.
- Others** Nothing!?
- Zara** I've so dedicated my life to Moondust, I forgot I had a son.
- Thi** (*Staggered*) That cannot be true.
- Zara** You have to be a stage mother to appreciate the sacrifice.
- Debbie** That's true.
- Thi** Did you really forget you had a son?
- Zara** (*She's serious*) Not completely; I mean I vaguely remember the conception.
- Val** So it wasn't immaculate?
- Zara** And the birth kinda rings a bell but once I got started on Moondust's stage career, other things faded from my mind.
- Thi** Please don't tell me you've forgotten your husband.
- Zara** Who?
- Thi** Your husband. (*Trying to help*) I'm sorry, I don't know his name?
- Zara** (*She can't remember*) Neither do I.
- Bev** Think of the number six.
- Zara** (*Looks in bag*) I've got it written down here somewhere. (*Gives up*)
- Debbie** I can remember all my boyfriends. (*OTHERS stop and stare*) It's true.
- Bev** Wow, with your track record, Debbie, that's some achievement.
- Debbie** I've got so many notches on my bed posts, they look like Swiss cheese. (*Proud*) And with my latest boyfriend, we're coming up to our first anniversary.

Zara Week or fortnight?
Val I moved my granddaughter from the country to be closer to town. I sold everything and moved here so my Nevaeh can be a star.
Thi *(It's an eye-opener)* This is amazing. You have all dedicated your whole life to helping your daughter.
Bev It's a no-brainer.
Debbie The benefits outweigh the costs.
Val It's what we do.
Zara Wouldn't have it any other way.
(Pause as they stare at THI affirming their role in life)
Thi But I wonder, would you do all that if, instead of a daughter, you had a son?
(Huge shock, OTHERS collapse, sit, gasp, fall back, etc)
Others A son!
(MUSIC BEGINS)
Debbie *(Distraught)* You mean Kylie would be Kevin?
Val *(Discombobulated)* What is "hell" backwards?
Zara *(Determined)* I'd make him have the operation.
Bev *(Despairs)* I couldn't handle a boy called Sue.

Song No. 7 Thank God I Had a Daughter

Quintet *Pregnant, I'm pregnant
I wonder what the hell it's gunna be
Pregnant, I'm pregnant
I'm hopin' and a-prayin' it's a she
I know a baby's meant to bring us joy
But how I dread that it'll be a boy.
Thank God I had a daughter, thank God I had a girl
Imagine a son, the mess and the gun
The sweat and the swearing, the X-Box all blaring
Thank God I had a female, a silly, frilly, lily, a pearl
Thank God I had a daughter, thank God I had a girl.*
(The women take it in turns to shout a comment at their imaginary sons who are out beyond the audience. The mothers are unhappy. THI is observing but joins in on the final speech)
Zara *(Spoken)* Will you please put your football gear in the laundry.
Bev *(Holding up imaginary undies)* You do know you're allowed to use toilet paper.
Val What time exactly did the bomb explode in your bedroom?
Debbie Could you please turn down the music, one or preferably two decibels?
Zara Oh come on, how hard is it to pick up your own towel?
Bev You do know you've been in your bedroom now for six months.
Val No, God did not create pizza and chips.
Debbie I don't know. Ask your father.
Quintet You are allowed to wash.

(Song is repeated with THI now fully on board with understanding the commitment of a stage mother having a daughter)

(They collapse after the number because it's a full-on performance and because they have avoided the dreaded experience of not having a daughter. They puff and pant and relax)

Stage Mothers 23

FX *Door knocking*
(The women are instantly alive. It's another stage mother with what might be a fanatastic star child performer. They've all - even THI - become desperate to win now that audition time draws ever closer)

Zara *(Hushed tones)* Shut up. Don't make a sound.

Thi Who is it?

Others Shhhh.

Zara *(Whispers)* It's the enemy.

Thi *(THI is confused, whispers)* Who is the enemy?

Zara *(Whispers)* Another mother.

Bev *(Whispers)* Lock the door.

Val *(Whispers)* Block the door.

Debbie *(Dragging pram upstage. Whispers)* I'll barricade us in.

Thi *(Whispers)* If it will help, I've studied martial arts.
(That momentarily startles the OTHERS who new realise that THI is one of them)

Zara *(Heading to door)* Come on.
(They move to upstage door joining DEBBIE and press against it joining forces to protect their patch. They lean in but keep quiet)

Bev *(Whispers)* I can't hear anything.

Zara Shhhh.

Val *(Pause. Whispers)* If we keep quiet and block the door, they'll go away.

Debbie *(Whispers)* I agree, let's all keep quiet.

FX *Babies start crying*
(DEBBIE shattered. OTHERS despair and mime frustration. The FX is one baby at first which becomes two. The plan to keep quiet collapses as DEBBIE struggles to quieten her brood - without success. Facing front EVERYONE fusses around the pram making signs or faces or whatever to try and distract the babies and stop their crying. Just as this builds to a climax another knocking sound is heard)

FX *Door knocking*

Zara *(First to be distracted. Still whispering)* Stop, stop. *(The fussing stops and crying baby sounds fade)* What was that?

Bev *(Still whispering)* What was what?

Zara *(Still whispering)* I heard knocking.

Thi *(Still whispering)* So did I.

Bev *(Indicating upstage door)* Yes, it's that door.

Val *(Still whispering)* It's another mother.

Debbie *(Pleased)* Oh look, my boys are asleep.

Zara *(No longer whispering)* If it's not this door ...

Others What?

Bev *(Worried)* Then it must be ... *(She indicates office door)*
(OTHERS turn and face office door)

FX *Door knocking*
(Pause. The penny drops)

Zara The producer's office.

Bev With the audition times.
(Another pause before the stampede begins - well choreographed of course. Each mother heads to the producer's office to get a booking for their little angel. DEBBIE abandons the pram. There's a bit of argy-bargy as they struggle to open the door. DEBBIE is at the back of the pack)
(MUSIC BEGINS)

Stage Mothers 24

Song No. 8 *Thank God I Had a Daughter* (Instrumental)

(This dialogue is spoken over the top of one another over the music)

Zara

I was first.

Bev

Like hell you were.

Val

Age before beauty.

Thi

Beginners go first.

Debbie

(Pretend panic as she plays a trick) Oh no, my babies.

(The OTHERS are distracted by DEBBIE's fake distress. They stop struggling allowing DEBBIE to push/sneak through, open the door and exit)

Debbie

(Smug) Thank you.

(OTHERS realise they've been tricked and follow with shoving and abuse to match. Again dialogue spoken over top of one another and use of ad lib is possible)

Zara

You bitch.

Bev

Stop pushing.

Val

Move, Cuppa.

Thi

Move yourself.

(They all exit. Lights start to fade. Music about to end as FX overlaps it)

FX

Babies crying

(Crossfade end of music with FX of babies. FX of babies crying rises in volume and then softly fades as lights fade. Now crossfade FX of crying with FX of cooing, gurgling)

FX

Babies cooing, being happy

Crossfade cooing baby sounds with house lights coming up)

INTERVAL

(During interval, the women change into children's costumes and become their daughter/granddaughter. The pram is removed. Perhaps a banner of the musical Rosie could be displayed upstage. The performers now wear tap shoes. They are here to audition)

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ACT TWO

(MUSIC BEGINS and house lights slowly fade during the Entr'acte and finishes in darkness)

Song No. 9 Entracte (Instrumental)

(MUSIC ENDS. Pause and then two two things happen simultaneously. Lights come up and MUSIC BEGINS)

Song No. 10 Pushy Stage Mother

(“GIRLS” come in a la chorus line/s. The performers are the daughters (granddaughter) of the five women in Act One. Moondust, Kylie Thao, Nevaeh and Sue are the auditionees. They probably wear outrageous wigs, bows, ribbons, shorts or short skirts, sparkling tops, tap shoes, short socks and liberal lashings of make-up. The “girls” bounce in and sing)

Company *I've got a pushy stage mother
Oh happy, snappy, tappy that's me
She's not a bit like any other
Certifiable is she
She helps make me a winner and to scoop that major prize
It's thanks to darling mater that my star will rise
Oh I've got a pushy stage mother
Oh happy, snappy, tappy that's me.*

Moondust *Where would I be without mother?
Where would I be without ma?
Flat on my face, such a disgrace
Right off the pace to be a star.*

Susan *Where would I be without Mummy?
Where would I be without her?*

Kylie *Under the cosh, all out of dosh
Needing a wash, much more a spur.*

Thao *Where would I be without Madre?
Stuck behind some amateur*

Neveah *Where would I be without my old lady
Where would I be without her?*

Company *Without her?*

(Chorus is repeated with dance. The GIRLS spread out, fuss and get ready to audition)

Kylie Well I'm ready for my audition. I've been practicing forever.
Susan Me too. I am so ready it's not funny.
Thao I've only just started practicing. Does that mean I might fail the audition?
Nevaeh Probably.
Moondust Definitely. If you fail to prepare, you prepare to fail. You should go home now.
Thao *(Saddened, starts to leave)* Oh, really?
Moondust Yes really. On y'bike, Sister.
Susan *(Protesting)* No. *(THAO stops)* Don't listen to her. You stay.

Kylie Yes, you stay. I'm Kylie. What's your name?
Thao Thao.
Nevaeh Pardon?
Moondust Cow?
Thao No, Thao.
Moondust What sort of name is that?
Sue A nice one. I'm Sue and I think you should stay, Thao.
Thao *(Changes her mind)* Okay, thank you, I'll stay, but I am a little nervous.
Nevaeh Oh nerves are good, we're all nervous, and I'm Nevaeh.
Moondust Nevaeh? What sort of a name is that?
Nevaeh It's Heaven backwards.
Moondust *(Under breath)* Backwards is right. *(Louder)* And I'm not nervous.
Susan I bet you are even if only a little bit.
Moondust I'm not allowed to be nervous. Anyway, fear is for losers and I'm going to get the main part in this new show - again.
Thao Really? How do you know that?
Susan I bet she knows the director.
Moondust As a matter of fact I do. But I succeed because of networking. *(OTHERS puzzled)*
Thao What's networking?
Moondust *(Doesn't know)* Um, it's where you get a net and make it work.
Kylie What, like fishing?
Moondust I go to all the right cocktail parties and work the room. *(OTHERS shocked)*
Thao What's a cocktail party?
Nevaeh How old are you?
Kylie I had a party last week. *(Thinks)* I think it was last week.
Susan I'm the right age for the main part of Rosie. My mum says I'm perfect for the role and I've been rehearsing all the right songs.
Moondust Big deal.
Kylie *(To MOONDUST)* I don't know your name.
Moondust You should - I'm a star.
Susan *(Under her breath)* Mon-star.
Kylie What is it?
Moondust If you must know, it's Moondust.
Others Moondust!
Moondust Moondust Poppyseed, the name of the star of this new show.
Nevaeh Don't be so sure. I've been rehearsing and will show off my best me.
Thao I haven't had any experience on stage. Do you think that will be a problem?
Moondust Massive. If I were you I'd leave now.
Sue But not if you're really talented. Experience is important and if the director sees your po-ten-shall *(sic)*, you'll be considered.
Nevaeh What's your po-ten-shawl?
Moondust It comes after your po-nine-shawl. *(No-one disagrees, they're all ignorant)*
Kylie I've had a lot of experience watching shows. *(OTHERS look at her)*
Nevaeh *Watching* shows?
Kylie Yes, I'm very good at that.
Sue But what about performing shows? What have you done?
Kylie Not a lot. I've only ever had one part, but I didn't forget a single word.
Moondust One part? Is that all?

Kylie My mum says Missus Worthington's daughter is just like me.
(MUSIC BEGINS)

Moondust Then she must be horrible.

Song No. 11 *I'm the Understudy to the Scarecrow*

Kylie *It isn't what you'd call a major role
I didn't have a line to speak, a note to sing, a move to make
And as I said it isn't what you'd call a major role.
I thought that all my Christmases had come at once
When in fact I simply crowned myself the dunce.*

*I was the understudy to the scarecrow
In the back row by the wings
With a head of hay, not a word to say
Any wonder my phone never rings
I won't ever be an actor
Only here 'cos me mother pulled some strings
I was the understudy to the scarecrow
In the back row by the wings*

*I never can remember my lines
I struggle just to sing in key
I may look sweet but with two left feet
I'm the perfect nobody.
I was the understudy to the scarecrow
In the back row by the wings*

(During the dance break, KYLIE dresses/is dressed as a scarecrow and comes alive for a wee dance. OTHERS reprise the chorus then all settle and attend to their clothes, shoes, etc.)

Thao I would like to make the announcement. My mother has made a great sacrifice for me to be here today.

Sue So's mine.

Kylie Me too.

Moondust Nobody makes a bigger sacrifice than my mother - nobody.

Thao *(Taken aback)* Oh, well I am very pleased for your mothers.

Nevaeh I get a lot of help from my grandmother.
(OTHERS stop and look at NEVAEH)

Sue Did you say grandmother?

Nevaeh To me, she's a star.

Kylie My mother doesn't get any help from her mother. She doesn't get any help at all.

Thao I think that's wonderful, the whole family helping.

Hevaeh My gran used to be in showbiz and now she's helping me do the same. She's taught me everything I know.

Moondust Bully for her.

Nervaeh Even the dirty tricks.
(OTHERS REACT)

Sue *(Can't believe it)* She doesn't help you with them?

Thao Please, what are dirty tricks?
Moondust They're how I star at auditions, they're my ticket to success.
Thao I don't understand.
Moondust And believe you me, the best performers play the best dirty tricks.
Thao But what are they?
Nevaeh I'll tell you, Thao. My gran texted a girl and told her the auditions were off.
Thao *(Confused)* And that's a dirty trick?
Sue It's a beauty.
Thao But that's being kind and helpful. *(OTHERS groan)*
Nevaeh Not when the auditions *weren't* off. The other girl missed out.
Thao *(Shocked)* You mean your gran lied?
Nevaeh In a word, yes.
Thao Deliberately?
Nevaeh In two words, oh yes.
Thao But that's terrible.
Moondust No, that's a dirty trick. That's how you win.
Thao *(About to cry)* I don't want to be here.
Sue I once put drawing pins in another girl's shoes.
Thao I will never do anything like that. I will never perform a dirty trick.
Sue Give it time.
Moondust You'll change.
Kylie I once accidentally spilt honey in me knickers.
Nevaeh How is that a dirty trick?
Kylie It's not but I smelt very nice.
Moondust I once started a rumour about a girl who wet herself on stage.
Sue *(Furious, pointing)* Ahhhh, so it *was* you!
Moondust Of course it was me and it worked. You couldn't handle the sniggering.
Sue *(Anger brewing)* But it wasn't true.
Moondust Dirty tricks aren't true. That's what makes them dirty.
Sue But I didn't wet myself on stage.
Moondust Yes you did.
Sue *(Almost breaking down)* I wet myself in the wings.
Moondust *(Laughing, not looking at SUE but mocking her)* In the wings.
(SUE is enraged and moves to fight MOONDUST who turns at the last moment and, like their mothers, they grab each other's hands and fight thus keeping their hands free from slapping and scratching. They yell over the top of one another)
Sue You bitch.
Moondust You snitch.
(THAO screams. OTHERS are upset and move to break up the fight)
Nevaeh Hey! Stop fighting!
(KYLIE and THAO each grab a contestant)
Thao Yes, please stop.
Kylie That's enough.
(SUE is escorted/dragged away from MOONDUST)
Moondust *(Calling)* You always were pathetic. Loser.
Sue *(Calling back but being restrained)* You always were a runner-up. Poser.
Nevaeh *(Angry)* I said, 'Stop fighting!'
(The pugilists settle, the OTHERS settle. Pause)

- Thao** I have to say this, girls, I am in shock. This is my first time at the auditions and I did not expect to see competitors fighting.
- Moondust** This is normal.
- Thao** *(Stunned)* Girls fighting is normal?
- Kylie** Yes and I reckon girls are better fighters than boys.
- Thao** *(Stunned)* No.
- Moondust** What do you expect? Our mothers are stage mothers.
- Nevaeh** *(To THAO)* You'd better learn the rules, sister. *(She's forgotten THAO'S name)* What's your name again?
- Others** *(Not quite shouting)* Thao.
- Nevaeh** You need to understand, Thao. We girls are super competitive. To us winning isn't everything. It's ...
- Others** *(Except THAO)* ... the only thing.
- Nevaeh** Dirty tricks, mind games, you name it. We cheat, steal and yes, we fight.
- Thao** I have made a big mistake. *(Leaving)* I should not be here.
- Nevaeh** *(Calls)* No, wait. *(THAO stops)* Do you really want to perform on stage?
- Thao** *(Pause, thinks)* Yes. *(Stronger)* Yes, I really do.
- Nevaeh** Then before you audition you have to go to the School of Hard Knocks.
- Thao** I don't understand.
- Nevaeh** Come here.
(THAO moves to NEVAEH and sits beside her)
- Kylie** *(Exiting upstage, needs the Ladies)* I need to put some powder up my nose.
- Sue** *(Joining KYLIE)* I think you mean powder on your nose?
(They exit and lights fade to concentrate on NEVAEH and THAO)
- Nevaeh** When you go to lots of auditions, you learn lots of things.
- Thao** Like dirty tricks?
- Nevaeh** Exactly. And ... *(Stops and looks at MOONDUST)* Care to join us, Miss Stickybeak?
- Moondust** *(Exiting)* I'd rather paint my nails with vomit. *(She exits)*
- Nevarh** See, that's what I mean. Some girls are nice and some are ...
- Thao** Nasty?
- Nevaeh** Exactly.
- Thao** But you're not like that.
- Nevaeh** *(Hesitates)* Oooo, sometimes.
- Thao** *(Doesn't believe her)* No, I don't believe you. You couldn't be nasty when you come from such a wonderful family.
- Nevaeh** Errr, not exactly wonderful.
- Thao** But your gran, she is there helping your mother.
- Nevaeh** *(Shaking head)* No. Listen. My gran is now my mother.
- Thao** *(Shocked)* Oh, I am so sorry. I did not know your mother had passed away.
- Nevaeh** She hasn't, at least I don't think so. *(Pause, decides to tell all)* When I was little, my mum did some bad things and went away so now I live with my gran.
- Thao** *(Afraid to ask)* And is your mother okay, now?
- Nevaeh** *(Sigh)* Not sure. I haven't seen her for a very long time.
- Thao** She'll be happy if you get a part in the show.
- Nevaeh** She will. She always rings on my birthday and sends a present at Christmas.
- Thao** That's nice.
- Nevaeh** *(Snaps out of her lethargy)* But you, ... *(Can't remember her name)*
- Thao** Thao.

- Nevaeh** But you, Thao, if you want to succeed at this audition and be a star on the stage, you need to learn things and the first is about make-up. My gran says, “Never stint”.
- Thao** What is skint?
- Nevaeh** Not skint, stint. It means slap it on. Too much make-up is never enough.
- Thao** *(Hand to face)* Oh.
- Nevaeh** Then next there’s your smile.
- Thao** *(Relieved about this one)* Well that’s not difficult. I can smile. Look. *(She smiles)*
- Nevaeh** No, no, I’m talking about a particular smile. This one needs a roomful of teeth and eyes that double as a lighthouse.
- Thao** *(Less sure)* I could probably do that.
- Nevaeh** Non-stop for at least three minutes.
- Thao** *(That sounds tricky)* Oh.
- Nevaeh** As you dance and travel and bow and wave and always make eye contact with your audience, *(Pedantic)* you must use your face. *(Gives huge fake smile)*
- Thao** I see.
- Nevaeh** You have to be able to smile when sad, and grin when a grump.
- Thao** *(Shocked)* Smile when sad?
- (MUSIC BEGINS)*
- Nevaeh** You must pretend you’re happy even when you’re not. But ... *(Has forgotten her name - again)*
- Thao** Thao.
- Nevaeh** Thao, you’ll never perform ‘til you master your fantastic plastic smile. *(The OTHERS drift in once the song begins and join in singing later)*

Song No. 12 Plastic Smile

- Nevaeh**
- When you choose to tread the boards
Go upon the wicked stage
Then you need to learn the histrionic art
You project and you emote
You declaim and hit that note
In the hope you’ll make at least a living wage.
When it’s Thespis you adore
Feel the theatre in your core
And you strive to find the perfect style
There is a simple trick you can master oh so quick
It’s the basis of your schtick, your dial.*
- When you’re on the stage performing
Don’t forget your plastic smile
When you’re up the front informing
Get them warming with your dial
If you plan to try barnstorming
Have them swarming for your style
When you’re on the stage performing
Don’t forget your plastic smile*

Quintet

*It's the teeth, it's the teeth
It's the pearly whites, the toothy pegs, the teeth*

(QUINTET joins in on the march past and the repeat of the chorus. Song ends and there is a lot of jaw manipulation after all that forced grinning)

Moondust I just thought you'd all like to know that I've run out of wall space in my house.

Sue *(Scoffs)* Tell that to someone who cares.

Moondust I've filled all the shelves in my bedroom with the trophies and medals I've won at dancing comps, singing comps and speech comps.

Kylie I haven't got any shelves.

Moondust I've got a poster of every show I've starred in and there are so many, I've run out of wall space.

Nevaeh I thought you said you loved in a tent.

Moondust *(Ignores the jibes)* I'm going to have an extension built with a special room just for my medals, trophies and posters.

Kylie I've kept my scarecrow costume.

Sue But despite all your prizes, all your trophies and leading roles, you've never ever won the daring comp.

(That stops EVERYONE especially MOONDUST)

Moondust The daring comp? I've never even heard of it.

Sue And you'll never ever win it because you'll never ever audition.

(MOONDUST starts to move to SUE but OTHERS step in preventing another fight)

Thao This is something I do not understand.

Nevaeh Me too. What are you talking about?

Sue The Daring Competition is won by the girl who dares to defy her stage mother.

(Big shock from OTHERS. This is shocking)

Nevaeh She's making it up.

Moondust I win everything.

Sue *(At MOONDUST)* Not this because you are scared to even enter the comp.

Moondust I enter every comp, and unlike the rest of you, I always win.

Thao How do you defy your stage mother?

Nevaeh Good question.

(OTHERS look at SUE. She milks the moment)

Sue You retire.

Others *(Stunned)* What?

Sue You tell your stage mother you no longer want to rehearse, audition and perform and so you quit. *(At MOONDUST)* And that Moondust Poppyseed, is something you will never do. And why? Because you're a coward.
(Pause. Silence. MOONDUST is stuck for an answer. The thought is staggering. Telling her pushy stage mother she will no longer continue seems incredible)

Nevaeh Lost your tongue, trophy-winner?

Moondust It's a stupid idea. Why would I want to retire?

Sue Because like so many of us, you're doing all this for your mother. I know girls who hate having a stage mother but they keep going because they don't dare quit.

Nevaeh My gran would have a fit if I quit.

Kylie My Mum'd have a break-up.

Sue Break-down.

Kylie *(Nodding)* That too.

Moondust I could retire at any time. *(OTHERS scoff)* I could.

Sue Your Mum'd kill you and you know it.

Moondust *(Struggling to win the case)* You just want me to stop so you'll have a chance at winning. Well hard cheese, runners-up, you're gunna have to keep on coming second - losers.

(MOONDUST fiddles with her hair, make-up, whatever. OTHERS discuss SUE's radical idea)

Nevaeh It's true. We only do all this because our stage mothers push us.

Sue But if they didn't push us, they wouldn't be stage mothers.

Thao I'm not sure I've got a stage mother.

Nevaeh Try quitting and you'll find out.

Kylie Scarecrows never quit so why should I?

Thao Have you all got trophies, medals and posters on your walls?

(OTHERS can't boast of the success enjoyed by MOONDUST)

Moondust Squillions.

Sue I've got a couple.

Nevaeh I've got a few.

Kylie I'm not sure if we've got any walls.

Thao *(Pause)* Well after listening to all of you, I decided that winning is not so important.

(OTHERS scoff)

Moondust Only a loser would say that.

Sue Sorry Thao but winning isn't the best thing, it's the only thing.

Kylie It is and I should know because I'm very good at not winning.

Nevaeh *(To THAO)* So come on, what's more important than winning?

(OTHERS look at Thao. She says what she believes)

Thao *(She takes her time)* Friendship. *(OTHERS scoff)* Kindness. *(OTHERS scoff but each time another word is spoken, the scoffing decreases)* Patience. *(OTHERS scoff)* Forgiveness.

(OTHERS scoff) Politeness. *(OTHERS scoff)* Love. *(Silence)*

(OTHERS don't know what to say. They are so used to being unkind to one another or being falsely kind that someone genuinely nice and wise is a rarity)

(MUSIC BEGINS)

Song No. 13 Sprinkle Some Sunshine

Thao *Climb the showbiz ladder, how exciting
Trying hard to win is tough but grand
But throughout the flight, do we have to fight?
Where's it written we must be offhand?
No-one seeks a quarter to be given
Fighting fair but hard should be the way
But as we do our thing, can we lose the sting
Make performing fun, okay?
Sprinkle a little sunshine
Show us a smile or three
Stir in good cheer and shove out the fear and
Spread some delight and glee.
Scatter a sum of gladness
Send up the friendly flag*

*Show us your style but slip in a smile and
Sing us the sunny Sunshine Rag.*

(Company repeats chorus. Song ends with everyone feeling good but not knowing what to say)

Sue That was nice.

Kylie Yes I really liked that.

Neveah I feel ... different. Thanks, ah ...

Others *(Even THAO)* Thao.

Neveah *(Grinning)* Thao.

Moondust *(Reluctant praise)* I suppose it was okay.

Thao I think I need to talk to my mother about going to auditions.
(Now the OTHERS slip back into their real selves)

Moondust Oh dear, she's going to quit before she's started.

Sue Don't give up yet, Thao. Give performing it a try. You might find you like it.
(OTHERS agree)

Thao I'm going to do something none of you have ever done.

Neveah Yeah, quit.

Thao I'm going to talk to my mother.
(OTHERS react and go defensive)

Moondust I've done that. I talk to my mother.

Sue I do it all the time.

Thao And say what?

Kylie "Hello" and "is there any more ice-cream?"

Neveah I never stop talking to my gran.

Thao Talking's fine but so is listening. Stage mothers are good at talking. They give orders and we follow. In some ways, we're all like sheep.

Sue *(OTHERS react, protest)* You've got a cheek.

Thao They tell us what to wear, what routine to learn, which competition to enter and when we can start and stop practising. They control our life.
(Silence. It's true)

Moondust *(Angry)* And what's wrong with that? *(OTHERS agree)* A stage mother smothers us with love. *(OTHERS agree)*

Thao Smothers is right. You can't breathe unless she says so.

Kylie My mum makes huge sacrifices for me.

Sue So does mine.

Thao But are those sacrifices for you or for her? Does your mother ever ask if you really want to do this performing, to live this life?

Moondust *(Angry)* I *do* want to do this performing. I do want to live this life.
(OTHERS agree although doubts are starting to appear)

Thao But is your mother living her life through you? If your mother stopped pushing you to rehearse and perform, would you mind? Would you be pleased to stop?
(Silence. These thoughts have never been considered before)

Moondust *(Not convincing)* I wouldn't.

Kylie I'm not sure.

Neveah My gran loves me.

Thao Of course but does she love you enough to give you a choice?
(Another pause as these ideas are challenging)

Sue I think you're jealous.

Moondust Exactly.

- Thao** Jealous of what? Being cruel and hoping your opponents fall over mid-performance? Playing dirty tricks? Wearing a plastic smile? I don't want to be like that.
- Sue** You're jealous because you haven't got a stage mother and we have.
(OTHERS agree. They need a reason to understand what is happening)
- Moondust** Yeah, you haven't got any ambition because your mum is a wimp.
- Kylie** My mum is a wimp but I still wanna perform.
- Naveah** Wait, wait, wait. I've just noticed something.
- Sue** What?
- Nevaeh** Can't you see? We're all like our mothers. *(Big shock from OTHERS)*
- Moondust** What?
- Naveah** We're younger versions of our mums, peas in a pod, copy cats. *(Indicating THAO)* Her mother is not pushy, *she's* not pushy. *(Indicating KYLIE)* Her mother's a soft touch, *she's* a soft touch.
- Moondust** *(Threatening)* Don't you dare.
- Naveah** My Gran's a bit vague, I can't remember people's names.
- Sue** What about me?
- Naveah** Is your mum a dreamer, someone who wants to get better but never quite makes it?
- Sue** Yes, and that's me - exactly.
- Naveah** Can't you see? We're all just like our mothers and if we have a daughter, she'll be just like us.
- Moondust** So, what's wrong with that?
- Sue** Nothing.
- Thao** Everything, if you want a choice. Some stage mothers don't give their kids that choice. Some are stuck on the road with no exits.
- Moondust** *(Shouting, defiant)* My stage mother loves me!
- Thao** Then she'll have no problem when you ask if you can talk about your life and where it's heading.
(Pause, That makes sense. This is scary)
- Kylie** This is kinda ... scary.
- Nevaeh** I've decided. I'm going to talk to my gran about retirement.
(OTHERS react)
- Thao** Good for you, ah ... what's your name again?
(OTHERS get the joke and the mood is made lighter)
- Sue** I guess there's no harm in talking.
- Thao** Of course there isn't. And you don't have to quit. I don't want anyone to stop performing if that's what they want. It's all about being able to talk to our stage mum about our true feelings.
- Moondust** *(Shaking her fist)* I hate you. You come in here with no experience, no prizes, no nothin', and start telling us how to live our lives. What do you know about show business?
- Thao** Nothing.
- Moondust** Exactly.
- Sue** She's not talking about show business.
- Moondust** Yes she is.
- Nevaeh** No she's not. She's talking about life.
- Moondust** Show business is life.

Nevaeh She thinks we should talk freely with our stage mothers.
Thao My mother has always encouraged me to talk about what I'm doing and what I'd like to do.
Kylie Then you're just like your mum.
Thao Am I?
Sue We all are.
Nevaeh I'd like to be like my mum, wherever she is.
(*MUSIC BEGINS*)
Thao (*To MOONDUST*) If you're just like your mum, you'll tell her exactly how you feel.
Moondust (*Thinking*) Maybe.
Sue I'm going to tell my mum that I'm just like her.
Kylie Me too.
(*OTHERS excited at what they've learnt*)

Song No. 14 Just Like Ma

Sue *I'm just like my mother, I'm just like my ma*
Moondust *I've become my mother, a younger superstar*
Nevaeh *I'll repay my mother, she's the reason I'll go far*
Kylie *I'm just like my mother*
Thao *I'm just like my ma.*

(*During song, each performer "proves" they are just like their mother by doing a brief impersonation of their mater. That should be easy given who they are*)

Moondust (*Spoken impersonating ZARA*) Well pretend or not makes no difference, Honey, because my daughter's a shoe-in.
Sue (*Spoken impersonating BEV*) These are all the shows she's been in and here, these are all the competitions where she's won a prize.
Kylie (*Spoken impersonating DEBBIE*) Whenever I think Kylie should give up, I remember Mrs Worthington and on we go to the next audition.
Nevaeh (*Spoken impersonating VAL*) Showbiz life is cruel. For every job there are a million wannabe stars and to survive, you need a really tough skin.
Thao (*Spoken impersonating THI*) I have to say, ladies, this is not what I expected at the auditions.
(*Quintet repeats song then the girls return to their spots just as phones start ringing*)

FX *Mobile phones sound*
(*The girls dive into their bags. Each is talking to their mother. Following lines are rapid fire. FX fades as phones are answered*)

Moondust (*Answers phone*) Oh hi, Mum.
Kylie (*Answers phone*) Kylie speaking.
Sue (*Answers phone*) Hello Mummy.
Nevaeh (*Answers phone*) Yes Gran.
Thao (*Answers phone*) Chào mẹ, mẹ khỏe không? (*Hello mother, how are you?*)
Moondust You're kidding?
Kylie Oh no!
Sue How many?
Nevaeh I can't hear you.
Thao Tôi sẽ làm cho bạn rất tự hào. (*I will make you very proud*)

- Moondust** Two songs and a tap routine. Okay. Bye.
(Puts away phone and rehearses tap routine - quietly)
- Kylie** And don't forget my hat. Okay. Bye. *(Puts away phone, finds and tries on hat)*
- Sue** Use my hands. Okay. Bye. *(Puts away phone and mimes song using big hand gestures)*
(The above three are working separately)
- Nevaeh** I still can't hear you. *(Pause)* Gran, I can't hear you. *(Line goes dead. Puts away phone, packs up, sits and looks miserable)*
- Thao** Tôi sẽ làm cho bạn rất tự hào. *(I will make you very proud)*
(THAO puts away phone and is tidying, NEVAEH sits forlorn as the other three are posing, rehearsing. THAO sees NEVAEH looking sad)
- Thao** Cheer up, Nevaeh. Soon you will audition and become a star.
- Nevaeh** *(Shaking head)* Nah, soon I will fail. I always fail and let down my family.
- Thao** Come on, sprinkle a little sunshine.
- Nevaeh** It's because I have no stage mother to push, push, push me hard.
- Thao** Yes but you have your stage *grandmother*.
- Nevaeh** Everyone else has their mother.
- Thao** Who will be very proud when you win.
- Nevaeh** *(Snaps)* I won't win.
- Thao** You will when I wish you *(Big voice)* good luck.
(Everything/everyone stops. Giant gasp. THAO frightened)
- Moondust** *(On the attack)* What did you just say?
- Thao** *(Frightened)* Ah ...
- Sue** She said those forbidden words.
- Thao** *(Upset)* I'm sorry.
- Moondust** Are you mad? Are you completely crazy?
- Thao** *(Clueless)* What have I done?
- Kylie** You never ever say "good luck".
- Sue** It's bad luck to say good luck.
- Thao** But why?
- Moondust** *(Threatening)* If you've jinxed me ...
- Debbie** It's called blooper condition. *(sic)*
- Sue** No it's not, it's called super audition. *(sic)*
- Nevaeh** You're supposed to say, "Break a leg".
- Thao** Break a leg? But I don't want anyone to be hurt.
- Moondust** Learn the showbiz traditions or get out.
- FX** *Knock on upstage door*
(Pause)
- Thao** Somebody's outside.
- Moondust** *(Returns to rehearsing)* Forget 'em. I'm about to audition.
- Sue** *(Returns to rehearsing)* Me too.
- Kylie** *(Returns to rehearsing)* Me three.
(Three rehearse. NEVAEH still miserable. THAO in shock)
- FX** *Another knock on upstage door*
- Thao** *(Looks around. No-one is interested)* I'll see who it is. *(THAO exits)*
- Sue** *(Still rehearsing)* That might be another girl.
- Moondust** *(Still rehearsing)* Too bad. She's too late.
- Debbie** Is my hat on back to front?
- Nevaeh** No, your head is. *(DEBBIE confused)*
- Sue** Why don't we play a dirty trick?

- Kylie** We could tell her the audition is yesterday.
Moondust *(Snaps)* Tomorrow!
Nevaeh *(Loses it, frustrated, dramatic scream)* Ahhh!
(TRIO turn and stare at the angry NEVAEH)
- Kylie** That's a funny warm-up.
Sue That's not a warm-up.
Moondust She can't handle the pressure.
Nevaeh *(Pointing at them, angry)* The real dirty trick is you all have stage mothers and I don't. It's not fair!
Sue You've got a stage *grandmother*.
Nevaeh She's old. She's wrinkly and smells. She takes her teeth out at night. I want a young pushy stage mother.
Moondust Excuses. You're scared of losing - loser.
(Pause. NEVAEH stares at her fellow auditionees. They offer no comfort. She starts packing preparing to leave. TRIO ignore her and resume their preparation. She puts backpack on and heads to door. It opens and THAO appears. NEVAEH stops)
- Thao** Oh Nevaeh.
Nevaeh Get out of my way. I'm leaving.
Moondust *(Calling)* Good. And you can tell that new girl she's too late.
Thao It's not a new girl. It's an old girl.
(EVERYONE stops, is fascinated)
- Sue** Old girl?
Kylie What, eleven?
Thao Nevaeh, it's your Gran.
Moondust She can't be here. Coaching ain't allowed.
Thao She wants to give you a good luck charm.
Moondust Stop saying that.
(NEVAEH drops her rucksack and walks to door. THAO steps aside and lets her pass. OTHERS fascinated. They wait. NEVAEH screams offstage. OTHERS exchange glances)
- Nevaeh** *(Enters, excited)* It's my Mum! She's come to say, "break a leg!"
MUSIC BEGINS
(They rush about, move their 'stuff' and form a line and sing)

Song No. 15 Curtain Calls

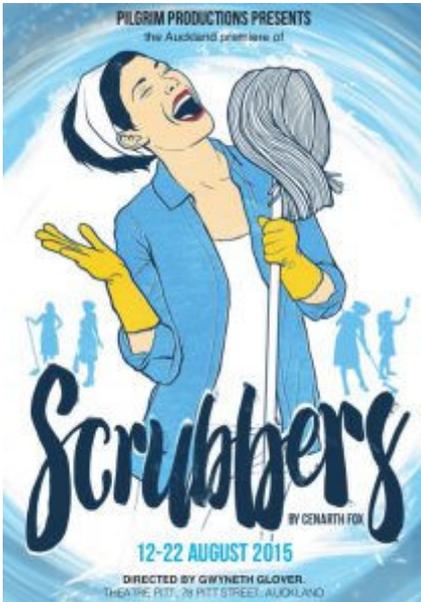
- Company** *I've got a pushy stage mother
Oh happy, snappy, tappy that's me
She's not a bit like any other
Certifiable is she
She helps make me a winner, to scoop that major prize
It's thanks to darling mater that my star will rise
Oh I've got a pushy stage mother
Oh happy, snappy, tappy that's me.
I'm just like my mother, I'm just like my ma
I've become my mother, a younger superstar
I'll repay my mother, 'cos of her I'll go so far
I'm like my mother, I'm just like my ma.*

BLACKOUT

(Bring up house lights and play the Payout)

More All-female Shows by Cenarth Fox

Scrubbers



Five women work as cleaners at night in a large office complex. The play takes place mainly in their small tea-room before and after their shifts. Their working lives are pretty dull – washing floors, cleaning toilets, dusting, vacuuming and emptying rubbish bins. And their home life is just as bad, perhaps worse. Each woman has a story to tell; a sad story. But one of the cleaning ladies has hopes for a better life away from scrubbing floors. Her dreams affect the others to the extent that their lives are changed dramatically and forever. The drab tea-room for the scrubbers is transformed when they become showbiz stars. It's a hoot.

Scrubbers has been staged around the world with great success. One company toured the show to many parts of the UK with a stopover in London.

An awesome script that delighted every audience. The music was fantastic, complemented by the backing tracks that came with the show package. The further into rehearsals we got, the more we appreciated the depth of the show. It had just the right amount of drama combined with some excellent humour. The cast, crew and audiences all came away buzzing at the experience. Heretaunga Players

Scrubbers is gritty, challenging, then heart-warming and finally triumphant. We had a very successful season. Riverlea Theatre, Hamilton NZ

Scrubbers was a resounding success. This fabulous musical was thoroughly enjoyed by the audiences at all four venues and we have received many compliments for the show and the cast. Scrubbers was hilariously entertaining and brought many people to theatre who had never been before. Maryborough Players Inc.

A strong point for me in this show is multi-talented Cenarth Fox's terrific lyrics and music. The songs deserve to be enjoyed by audiences beyond this show. Cheryl Threadgold, Melbourne Observer

Scrubbers is a fabulous show, both heartwarming and funny, besides where else would you find a playwright/director who bakes cupcakes for the show. Marie Ryan Inner FM



The Merry Widows

A group of four mature widows meet for weekly coffee. Beth is 'normal', Siobhan's into toy-boys, Ruby has her late hubby in a carry bag, (it's Ern in an urn), and Joan's in a time warp. These mismatched matrons share secrets, sorrows and sins helping one another to become very merry widows. Then a fifth and new widow arrives. She's different, mysterious and striking. Her life story is amazing. Her late husband did something dramatically unusual. And this new widow is on a quest. Will it destroy the merry widows? From being on friendly terms, the four original widows suddenly start competing against one another. Why? Why would four friendly older females suddenly become antagonistic and desperate to win against their friends? The play becomes a mystery with a real guessing game for the audience to solve the puzzle. Fabulous reviews.



The cast had the audience totally involved right from the start. The final moments were deeply moving and I wasn't the only one with tears in my eyes when the lights went up!

Joan Krutli Golden Days Radio

A wonderful, heartwarming, thought-provoking and beautiful production. Great writing, superb casting and beautifully nuanced delivery gave us an inside seat in the lives of The Merry Widows. The sadness, the joy, the laughter and pain and with a twist in the tail, it's a mystery again and a wonderful show. Marie Ryan 96.5

A story that touched, profoundly at times, on the suffering and longing, the loneliness, the loyalty, and isolation of a group of older women. There were a lot of laughs too.

Encore Theatre Company

We had sell-out shows which were brilliantly received! At one performance we had the Archbishop of Armagh, the head of the Church of Ireland and another bishop and heaps of clergy! They all laughed like drains! Thank you so much for writing the play, we really enjoyed performing it, and I've already been asked when we're putting The Merry Widows on again. Helen Ryan, Dublin

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