

Casablanca, you must be joking!

Libretto

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Characters

(in order of appearance)

Orchestra (adult and children) - fantastically dressed. Pianist with a top hat.

Master of Ceremonies (child)

Chorus of children

The Holder of the Book (child)

Master of the Book (child)

Farmer John (adult - tenor)

The Child (child)

The Teacher (adult - baritone, *Sprechstimme*)

Gullible (child)

Amanda (child)

Other children

The Fairy Godmother

The entire sides and back of the stage are filled with scaffolding - ordinary scaffolding - with different levels and platforms all around. Ladders go up some; ropes hang from others. They will all be used. In the centre of stage, a sandpit. In the centre of the sand pit quite large building blocks or large bricks, which are imagined as a dull colour (e.g. worn wood, concrete), except for one, which is not-bright yellow. Suspended from the scaffolding over the stage a very fine, light net.

The instrumentalists come on well before curtain time, taking their places singly in the areas where they will play. They are fantastically dressed, but with some common theme that differentiates them from the chorus. One of the pianist should have a top hat. There they engage in mundane activities, such as reading comic books, doing their make-up, playing cards etc. One of the pianists wears a top hat. The other is darning an overcoat. A motley crew.

1. Opening

As the houselights fade, the percussionist starts playing the xylophone, fast and furious. Everyone else takes no notice.

As the xylophone gets going, Ceremonies runs on stage, carrying a thin very light staff that is taller than she (he) is and should ideally catch the light in interesting ways. She runs to the front of the stage, looks Puckishly at the audience, lifts the staff, and bangs it on the ground.

Instantly, the pianists join in with the xylophone. Everyone else still takes no notice.

Ceremonies points the staff at the audience.

Ceremonies:

Hey you out there,

looking out on at us

just sit where you are

and don't you make a noise

don't you make a noise.

That's right!

It's cold out there

It's the end of the year (Southern: It's the middle of the year)

And you might need us,

yes, you might need us.

All of us!

She turns to the clarinet

Hey, you,

lets get going!

The instrumental forces join in section by section, quite close on one another, but not too close. Their cue each time is Ceremonies pointing to them with her wand. As she points to them, they should immediately drop what they are doing and start playing with enthusiasm (note: Ceremonies' cues will have to be a little before the actual musical cue to allow them to do this)

One by one the instruments join in, with the Orff instruments last

2. The Entrance of the Chorus

The concerted orchestra is still fast and furious as Ceremonies goes to different points in the auditorium, singing to the chorus to come out. The chorus come from all points, and find positions all around the scaffolding. They are fantastically dressed.

Ceremonies: *(to one entrance)*

The audience are in

Come on out!

Some chorus enter

Ceremonies: *(to another entrance)*

They don't look much

but they're all we've got!

More chorus enter

Ceremonies: *(to another entrance)*

Let's go and show them
what we can do!

More chorus enter

Ceremonies: *(to another entrance)*

Don't hang about,
they haven't got all day.

More chorus enter

Ceremonies: *(to another entrance)*

Late, late, late,
we ought to lock you out!

The last of the chorus enter

3. The Song of the Autumn Leaves

(construction: Autumn song; tree song; geese song; wind song; Autumn song)

When the last of the chorus have got to their places, the music suddenly collapses into itself, quiet, almost sad, but waiting for something to happen

Ceremonies:

Now that all of us are here

We can tell you

Why we are here.

The old year's dying

Chorus:

The old year's dying

Ceremonies:

The Earth is getting cold

Chorus:

The Earth is getting cold

Ceremonies:

There's snow in the air

Chorus:

There's snow in the air

Ceremonies:

And frost on the ground.

Chorus:

And frost on the ground.

Chorus: *(during the following the chorus scatter leaves from their places in the scaffolding. These could be real leaves. They could also be paper leaves in autumnal colours shaped like paper darts so that when they are dropped they fly around a little as they fall. The stage director should not worry about their later presence, except that they can be used as appropriate, for eventually they will be swept up)*

All the trees are shutting up their doors

All the leaves are climbing to the ground

Every plant has sent away its flowers

All are silent, not a sound,

All are silent, not a sound.

Ceremonies: *(very lyrical, long, flowing)*

Ahaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa -----

Chorus:

The animals are shutting up their doors

The burrowers are sleeping underground

The buzzing things have put away their wings

All are silent, not a sound,

All are silent, not a sound.

Shimmer sounds from the instruments

Chorus: *(during the following there should be an appropriate action. It is preferred that, if available, some of the chorus hold up and get going those little wooden flying geese one sees in front gardens, with a turning handle substituted for the propeller)*

The geese are flying, flying, flying, flying, flying, flying, flying, flying

south

and calling, calling, calling, calling, calling, calling, calling

goodbye

and you an I

can't fly,

can't fly.

Ceremonies: *(as above)*

Ahaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa -----

Chorus:

The hawks are leaving, leaving, leaving, leaving, leaving, leaving, leaving, leaving

us

and calling, calling, calling, calling, calling, calling, calling

goodbye

and you an I

can't fly,

can't fly.

flying sounds from the instruments

Chorus: *(with walkabout movements)*

The warm winds have gone

walkabout

The north winds are knocking

on the sky

cold wind's coming

ice wind's coming

snow wind's coming

and they're going to

wrap you up in icicles

Ceremonies: *(as above)*

Ahaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa -----

Chorus:

The north winds have a mean

face on them

The north winds have got

sharp steel claws

cold wind's coming

ice wind's coming

snow wind's coming

and they're going to
wrap you up in icicles

Ice music from instruments

Ceremonies:

The old year's dying

Chorus:

The old year's dying

Ceremonies:

The Earth is getting cold

Chorus:

The Earth is getting cold

Ceremonies:

There's snow in the air

Chorus:

There's snow in the air

Ceremonies:

And frost on the ground.

Chorus:

And frost on the ground.

4. Overcoat winter

During the opening of this section, the person who manages the budgets for the company presenting the opera - preferably the actual person - who has gone to the pianist with the coat, now brings it out on a crossed branch, so it looks like a kind of scarecrow. When he/she reaches Ceremonies, he/she drapes the overcoat over

Ceremonies shoulders. It will of course be much to large for her. The budget person exits with the cross-tree.

Ceremonies and Chorus: *(fastish. Slightly over the top, in a surrealistic sense)*

Overcoat winter

Overcoat winter

Overcoat winter's here

Overcoat winter

Overcoat winter

Overcoat winter's here

and we don't know

and we don't know

and we don't know

what to do.

The old year's dying

The old year's dying,

gotta find one

that's new

The old year's dying

The old year's dying,

gotta find one

that's new

You are full of fear

we can see it in your eyes

You are full of fear

we can see it in your eyes

we're your only chance

for a bright new year,

we're your only chance

for a bright new year

and we don't know

what to do

we don't know

what to do.

We're the only chance

for a bright new year

and we don't know

what to do

We're the only chance

for a bright new year

and we don't know

what to do

Ceremonies:

And you're not going

anywhere

No, you're not going

anywhere

until we

find out!

Ceremonies sits

(long, swooping down - this will be picked up in chicken?)

Huh!

She sweeps the overcoat of her shoulders and to one side. The pianist (or a delegate) sneaks off to retrieve it, trying not to be seen.

Chorus:

Huh!

Ceremonies:

Any ideas?

Chorus:

Not

one.

pause vocally

5. The Opening of the Book

Ceremonies: *(suddenly, very insistent, fast, enthusiastic)*

The Book!

The Book!

The Book!

The Book!

We need The Book

Chorus:

We need the Book

Orchestral crash - intended

Ceremonies looks around. Conspiratorial.

Ceremonies:

Shhhh -

When things are green or maybe brown

The jumble down the pickle lean

When troubles spin or muddle's torn

It's time to say: "It is the Book"

Chorus:

It is the Book.

orchestral crash

Chorus: (*medium strong - a comment rather than a reprimand*)

Shhhhh -

Ceremonies:

When skies are brown or maybe green

The days are short the pickings lean

When shadows shut or sunlight's worn

It's time to say: "It is the Book"

Chorus:

It is the Book.

orchestral crash

Chorus: (*very strong - a definite reprimand*)

Shhhhh -

Ceremonies:

When days are grey or maybe brown

You have forlorn or maybe stay

When fidget's fly or face forlorn

It's time to say: "It is the Book"

Chorus:

It is the Book.

All the orchestra are poised with hands or mallets to do the crash that will not come. Everyone is expecting it. Instead, the flute does a plaintive little blow. Everyone looks at the flute player, who looks embarrassed. The flute note peters out. As is does so, there is a tremendous fanfare from the trumpet, joined by whatever is appropriate.

To ceremonial music, a child comes forward bearing the Book, followed by the Master of the Book. When the child reaches the front of the stage, he/she turns and kneels and offers the Book to the Master of the Book.

The Master of the Book holds up her hands.

M Book: (*imperious*)

Gloves!

Chorus:

Gloves!

A child brings gloves, and the Master of the Book ceremoniously put them on.

M Book: (*imperiously*)

Spectacles!

Chorus:

Spectacles!

A child brings spectacles, and the Master of the Book ceremoniously put them on.

6. What says the Book?

The Master of the Book, now ready, ceremoniously turns the pages until she finds the right one, and then consults it with deep thought.

Chorus:

What says the Book?

Fanfare

Chorus:

What says the Book?

Fanfare

Chorus:

What says the Book?

Fanfare

M Book:

Deen lee-ou oi e-ra

Deed eth rof sen-o eth -

Ceremonies: *(very kindly, matter-of fact)*

My dear,

I think you have the Book

the wrong way round.

(she turns it the right way round)

M Book:

So I have,

how silly of me.

She giggles, then starts again

Three are the one you will need

Three are the ones for the deed

Three you will find

Three of a kind

One must be large and fat

One must be tall and thin

One must be smaller still.

These are the three

who hold the key

to the place

of the bright New Year

In exactly the same tone

Now you can

shut me up.

Very ceremoniously the Master of the Book shuts the book.

7. in which a pianist is not chosen

Ceremonies: *(looking around at the company)*

Large and fat.....

Chorus:

Not us!

Ceremonies: *(looking around the company)*

Tall and thin.....

Child: *(pointing to the pianist with the top hat)*

What about him?

Ceremonies: (*going towards the piano*)

Hey you!

The pianist looks worried, and hits the keys in a chord or phrase that should suggest 'What, me?'

Ceremonies:

Yes, you.

Stand up.

Miserably, the pianist stands up

Chorus:

He's not tall enough

He's not thin enough

He'll never do

He'll never do

Pianist sits down with a sigh of pianistic relief

We need a large one

We need a tall one

And we need one

That's smaller still.

Ceremonies:

But where?

Sudden inspiration. As above.

The Book!

The Book!

The Book!

The Book!

We need the Book

Chorus:

We need the book

Orchestral crash - everyone looks at the orchestra

The Master of the Book opens the Book again, finds the place.

M Book: *(very ceremoniously)*

What do you want

This time?

Can't you

Leave me in peace?

What do you think

the audience is for?

Now shut me up!

Ceremonies:

That's it!

Surveys the audience. During the following she goes into the audience to get Thee, who come to the front of the seats.

8. The Choosing of the Three

Chorus:

One fat one

One little one

One that's smaller still.

Go find them

Go get them

Bring them up here

One fat one

One thin one

One that's smaller still.

Go find them

Go get them

Bring them up here

Not that one

Not that one

Go to the right

Yes that one

The fat one

Send him up here

Yes you there

The large one

Come on up here!

Ceremonies points to the stage. Farmer John reluctantly goes to the stage

One thin one

One thin one

And one that's smaller still.

Go find them

Go get them

Bring them up here

Not that one,

Not that one

That one over there

Ceremonies finds a 'plant' next to the child

Not that one!

Not that one!

The one next to her!

The wrong one!

The wrong one!

The one NEXT TO HER!!!

Ceremonies, after hauling the 'plant' out of her seat, finally gets The Child, and points to the stage

Yes you there

Come up here

The one that's smaller still!

The Child goes to the stage

One thin one

One thin one

One tall and thin

Go find him

Go get in

Bring him up here

Yes, that one

The thin one

Send him up here

Ceremonies pulls out the Teacher, and points to the stage

The thin one

The thin one

Come on up here!

9. The March of the Three

Ceremonial music, long enough to last for Ceremonies to fuss around the three, sort them out, and then to line up the three, march them along the front of the stage to the side, under the scaffolding, back onto stage, and to the middle. The three present rather a sorry sight, looking around. The Teacher has rather odd, bean-pole jerky movements. The Child should have a characteristic set of body-language gestures, as appropriate. As the librettist had intentionally left them onstage during the following, rather than bringing them in one by one, they will need to use this body language while listening.

Ceremonies:

Here are the three

Not much good to me.

What says the Book?

M Book: *(opening the Book again)*

The Book says

Looks up at Farmer John

The Book says

That you are a farmer.

Are you a farmer?

Farmer John: *(very doleful)*

I am a farmer.

M Book:

A farmer of what?

Farmer John: *(looking suddenly dejected)*

Chickens -

Chorus:

A chicken farmer?

Farmer John: *(looking very sorry for himself)*

Yes, chickens -

Chorus: *(rubbing their bellies, etc., with obvious allusions to Farmer John's girth)*

Fat lot of good

He'll be!

Gullible:

Hey, you guys

Don't be so unkind

Don't be so unfeeling

Can't you see he's hurting

Can't you see he's sad

Don't be so unkind

Don't be so unfeeling

During the chorus line Gullible climbs down and goes to Farmer John

Chorus: *(a little nonsense chant/ditty they have used about Gullible many times before)*

Look at little Gullible

Isn't she so loveable
Always is so trustable
But she is combustible
Well maybe
she's right!

Gullible: *(to Farmer John)*

You look so sad and lonely,
You're wearing such a frown,
Whatever is the matter?
What has got you down?

Farmer John:

You really want to know?

Gullible:

I really want to know.

Farmer John:

Well, then -

Ceremonies indicates to The Child and the Teacher to sit. They do. Ceremonies herself sits.

10. Lament for The Chickens

Farmer John: *(Slow. Very serious, very sad. Muted trumpet)*

Lyrical

All my chickens have gone away
All my chickens have left the roost
The chicken coops are sad and empty

Not a chicken tried to stay
One by one they left the yard
one by one they said goodbye
The chicken coops are sad and empty
And without them life's so hard
slow gentle sad tango underneath long vocal line

I want to hear them crowing in the morning
I want to hear their clucking late at night
Now there is not a reason to go mucking
out their cosy little chicken stalls.

When I reach my hand in for the eggs
I like to feel them sitting on the nest
Now there is nothing but a small straw patch
where they sat and clucked away the day.

Children: *(in tango rhythm, commiserating, not sarcastic)*

(Beat) Cluck cluck cluck

(Beat) Cluck cluck cluck *(as required)*

Farmer John: *(as above)*

All my chickens have gone away
All my chickens have left the roost
The chicken coops are sad and empty
Not a chicken tried to stay
One by one they left the yard
one by one they said goodbye

The chicken coops are sad and empty

And without them life's so hard

And without them life's so hard.

11. Anvil Chorus

Gullible:

Don't be so sad,

I'm sure we can do

something.

I know!

I'll be back

In a moment.

*Gullible exits. There is the sound of hammering (percussion with harwar4e/tools)
for about 30 secs*

Ceremonies:

Amanda -

Go and see what is happening..

Amanda:

Okay.

She exits.

The hammering stops. Gullible and Amanda enter with a large, hastily constructed chicken. It has, however, not been constructed very well, and on one side the wing is where the leg should be, and vice versa, the beak is in the wrong place, etc.

Amanda: *(to Farmer John)*

Here's a chicken for you.

I hope you like it.

Farmer John takes one look at it and sobs

Gullible:

Is there something

Wrong with it?

We did our best.

Farmer John: *(sobbing)*

It's

It's

It's

It's

The Child and the Teacher sob along with him

Chorus: *(in tango rhythm as clucks above but with the first beat)*

There, there there there

There, there there there

There, there there there

There, there there there

Amanda: *(spoken)*

Don't you want it then?

Gullible: *(sung)*

It's alright.

We understand.

We'll

Take it away.

(Claribel comes forward. Gullible and Amanda take the chicken out)

Claribel: *(sung)*

What can we do
what can we do
to cheer you up?

Farmer John:

I don't know.
The old year was cold
The old year was dark
Perhaps in a new year
The chickens would return,
Perhaps in a new year
I could smile again.
If there ever was
a new year.

Claribel:

Don't be so sad,
We'll find it.

(to chorus)

Won't we?

Chorus:

We'll find it.
You are the first
Of the noble band of three

You are the one

Who'll set the New Year free!

Hail to the fat one

Hail to first

Of the noble band of three!

Farmer John: *(looking around puzzled)*

What do they mean,

What do they mean?

Ceremonies:

You'll see,

You'll see.

Chorus:

Now for the one who's smaller still.

What says the Book?

What says the Book?

12. The Child

The Master of the Book ceremoniously consults the Book again. As she does so, the Teacher tries to crawl away on all fours unseen, but is seen by Ceremonies, who grabs him by the collar and firmly puts him down again.

M Book:

The Book says:

The first was of earth

The second of air,

Bring forth the child

That is

Looking up at the Child

The Book says

Child:

Stupid book!

she takes out her gum and sticks it on the book

Ceremonies, M Book, Chorus:

(musical sigh of horror)

Ahhhh -

Child:

So -

what are you all

staring at?

Chorus:

You!

Child: *(As she sings the following, she should be going around annoying people)*

Haven't any of you

ever seen

a *real* girl before?

Get a life -

not like this clown - *(to Ceremonies)*

You all just stand around

Not like me -

Nobody can make *me* do

anything I don't want to

Nobody can tell *me* what
they think is good and what is not -
I decide what to do today
I decide where I'm going to play
I decide what clothes to wear
I decide how to do my hair.
If I don't want to go to bed
I don't
If I don't want to clean my room
I don't
If I don't want to see my gran
I don't
If I don't want to do my work
I don't
But if I want to watch TV
I do
If I want to paint my nails
I do
If I want to phone my friends
I do
If I want to tease the cat
I do
If I don't want to finish my food
I don't

If I don't want to put on my coat

I don't

If I don't want to take off my boots

I don't

If I don't want to do my chores

I don't

If I want to

I do it -

Yes! -

If I don't

I don't

Oh, no! -

I decide what to do today

I decide what music to play

I decide what is good for me

I decide how I'm going to be

Nobody can make me do

anything I don't want to

Nobody can tell me what

they think is good and what is not -

If I want to

I do it -

Yes! -

If I don't

I don't

Oh, no! -

If you don't believe me,

ask them.

They're sitting somewhere

Up there.

Somewhere in that

stupid audience.

(to the audience - but from an area near an instrumentalist)

What are you staring at?

(shouts, not sung)

Hey, mom,

when you're going to get me

those roller-blades

you promised?

She has reached a string player, or the piano

(singing again)

That's stupid thing

is much too old.

Why don't you get

an electric guitar?

Nobody can make *me* do

anything I don't want to

Nobody can tell *me* what

they think is good and what is not -

Voice from chorus:

So what are you doing here?

Child:

If I hadn't been dragged to this stupid theatre

to see a lot of stupid people dressed in stupid rags

I'd be down with my friends having fun in the shopping mall

dropping in to all the stores and trying on the clothes.

When the stupid shop assistant tells us "put that skirt right back"

we try to look all innocent and hang it on the bargain rack.

Then we test the perfume samples sitting on the counter

and accidentally smear the lipstick on the polished glass.

Then we're racing fast down the main mall aisle

there are stupid older people who are standing in the way

we accidentally trample on their geriatric toes

and we don't hang around to see what they might say.

We go to get a burger in the fast food place,

the lady at the table tells us not to make a noise

We wait until we've finished and we throw our garbage round,

then we accidentally tip the ketchup in her baby's pram.

For nobody tells us what to do

Nobody tells us what to say

We will decide when we are through

We will decide what we do all day .

(To the Farmer)

And I have decided

I don't like you -

Can't you stop your snivelling?

Why did the chickens

cross the road

anyway?

She takes a big blob of bubble gum, and blows a bubble in the Farmer's face

Chorus: *(appalled. Very solemn)*

How could she ever be of any use to us?

How could she ever help us find the missing year?

Child:

You couldn't do a thing without me

All of you are much too stupid -

Ceremonies: *(diplomatically)*

I am sure

if she was chosen

there must be a reason.

Let us welcome her -

Come on!

Chorus: *(enthusiastically)*

You are the second

Of the noble band of three

You are the one

Who'll set the New Year free!

Hail to the smaller one

Hail to the second

of the noble band of three!

The Child:

What do they mean?

What do they mean?

Ceremonies:

You'll see,

you'll see.

No you don't!

The teacher has tried to crawl away again, but Ceremonies catches him, and makes him stand on his feet.

13. The Teacher

Chorus:

Now for the thin one.

What's says the Book?

What says the Book?

M Book:

The Book says:

the first was of earth,

the second of air,

the third is of wisdom

And knowledge and care.

Chorus:

That sounds more like it!

M Book: (*looking up from the Book*)

And what

do you do?

Teacher:

Let me see now...

I'm - I'm -

hypotenuse -

not very good at words -

pterodactyl -

Gullible:

Don't be shy -

Teacher:

I'm -

a teacher.

Chorus:

A teacher of what?

Teacher:

I teach -

Let me see now... -

crab nebula -

I teach

all sorts of things.

Children mostly.

Child:

Yuk.

Teacher:

I'm not very good at words...

The capital of Columbia

is Santa Vera Cruz -

Chorus:

Bogota!

Teacher:

If you invest in Nasdec stocks

you will never ever lose -

Chorus:

Down thirty-eight points!

Teacher:

The problem of the Dodo is

it hasn't learnt to fly -

Chorus:

It's extinct!

Teacher:

The plural of umbilical

is umbil-iss-ee-i

Chorus:

It's an adjective!

Teacher:

The compound nitro-glycerine
is always very stable -

Chorus:

Says he!

Teacher:

Iridium comes twenty-third
in the periodic table -

Chorus:

That's vanadium!

Teacher:

A spectrum's final colour
is always cobalt blue

Chorus:

It's red!

Teacher:

Forty-two by seventy-six
is a hundred-and-ninety-two -

Chorus:

three thousand

one hundred-and-ninety-two

Teacher:

The film-star Omar Sharif

was known for playing whist -

Chorus:

Bridge!

Teacher:

And Shakespeare's most famous work

was the novel called Oliver Twist -

Chorus:

What about Dickens?!

Teacher:

Let me see,,,,,

Farmer Jones:

You know so many things -

Child:

Fat lot of good

that'll do!

Ceremonies:

I'm sure his erudition

will be of real use.

What else can you tell us

about yourself?

Teacher:

Let me see....

The melting-point of ironous gas -

M Book: (*breaking in, reading*)

He'll make up the three,
the one of the earth
the one of the air
and the one
of wisdom.

That's all I can tell you -
so don't ask me!

Ceremonies:

I'm sure you will know
what you need to do -
let's welcome him!

Chorus: *(enthusiastically)*

You are the third
Of the noble band of three
You are the one
Who'll set the New Year free!
Hail to the thin one
Hail to the third
Of the noble band of three!

14. The break

then surveying the three, so the same tune, much slower

These are the chosen
of the noble band of three -

these are the ones

who'll set the New Year free -

One is a farmer

one is a brat (*Child looks up sharply*)

the last one is a teacher

Not much good to me!

What do we do now?

Ceremonies: (*to the three*)

Well?

What do we do?

Farmer Jones:

My chickens.....

Child:

How should I know?

Teacher:

If a train is travelling at sixty-eight -

Ceremonies: (*breaking in*)

Well at least we have

the three who are chosen.

Now I think we could all use a break

and when we come back we will know what to do.

(*to Chorus*)

Are you ready for a break?

All the musicians immediately cease playing and stand.

Musicians: (*shouting out*)

Yes!

Ceremonies: (*to audience*)

sings a capella

And -

turns to glower at the musicians, who hastily play her note. She turns back to the audience again.

And you?

Chorus: (*spoken - just in case there is no reply from the audience!*)

Yes!

Ceremonies:

Right!

Time for some light refreshment

And a bathroom break

Then we will better see

What course we have to take.

We'll meet back here

in - say - twenty minutes.

Abrupt end of music. Lights. Musicians rush out. All others on stage more slowly, in character as appropriate.

END OF PART ONE

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Part Two

During the Intermission, a large Russian Doll has been placed in the middle of the stage. As the house lights go down, it should be brightly lit with the rest of the stage in darkness.

Noise of children off-stage, chattering as they come back from the Intermission (not too loud). Instrumentalists come on and briefly inspect the doll, but silently, and take their places.

Rest of the stage is gradually lit as Ceremonies comes on.

15. The Return

Ceremonies: *(to audience, with a flourish)*

Welcome back, ladies and gent -

sees the Russian Doll

What is that?

She goes up and inspects it

Looks to audience

Did any of you

leave that behind?

No response

If so, could you

come and remove it?

As she sings the last line, the chorus and soloists enter, chattering, but falling silent as they see the Russian Doll. The Child is slurping on a large fast-food drink. Ceremonies during the following is a little petulant - she doesn't like such surprises in her domain.

Ceremonies:

Yes, yes,

I know it's not supposed to be there.

Quit dawdling,

quit dawdling -

Child from chorus:

But what is it?

Ceremonies:

We'll soon find out.

(shooing the child)

Come on

come on,

we've got work to do,

take your places,

take your places,

we've got work to do,

we'll soon find out

what this is,

have it taken away.

Places,

come on,

places.

The chorus should by now have taken their places. The Farmer, The Teacher, The Child, and M Book are left around the Russian Doll, all a little away from it looking at Ceremonies apart from The Child, who is circling the Russian Doll, slurping loudly.

Ceremonies:

Do any of you

know who left that there?

Farmer, Teacher, M Book:

No.

The Child slurps very loudly

Ceremonies:

Oh do

stop that noise!

The Child makes a face at her

Ceremonies:

If you don't know

who left it there

perhaps you could tell us

what it is?

Farmer:

Well it's not a chicken coop -

that I can tell you.

Ceremonies:

That much is obvious.

(to teacher)

What about you?

You are the one of knowledge.

Teacher:

Let me see...

Deep in the steppes of the mighty Volga

So it is told in the ancient saga

There lived an old maid who's name was Olga.

Everyone swore she was a Babi Yaga.

Child:

I know what it is.

Everyone looks at her. She takes a mighty final slurp.

It's a Russian Doll.

Look!

She throws the drink away and starts turning the head/shoulders

Ceremonies:

Stop -

Farmer:

See here -

Teacher: *(hesitantly)*

A Babi Yaga -

Child:

I know what I'm doing...

She lifts the top off, revealing the second head/shoulders

Chorus: *(surprised)*

A second head

on second shoulders!

Child:

Now for the next one...

She starts unscrewing the second head/shoulders

Ceremonies:

You'll break it -

Farmer:

Now look here!

Teacher: *(fearfully)*

A Babi Yaga -

Child: *(with effort)*

Don't - be - so - stu - pid

She lifts the second head/shoulders off, revealing a third/head shoulders

Chorus: *(delighted)*

A third head

on third shoulders!

Ha!

Child:

Now for this one....

She starts unscrewing the third head/shoulders

Ceremonies:

You're wasting our time -

Farmer:

Children's toys!

Teacher: *(mysteriously)*

A Babi Yaga -

Child:

Let's see what we've got -

She lifts the third head/shoulders off.

The head and shoulders of a Fairy Godmother, complete with wand with a star on the end of it, are revealed.

The Fairy Godmother is really the witch from 'Hansel und Gretel', and very occasionally vers to her witch-like state, but always smooths it over. For otherwise she is sickly sweet all the time.

(Short) magic music, to allow the Fairy Godmother to slowly look around, during which:

Child: *(disgustedly)*

I should have guessed...

16. The Fairy Godmother

Fairy Godmother:

sings a long very florid vocalise line

(enthusiastically)

Is this China?

Ceremonies:

No.

Fairy Godmother: *(hopefully)*

Japan?

Ceremonies:

No.

Fairy Godmother: *(standing up in the doll)*

Good.

Then I'm in the right place.

She gets out of the doll

M Book:

Who are you?

Why are you here?

Chorus:

Yes,

why are you here?

16.1 The Fairy Godmother's Song

Fairy Godmother:

Well, my darlings, I will tell you.

I am not only here
I am also everywhere.
Though you think
You do not know me
I am with you in your dreams
And sometimes,
When you are awake.

When you see a shooting star
tumbling down the dark night sky
bright and sharp and silvery
and you make a wish
it is I
who listens
When you have a birthday cake
full of candles in the icing
thick and rich and sugary
and you make a wish
it is I
who listens
when you keep your fingers crossed
for something that you want so much
round and plump and blubbery
it is I
who listens

When you gobble down your food

rich cream puffs and tasty pies,

getting fat -

she stops herself and smiles a brilliant sweet smile over everyone

Well, enough of that.

That's who I am, my darlings,

aren't you glad that I'm here?

Ceremonies:

Then you will help us

find the New Year?

Fairy Godmother:

I'm afraid I cannot find

the New Year for you.

groan from the Chorus

I am here to watch and wait

and to advise you.

It is you who

who must help yourselves.

Some of the Chorus:

But we don't know what to do!

Some of the Chorus:

And they are not much use!

17. Will I ever really learn?

Farmer: *(sitting down)*

Will I ever really learn

why my chickens left the farm?

Teacher:

Will I ever learn to say

things that others understand?

(March proper begins)

Ceremonies, M Book:

What to do? -

Farmer:

My chickens -

Ceremonies, M Book:

Where to turn? -

Ceremonies, M Book:

What will we do? -

Teacher:

Dar El Beida -

Child: *(wearily)*

This is stupid -

Teacher:

Casablanca -

Ceremonies, M Book:

Where to turn? -

Teacher:

In Arabic -

Ceremonies, M Book: *(to Fairy Godmother)*

And you? -

Fairy Godmother:

I cannot help -

Farmer:

What to do -

Ceremonies, M Book:

Where to turn -

Fairy Godmother, Child:

I cannot help -

Ceremonies, M Book, Farmer, Teacher:

What to do -

Ceremonies:

Where to turn -

Fairy Godmother:

I cannot help -

Ceremonies, M Book:

What to do -

Farmer, Teacher:

Where to turn-

Child:

I cannot help -

Farmer:

What to do -

Ceremonies, M Book:

Where to turn -

Fairy Godmother, Child:

I cannot help -

Ceremonies, M Book, Farmer, Teacher:

What to do -

Ceremonies, M Book, Child:

The situation is really hopeless

For not one of us knows really what to do.

Ceremonies, M Book, Child, Farmer Teacher:

The situation is really hopeless

For not one of us knows really what to do.

reprise of introduction

Farmer:

Will I ever really learn

Teacher:

Things that others understand?

Teacher:

Will I ever learn to say

Farmer:

Why my chickens left the farm?

Ceremonies: *(rather formally, to the three)*

You are the ones who have been chosen.

You are the ones

who will show us the way.

Chorus:

You are the ones who have been chosen.

You are the ones

who will show us the way.

18. How would we know?

[go to next page]

Replace this page with attached sheet

Replace this page with attached sheet

Farmer:

Cannot do it

Teacher:

Cannot do it

Child:

Cannot do it

Farmer, Teacher, Child:

Cannot do it

Fairy Godmother:

Yes they can

Ceremonies:

Yes they can

Fairy Godmother, Ceremonies, Master of the Book:

Yes they can

19. The Broomstick

Child: *(who has got herself to the Russian Doll and has peered inside it. Pulling out a broomstick)*

Look what I've found

Look what I've found!

Fairy Godmother:

Don't touch that!

Child:

A broomstick,

A broomstick,

A witch's broomstick!

Fairy Godmother: *(moving towards the Child)*

Leave it there!

The Child extricates the broomstick completely, and a chase ensues. During the chase the lighting should imperceptibly change so that by the end it is darker and more ominous.

Child:

It's twitching,

It's twitching -

Fairy Godmother:

Give it here!

Child:

It's going to fly,

It's going to fly!

Chorus:

Try, try,

Fly, fly -

Fairy Godmother:

These stupid shoes -

(she is of course wearing regulation Fairy Godmother silver slippers. She kicks them off and continues chasing the Child)

Farmer:

This

Isn't getting us

Anywhere -

Child: *(the broomstick is obviously trying to take off)*

It won't take off

It won't take off

Chorus, Ceremonies, Master of the Book:

Faster, faster

Faster, faster

Fairy Godmother:

Give it back!

The Child nearly crashes into the Farmer -

Farmer:

Watch it!

- and does crash into the Teacher

Chorus:

She's catching you,

She's catching you -

But the Child eludes the Fairy Godmother and dashes up to the chorus. The Fairy Godmother tries to follow but is prevented by the Chorus

Teacher:

The velocity of an immobile object -

Fairy Godmother:

Come back here!

Child:

Come and catch me

Come and catch me!

Fairy Godmother:

Give it here!

Child:

Not a hope

Not a hope!

Chorus: *(both to the Child and to the Fairy Godmother)*

Try and fly,

Try and fly!

Fairy Godmother:

IT IS MINE!

20. Futile Foolish Follies

There is a terrible deep rumbling sound as the Fairy Godmother stands looking like the worst of all terrible grandmothers.

The Child stops dead in her tracks. The broomstick seems to fly of its own accord out of her hands and down onto the ground - or even better, into the Fairy Godmother's hands. Her aspect has changed completely. In place of the rather sickly sweet Godmother is a terrible woman contorted with rage. She dominates the stage. Everyone else is still, aghast.

You foolish futile follies

Fooling around with feeble fantasies.

She turns and glowers at the audience

Don't you snigger!

Snivelling in your seats!

Why are you

Wasting your time here!

Turning back to the stage

Looking for a New Year

That never comes

It never will come!

Not til I have have

Tasted -

Tasted -

Tasted -

Some internal force is struggling within her, but the Witch predominates

BLOOD!

Ceremonies and the Master of the Book shrink back.

Teacher:

The hemoglobin -

Fairy Godmother: *(turning on the teacher)*

Shut your mouth

You cackling crow!

The teacher buttons up his mouth

To chorus

And don't you move -

Fairy Godmother:

But first,

Oh, yes, first

First

You will see what it is like

To be transformed!

Transformed you shall be!

She brandishes the broomstick like a staff at the Farmer. If budget allows, the stick could have special effects at this point

Chicken cluckler

Try a Teacher!

Teacher: (*impressed*)

Meta-

Mor-

Pho-

Sis!

Farmer: (*with same expressions, body language, gestures, as Teacher*)

Meta-

Mor-

Pho-

Sis!

She turns to the Child

Capricious child

A fatuous Farmer!

Child: (*as Farmer*)

My chickens...

She turns to the Teacher

Tortuous tutor

Turn into

The Child!

She laughs a long hideous laugh

Transformed you all are!

For a short time, the Farmer, the Child and the Teacher all sing simultaneously snatches of the original introduction songs their new characters sang. As the Child sings, she appeals to the Chorus whom she is still amongst with her chicken lament, the Farmer address the Fairy Godmother, and the Teacher prances around Ceremonies and M Book

Ceremonies:

Amazing -

M Book:

Extraordinary -

Quite extraordinary -

21. The Trio

During the following, the three should move separately around the stage appealing where appropriate to the chorus and audience and generally annoying everyone with their earnestness, particularly the Child. It is important that each should have the gestures and characteristics of the character they have assumed, in rather an exaggerated way. In the following the Fairy Godmother should have a cackling laugh or two

Child:

Have you seen my chickens?

Did you see them go?

Have you seen my chickens?

Would you let me know?

I want them so.

I want them so.

Where is pretty Mary-Anne

Feathers white as snow?

Where is big fat Blunderbuss

An abscess on his toe -

And nervous little Stocking-Legs

Who lays her eggs so low -

Does anybody know?

Does anybody know?

Have you seen my chickens -

(etc. as needed)

Teacher:

What I want is lipstick

Though I'm not allowed

They don't think that I'm old enough -

(in place of the expect rhyming fourth line, the Teacher sees that the Fairy Godmother is holding out a lipstick, and holding up a mirror. The Teacher takes the lipstick, and starts applying it as he sings the next two lines, so they are distorted)

fourth line if needed (e.g. in tutti repeat): They tell me that I'm loud!

Mummmumm

Mummmumm

That's more like it!

Now I look as I should.

That's more like it!

Now I'll have some fun!

If you think you'll ever be rid of me

I've only just begun!

(to whomever the Director wants)

You really look so stupid

You're not even lucid!

Why don't you try to get a life

Why don't you do as I do?

I am the best in the whole of the Mall!

I am cleverer than them all!
I never do what I've been taught
And whatever I do, I am never caught!

Farmer:

To analyse a hen-house,
Its shape and size and form
Eight especial features
Are thought to be the norm.
Let me see...
Let me see...
The ambient humidity,
The relative liquidity
The salinity of the straw,
The ratio of feather-length
Considering the pinion strength
The dimensions of the door.
As a rule of thumb
the input air
must exceed
the CO₂
the colour of
the resting stalls
is achieved
by cobalt blue....

During the above, at a suitable moment, Ceremonies and M Book have the following exchange, and Ceremonies creeps up behind the Fairy Godmother

Ceremonies: *(to M Book)*

This will never do.

Let me look at the Book.

(she consults the book)

Make sure she's distracted.

M Book:

Will do -

Ceremonies suddenly leaps out from behind the Fairy Godmother, and snatches the broom, and dashes aside. Trio instantly ceases.

Fairy Godmother: *(big, loud, lengthened)*

No -----

Ceremonies breaks the broom over her knee. The Fairy Godmother falls in a swoon. The Child, the teacher and the Farmer instantly return to their normal selves, somewhat bewildered.

Child:

Where are we?

Farmer:

What happened?

Teacher:

I liked

Being a brat....

Chorus:

They're back,

They're back,

They're back.

To being themselves.

Ceremonies:

Thank goodness.

What shall we do with the witch?

Chorus:

What shall we do with the witch?

What shall we do with the witch?

Macabre waltz

Get rid of her

Finish her

Once and for all.

Chop chop chop

Chop chop chop

Chop off her head!

Child:

Wait a minute -

Chorus:

Get rid of her

Finish her

Once and for all.

Chop chop chop

Chop chop chop

Better off dead!

Chorus continue with chant

Child:

Stop

Stop

What are you saying?

Stop

Stop

That's not right!

NONE OF YOU MOVE! *Chorus chant stops*

Unless you want

A start a fight -!

The Fairy Godmother starts recovering from her faint

What do she do to you?

Whatever she did, she did it to us,

Not you.

Maybe she is a witch,

But I don't want her harmed,

So leave her alone!

Fairy Godmother: *(getting up)*

Thank you, my child, for your kindness.

To Ceremonies and M Book

And thank you both for what you did.

By breaking the broomstick,

You broke the spell

Cast by the wicked

Witch of the East.

Ceremonies, M Book:

The Witch of the East..?

Fairy Godmother:

She caught me

One day

Unawares.

In Kansas.

She spelt out her spell

And before I could tell

What had happened

I was inside that doll.

It would take me to far distant lands,

And someone would lift off the top.

Each time I was sometimes myself

And sometimes the witch you have seen.

It would fly -

It would stop -

I would wake -

I would try

To do good -

I would turn

Into witch -

I would -

Oh,

It was terrible....

And by breaking the broomstick

You have broken the spell

I am

myself again.

Farmer:

How can we tell

What you say is really the truth?

This could be a trick

To catch us off guard

And allow you to start

Your mischief again!

Fairy Godmother:

Well thought out, Farmer Jones,

You could be right.

But tell me, were you not thinking

Only a moment ago,

How you could help out your chickens

Improve the hen-house

Remodel the yard?

Farmer: (*slightly surprised*)

Why, yes I was -

Fairy Godmother:

And wasn't it being the teacher

That helped you to gather your thoughts?

Farmer:

I suppose it was -

Fairy Godmother:

You had that knowledge all the time,

You just didn't know

How to use it.

(turns to teacher)

And teacher, do you now feel so shy?

Are you compelled

To talk in such riddles

To spout out nothing but facts?

Teacher:

Now that you mention it,

You are quite right!

I do feel different -

Fairy Godmother:

And wasn't it being the brat

That gave you your confidence back?

Teacher:

I suppose it was -

Fairy Godmother:

And this child -

She has already

Shown us

She has compassion.

She learnt it from being the Farmer.

But she had it all the time.

Child opens her mouth to say something, thinks the better of it, and then closes it again, and smiles. Only when this action is finished does the Fairy Godmother continue.

So to answer your question, Farmer Jones.

Do you think

This could come

From someone all bad?

Farmer:

No, you are right, I accept

That the spell has been broken.

Fairy Godmother:

And you lot

(indicating the chorus)

and you -

(to the audience)

Don't jump to conclusions

So hastily caught!

People are not always

What you had thought!

Chorus:

That's all very well!

How nice!

How sublime!

But may we remind you

We still haven't found

The New Year!

So where do we look?

Fairy Godmother:

Why don't you ask the Book?

Chorus:

The Book!

The Book!

Ceremonies: (*uncertain*)

I suppose we could....

The Book is ceremoniously opened

M Book: (*as Book*)

This is the seventh time

You have consulted me

This evening.

It should, I hope, be the last.

The solution to your question is this:

The New Year may be a point in time

But that we can never see

The New Year may be a point in space

But that we can never feel

But what is real

Is the New Year inside your own hearts

Where you find who you really are

And what you can really be.

I sent you to find the Three

You found them.

I said they would find the New Year.

They found it.

The Farmer needed to use the knowledge he had.

He's using it.

The Teacher needed to find his own confidence.

He has.

The child needed to bring out compassion.

She did.

Each needed to find something new,

Something they already had.

They have found

The New Year.

And that is all I have to say.

Ceremonies, M Book (*as herself*), **Chorus:** (*sighing a little*)

Ah, well, I suppose it will do.

The New Year's here

And what you say is true -

But -

It all seems a bit metaphysical.

What we would really enjoy

Is something a little more tangible -

You know -

The clock strikes twelve.

The Old Year is ended.

The New Year begins.

That sort of thing.

(all looking at the Fairy Godmother)

We're sure

You can do it!

Fairy Godmother:

If you're sure -

If you insist -

All:

We do!

The Fairy Godmother raise her wand and waves it. First stroke of midnight. Magic music and lighting effects as all twelve stokes of the bell ring.

All: *(except Farmer and Fairy Godmother. Farmer sits glumly near the front of the stage)*

It's a New Year!

It's a New Year!

Winter won't last

And Spring will be here!

(repeat)

The Child sees the farmer and goes to him. As she reaches him, the Chorus notice him too and fall silent.

Child:

You still look sad.

What's the matter?

Farmer:

All seems right,

And all ends well,

But I still don't know

Where my chickens are.

Fairy Godmother:

I think

If you listen

Carefully..

Offstage is heard the clucking of chickens.

Farmer: *(face lighting up, getting up)*

My chickens!

The chickens enter. Everyone eventually crowds round them

Chorus:

It's a New Year!

It's a New Year!

Winter won't last

And Spring will be here!

Repeat as necessary, as Farmer interjects over the top, with slight pause in between to allow to greet the next one:

Farmer:

Stocking-legs!

Priselda!

Mary-Anne!

Old Blunderbuss!

Sagging Eye!

Farmer:

But where have you been?

All the Chorus fall silent to hear the answer

Chickens:

We went to -

Casablanca!

Everyone *except Chickens:*

Casablanca! You must be joking....!

Instant BLACKOUT