

Jason and Hanna

Libretto

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The KidsOp Children-in-War Opera Project

Introduction:

This opera is designed to be performed in a number of different cultural contexts and circumstances.

We anticipate that most productions will be generally symbolic, and non-specific to location.

However, if the production is in a region that has, or is currently, suffering conflict, producers may wish - or need - to remove the setting from direct reference to that conflict. Conversely, other productions may wish to make direct reference to their local region.

In both these situations, the names of the characters may be changed to suit your needs, choosing names that keep the number of syllables and if possible have similar sounds to the originals, to preserve the music integrity.

The setting:

A small town in a region near which conflict has started.

Basic layout:

The front of the stage is a street running left to right. Centre stage is a street at right-angles, going out of town. Either side, houses.

This was the arrangement used to work out the action in the libretto. However, it is intentionally open to many variations and ideas, depending on circumstances and budget. It is requested that any set should be symbolic rather than overtly naturalistic.

Those working on a very low budget might consider keeping an open space with a pile of rubble in the middle (as from a pulled-down structure) and the houses, etc. just off-stage.

Ideally, the theatre or performance space should become, symbolically, the region of conflict, from the moment the audience step into the foyer. It is suggested that the foyer is dressed in imaginary items for the region (e.g. theatre posters, travel advertisements, notices, flags, political posters, etc.), and is treated as if the audience have to pass through it to reach the town that is their destination in the theatre.

Thus ushers should be dressed as if militia (or equivalent in keeping with the production), who are checking the papers of the audience (e.g. tickets). There might be road-blocks at each theatre entrance, etc. Really inventive productions might consider some 'planted' action in the foyer in keeping with the production.

Ideally, if the production has two or three children who could successfully act the part, there should be two or three children in the auditorium dressed in rough clothes (street children) and begging from the audience. All proceeds should go to the cast party.

Auditorium lights dim to hush the audience. Beggars disappear.

Accompanied by child percussion, two groups of children rush into the auditorium down suitable aisles (they will be the two separate gangs of the action).

At this stage, they are as children, aged c.8 - 14, who have got into two groups. They are taunting each other more in childish games than in the more serious confrontations that will occur later in the opera.

Both groups enter screaming and shouting like children in high spirits who have just been let out of school.

Group 1 & Group 2:

(Starting offstage, before the run in, and continuing as they run in, various shouts ad lib. such as "Come on", "Get them", "Hurry up", "Get out the way", etc. as chosen by producer. Offstage shouts are the cue for child percussion to start)

As the two groups enter the auditorium, they see each other, and confront each other across the auditorium, making faces at each other, sticking their fingers in their ears, etc.

Solo from Group 1:

(starting a chant that will turn into a round)

Three two one

Three two one

Group 1: *(all picking up the chant)*

Three two one

Three two one

Why don't you

Go and suck your thumb?

Six four five

Six four five

Grandma's dead

Her sister's still alive

Seven eight nine

Seven eight nine

Some go to heaven

But the castle's mine!

Three two one

Three two one

Why don't you

Go and suck your thumb?

Group 2:

coming in on the round

Three two one

Three two one

Why don't you

go and suck your shoe?

Six five four

Six five four

You'll have nothing

And we'll have more

Seven eight nine

Seven eight nine

Six four five
Six four five
Grandma's dead...etc

You'll drink water
But we'll drink wine!
One two three...etc

During this round, a small child, preferably a boy, who is dressed in clothes that were once respectable, but are now very dirty and torn, comes onto the stage, poking around, looking for things to eat or find in the gutter, in the garbage (rubbish) etc.

The round continues for as long as necessary. As Group 1 starts to repeat, they move toward an exit, and then Group 2 moves towards another exit. They continue their chanting well off-stage.

As they leave the stage, the piano comes in for the first time, and, from two houses on either sides of the stage, the voices, wordless, of the soprano and mezzo-soprano are heard. They sing an intertwining lullaby.

As they do so, adult percussion is heard for the first time, emulating very distant gunfire: the distant rattle of a machine gun, a rifle shot or two, the rumble of larger explosions. This should be very quiet. It is coming from the next town.

As this starts, the soprano/mezzo vocal lines maintain a lullaby, but it becomes much more edgy.

As the gunfire starts, the small boy grubbing in the street suddenly becomes very edgy. He stops what he is doing. He drops some of the things he has collected. He shakes. He puts his hands over his ears. He squats, tries to curl himself up into nothing.

*Into this come **Hanna** and **Jason**. They are just at that age (13-14) when their school friends might recognize or suggest they are boy-friend and girl-friend, but they still have enough of the childish play of an earlier age to not quite realize it yet.*

They are bouncing a ball across to each other as they enter (e.g. basketball moves, or similar game), gently and happily singing as they do so, concentrating on moving the ball to each other. The adult female voices are dying away.

Hanna & Jason:

Three one two...

Three one two...

Six four five...

Six four five...

As they enter, the small boy breaks his clench, and scurries away (exits)

Hanna: *(a little startled) (Jason stops the ball, holds it)*
What was that?

Jason:

Just a little kid.
(resumes bouncing the ball)
I've seen him around in the last few days.
He's probably a refugee.
He was scared at the sound of the guns.

Hanna:
I hope they don't come here.

Jason:
They won't. They're
Very far away, and anyway
Why should they?

Hanna:
My father says ---- *(pause. Jason stops bouncing ball)*

Jason:
What does he say?

Hanna:
Nothing ---- *(pause)*

Hanna sits

Oh Jason,
Sometimes
I am afraid.
Aren't you?

Jason: *(joining her. Gunfire dies away)*
Afraid?
What of?
Why should I be?
Don't be silly.

See, they've stopped.

Hanna:
Guns, guns, firing
in the day and in the night.
Suddenly they start
And fire and suddenly they stop.
I hear them when I'm sleeping
I put my pillow on my head
And pull the covers over that.

It doesn't stop the sound.
Of guns, guns
Firing
in the day and in the night.

My mother says
Many have been killed
Over there.

Jason:
They won't come here
It's not our fight.
They'll stay away
There is nothing for them here.

Hanna:
But they're getting closer –

Jason:
No they're not.
They've been that far away
For days now.
Come on,
Let's play ball.

Hanna:
No, not now.

Jason:
There is no need to be afraid.
All we have seen are the jeeps passing through
And they were Government troops.
My father says they have better guns than the rest.
I would like to be one
When I am old enough.
So there is no need to be afraid
They will make sure
Nothing will happen here –

Jason's father: (*calling*)
Jason -

Jason:
There's my father.
I'd better go now.

Jason's father: (*coming towards Jason and Hanna*)

Jason,
Your mother wants you inside –
(*angrily*)
Have you been playing with Hanna?

Jason:

Yes –

Jason's father:

Well, you're no to.
I forbid it.
You're not to see here
Again.
Do you understand?

Hanna:

No –

Jason:

If –

Jason's father:

You're NOT TO SEE HER.
(*to Hanna*)
And you
You
You
You stay away from my boy.
I don't want to see you
Anywhere near him again.
Have you got that?

Hanna:

I don't understand –

Jason's father:

I said you will stay far away
You're not to come near my boy.
I don't want him to be seen with
You and your kind, not again

Hanna: I don't understand –

Jason's father: (*more kindly*)

You may be too young to see it,
But one day you'll come to understand.
You and he, well, you're different,

You're not good enough for him.

Hanna:

That's not fair!

Jason's father: *(now angry, losing it, threatening Hanna)*

I said you will stay far away!

You're not to come near my boy!

I know very well what you're up to!

You and your fam –

Hanna's mother has come out to see what the noise is about. She interrupts Jason's father.

Hanna's mother:

What's going on?

What's all the noise about?

Hanna?

Jason's father:

I've been telling Hanna here

She's not to see my boy

Any more.

Hanna's mother:

Why ever not?

Hanna, what have you done?

Hanna:

Nothing.

Jason's father:

It's not her.

It's all of you.

She's to keep away.

Hanna's mother:

I don't understand.

Jason's father:

You know

Perfectly well.

Hanna's mother:

What has she ever done to you?

Haven't we been good neighbours?

Jason's father:

That was before.
Now we see
What you
And your lot
Really are!
Vermin like you don't belong here!
You should be
Run out of town!

Hanna's mother: *(astonished)*

I –

She is interrupted by the Hanna's father, who has just arrived.

Hanna's father:

What's going on?

Jason's father:

I told her we've all had enough of you!
Enough of you and your kind!

Hanna's father:

Wait a minute –

Jason's father:

What our leaders have told us is true –
'You're a different religion,
you're a different race,
and you belong
in another place!'

Hanna's father:

I won't hear that!
We have been here
For hundreds of years,
Which is more than can be said
Of you!

Jason's father: Get inside, boy!

Jason's father:

I said,
Get inside, boy!

Jason leaves. As he does so, he signals to Hanna, a time (with his fingers) and points to the place. Hanna nods in response. This exchange is not seen by the adults, who are glowering at each other.)

Jason's father (*following on from his words to his son, whose exchange with Hanna takes places during the opening lines of the following*)

I'm not going to stand here
Arguing with you.
The time for words is coming to an end!
You'll soon see
What will happen!

He storms off after Jason.

You will soon see
What will happen!

Hanna's father: (*shouting after him*)

You haven't heard
The last of this!
(*the following to himself, quite loudly*)

They think they are
Better than us!
We'll see about that,
We'll see!

(*shouting after Jason's father again*)

You stay away!

(*the following to himself, almost muttering, repeated as necessary*)

During the following, Hanna's mother and father and Hanna return slowly to their house, Hanna's mother pulling her husband

They think they are
Better than us!
We'll see about that,
We'll see!
We have been here
Longer than them
We'll see who will stay,
We'll see!
They think they are
Better than us!
We'll see about that,
We'll see!

Hanna's mother: (*pulling her husband*)
Come inside, come inside!

Hanna's mother: (*pulling her husband*)
You're embarrassing us!
Come inside!

Hanna:
Mother, what is happening?

Hanna's mother:
Oh, Hanna,
Things are getting nasty here
like they did
In the rest of the country.
From now on,
I want you to be careful..

(*repeated as necessary against the words of Hanna's mother and Hanna*)

They reach their door, enter, and shut the door. Jason's father's mutterings should continue until the door is closed.

During the end of the preceding section, Jason's mother has rushed out of her house to catch Hanna's parents. She should shout (sing) 'Wait' as she leaves her house, and again as she is half-way across the stage. She should reach their door just as it has closed.

Since the timing of this will be different in each staging, her two shouts ought to be ad lib.

Jason's mother: *(as in the stage direction above)*

Wait!

Wait!

She bangs loudly on Hanna's family door, but gets no reply. She tries again. Still no reply. Sadly she turns back to her own house.

Oh, God,
What has he done?
What has he done?
They were such friends,
My boy and Hanna.

There wasn't any need for this.
He gets angry so easily.
Those evening meetings -
He comes back
Full of hate -

They're decent people -
Like us -
What is happening?
What is happening?

We've seen all the families who flee from the countryside
They tell us of fighting and houses destroyed -
They say that they're planning to start on a ceasefire
The UN are sending in peacekeeping troops.
But will they
Will they
Be in time?

It's always been peaceful and friendly in this town,
But now that the fighting is getting much closer -

What will happen?
What will happen?

Offstage is heard a version of the opening children chorus, same words, but a bit more broken up.

The children are playing.....

The beggar boy comes onstage, and sits, far away from Jason's mother, but she sees him. He picks up the ball that had been left by Jason and Hanna, but instead of playing with it, hugs it to himself.

Oh, the poor thing –
I ought to help him -

I wish I could take you in,
But if we took them all in,
Where would we be,
Where would we be?

She enters her house. As she does so, Jason climbs out of a back window, and enters the street in the shadows. The beggar boy scampers away. The offstage children's chorus dies away. Hanna enters in the same fashion as Jason.

Jason:
Hanna, is that you?

Hanna:
Ssh!
Over here.

Jason goes across to Hanna

Jason:
My father says
I'll be in trouble
If I see you again.

Hanna:
That's what mine says, too.

Jason:
I don't understand –
We haven't done anything wrong.

Hanna:
My mother says
It's not us –
It's to do with our families

The sound of the children's are heard again.

Hanna:

The other children are coming –

Jason:

Let's join them.

My father didn't say anything about that.

Hanna:

Jason –

Jason:

Yes?

Hanna:

What ever happens –

We will stay friends?

Jason:

Of course we will.

The children enter, still singing

Child 1:

It's Jason and Hanna

Hand in hand!

Children stop their chorus

Jason:

We're NOT!

Children:

Jason and Hanna

Jason and Hanna

Two together

Like a nut and spanner!

Jason:

I'll get you!

Jchorus solo 1:

You shouldn't be with Hanna anyway

You know she belongs to the other side

And you belong over here with us.

children start to separate into two groups

Hanna: Jason!

He pulls Jason over to his side. Jason looks back at Hanna. Meanwhile the Hchorus cluster on Hanna.

Jchorus:

You belong over here with us!

Hchorus solo 1: *To Hanna*

Let him go and stay with us!

Who'd want to be on the other side?

And you belong over her with us.

Hchorus:

You belong over here with us!

Jchorus solo 2: *to the Hchorus in general*

My mother says

That you eat dead rats

Jchorus solo 3:

You sleep on the floor

And live like brats!

Jchorus:

We all know

That you eat dead rats

You sleep on the floor

And live like brats!

Hchorus solo 2:

My mother says

That you eat rotten fish

Hchorus solo 3:

You never clean your teeth

And you stink like cats!

Hchorus:

We all know

That you eat rotten fish

You never clean your teeth

And you stink like cats!

Big Ears: *(from Jason's side)*

Hey you there, Baggy Pants –

Yes, you –

Baggy Pants, who was at the back, pushes forward near the front.

Baggy Pants:

What do you want, Big Ears?

Big Ears:

My grandmother says

That your sister's been seen

Out with the gypsies every night.
Mimics Grandmother's voice
'Ain't it a shame'
my grandmother says
'when the town's so clean,
that they don't even know
where their daughter's been!'

*Note: productions may change 'gypsies' to
suitable alternatives*

Baggy Pants goes forward clear of his group

Baggy Pants:

Say that to my face!

Big Ears:

'Ain't it a shame –'

*Baggy Pants launches himself at Big Ears. Big Ears steps back. The two start circling
each other. During the following they start to fight (wrestling – nothing too serious).*

Both choruses:

Go on, get him!

Get him !

The following starting slowly, accelerando

Jchorus:

Punch his nose

Hchorus:

Pull off his ears

Jchorus:

Twist his arm

Hchorus:

Stamp on his toes

Jchorus:

Pull off his ears

Hchorus:

Twist his arm

Jchorus:

Stamp on his toes

Hchorus:

Punch his nose

Jchorus:

Twist his arm

Hchorus:

Stamp on his toes

Jchorus:

Pull off his ears

Hchorus:

Punch his nose

Jchorus:

Stamp on his toes

Hchorus:

Punch his nose

Jchorus:

Pull off his ears

Hchorus:

Twist his arm

repeat as required. By now very fast.

Straight into

All:

Punch his nose

Pull off his ears

Twist his arm

Stamp on his toes

Straight into, very big:

Jchorus:

We all know

That you eat dead rats

You sleep on the floor

And live like brats!

We all know

That you eat dead rats

You sleep on the floor

And live like -

Hchorus:

We all know

That you eat rotten fish

You never clean your teeth

And you stink like cats!

We all know

That you eat rotten fish

You never clean your teeth

And you stink like –

They are interrupted just at the climax of their song by Hanna's mother, who has come out from the house, and now tries to break up the fight. At the same time Jason's mother comes out and restrains the other boy. As they do so, both Hanna and Jason shrink back so as not to be seen.

Hanna's mother:

Stop it!

Stop it at once!

Jason's mother:

Stop it!

Stop it at once!

Various children:

Yeah! (*rudely*)

Don't listen!

Get him!

Jason's mother:

GET BACK!

(the children take notice of the tone in her voice)

Hanna's mother:

There'll be no fighting.
No fighting in the streets!
Do you understand?
Boy nods.

Jason's mother:

Do you?
Other boy nods.

Hanna's mother:

Now be off with you.
All of you.
Back home.
Right now!

Go!

The two gangs sheepishly go off in different directions, Hanna with hers. Jason sneaks into his house, trying (successfully) not to be seen by his mother. As the chorus goes:

Solo from Hchorus: *(to Jchorus)*

Rotten fish.
Poooh!

Hchorus laugh. Jchorus glower.

Hanna's mother:

GO!

Jason's mother and Hanna's mother are left looking across at each other. They do not know what to say.

Jason's mother: *(from a distance)*

I'm sorry –

Hanna's mother:

It's the way it is.

Jason's mother:

My husband. He –

Hanna's mother:

I understand –
Let's pray
There will be
No fighting in the streets.

Jason's mother:

When I was young like them
I was told
There was an angel looking after each of us.

Hanna's mother:

We were told
Something like that, too.

Jason's mother:

There is an angel spreading his wings over our town.
Everyone knows, and no-one will say so out loud.
And now he's beating those wings and the cruel wind
Is entering everyone's heart.
It is the angel of death who is beating his wings

The angel
The angel of death

I know it is
{ I know it is

{

{ **Hanna's mother:**

{ There is a shadow spreading its darkness over our town
Everyone knows, and no-one will say so out loud.
It's creeping through doors and through walls and the black shadow
Is entering everyone's heart.

It is the shadow of evil who is spreading its darkness
The shadow

The shadow of evil

I know it is
{ I know it is

{

{ **Jason's mother:**

{ There will be fighting and pain-

Hanna's mother: fighting and pain

Jason's mother: Hatred

And lies

Hanna's mother: Hatred

And lies

Jason's mother: Men

Will

Turn on men

Hanna's mother: Men

will turn on men

Family

On family
men
on men
family
on family

I fear most of all
For my children

That they should
Should hear
Such hatred
And such spite
Is bad enough
But I
Fear

I fear

I fear

That if they
Are caught
In the war
And the fighting –

How

How

How

How

Can I protect them?

How

How

How

Can I

Family

On family
men
on men
family
on family.

I fear most of all
For my children

That

That they

That they

Should hear

Should hear

Such hatred

And such spite

I fear

I fear

that if they

Are caught

In the war

And the fighting -

How

How

Can I protect them?

How

How

How

Can I

*the sound of small-arms fire
is heard again in the distance*

Protect them?

Protect them?

(insert at or around fig. 42 – better call it 41a)

Offstage:

Jason: *(raised voice):*

I don't WANT to!

Jason's father:

You have to! Listen!

Jason's mother: *(embarrassed)*

That's my husband –

He will be telling my boy –

About

the honour of the family

all the generations we have lived here

what he has to do... *(trails off)*

Hanna's mother: *(soothingly)*

I understand –

my husband

can be the same.

My mother was like that, too –

she's dead now,

God rest her soul.

What would she have said,

would she have known

how we can protect them?

Fig. 42

The following together

{ **Jason's mother:**

{ There is an angel spreading his wings over our town.

{ Everyone knows, and no-one will say so out loud.

{ And now he's beating those wings and the cruel wind

{ Is entering everyone's heart.

{ It is the angel of death who is beating his wings

{ The angel

{ The angel of death

{ I know it is

{ I know it is

{

{ **Hanna's mother:**

{ There is a shadow spreading its darkness over our town
{ Everyone knows, and no-one will say so out loud.
{ It's creeping through doors and through walls and the black shadow
{ Is entering everyone's heart.
{ It is the shadow of evil who is spreading its darkness
{ The shadow
{ The shadow of evil
{ I know it is
{ I know it is

Jason's mother:

I'm sorry –

Hanna's mother:

Let's hope

It never comes to that –

They both return to their houses.

Short orchestral interlude which indicates the quiet and calm after and before the storm. During it, the beggar-boy emerges as soon as he has seen the women depart, and looks around for anything the children have left. He finds a couple of sweet (candy) wrappers that have been dropped, and one with a candy still in it. As he is unwrapping it, the Jgang comes back, slowly. This time they are mimicking soldiers they have seen in films, and quite well, too, going from doorway to doorway and covering each other as they do so.

One of them knocks on Jason's door. Jason answers.

Child solo:

You coming?

Jason looks around, and joins them.

Jchorus solo (leader):

Thought you were on Hanna's side.

Jason:

My father's just

Told me all about them.

I'm with you now.

The leader sees the beggar-boy. He signals for two of the gang to sneak up behind him. They do so, and grab him as he is absorbed in the candy. He struggles like mad, to no avail.

Jchorus solo (leader):

Haven't seen you before.
Where are you from?

The beggar-boy struggles without answering.

Well?

The beggar-boy still struggles

Jchorus solo voice: *(menacingly)*

Make him talk!

The beggar boy's eyes go wide with fear, and he succeeds in slipping out from the hold, and scurries away.

Jchorus solo (leader):

Let him go –

Jchorus solo voice:

Someone's coming!

Jchorussolo (leader):

Back!

The Jchorus gang get back. From the other side, in come the Hchorus, Hanna among them, in much the same fashion as the Jchorus. As they near the centre of the stage, the Jchorus leader steps out. Each gang should now therefore occupy one side of the stage, with a no-man's land in between.

Jchorus solo (leader): *(stepping out)*

Don't come any
Further!

His gang emerge behind him. Hchorus stop.

Hchorus solo voice:

Who says?

Jchorus solo (leader):

I do!
Don't come any further.

Hchorus:

Take no notice.
Keep going!

Jchorus solo (leader):

You stay on your side,
And don't come over here!

Jchorus:

You stay on your side,
And don't come over here.

Hchorus:

We will go
Wherever we want!

Jchorus solo: *(coming from the back carrying a large cardboard box or a wooden crate)*

Here.
Use this.
We'll build a barricade.

Jchorus solo (leader):

Good idea.

(to his gang)

Find some things
To build a barricade.

Some of the children find materials and bring it. The barricade can be very simple – a couple of cardboard boxes with a plank across, for example, or can be more elaborate if required.

Hchorus:

If you can build one
We can build one
You're not coming
Over here!

The Hchorus start getting materials and building their barricade.

All chorus:

Build a barricade
Keep those scum away.
Build a barricade
And build it today!

Build a barricade
Build it strong and tight
Build a barricade
For might is right!

Build a barricade
Right across the street
Build a barricade
And we won't have to meet!

Nobody wants you

Nobody wants you

Here in this town!
You're going to have to stay there

And then we'll drive you out

(tutti)

You're going to have to stay there
And then we'll drive you out
Nobody wants you
Nobody wants you
You and your kind
Here in this town!

repeat if necessary

(by the end of this the barricades should be built, with each gang behind their own. At the very end, a couple of children on each side should start throwing things at the other side – a soft ball, a sponge made to look like a brick, etc.)

tutti:

Confused jeers, shouts and taunts at each other, spoken, ad.lib. Some brandish sticks, etc.

Hanna pushes forward, round or over the barricade, and comes into the middle in between the two. Hubbub dies down.

Hanna:

What are you doing?
What are you all doing?
Jeers and shouts from both sides.

Jchorus solo voice 1:

That's Jason's girl!

Jason:

No she isn't!

Jchorus solo voice 2: *(sarcastically)*

That's Jason's *friend*, then.

Jason:

She isn't any
Friend of mine!

Hanna:

What do you mean?

Hchorus solo voice:

Hanna, get back here –

Jason:

That was in the past
When I didn't know better.
Now I know
what you really are.
My father told me all about
The kind of things you people do

Jchorus:

Yeah!

Jason:

My father told me
How your people
Never
Belonged
here.
How you take up all the land
How you buy up all the houses
How you take all the jobs.
He said that if I was still
Going to be your friend
I would have to decide
Where my loyalties lay.
Well I have decided.
Right here!

Jchorus:

Yeah!

Hchorus:

Not us.
It's you!

Hanna:

You don't know what you're saying –

Jason:

Yes, I do!

Jchorus:

Yes, he does!

Hanna:

But you just told me
That you'll always be my friend –

Jason:

That was then,
And now is now!

Jchorus, Hchorus:

That was then,
And now is now!

Hanna:

What is happening to you all?
We've all played together in the same school yard.
We've all sat together in same school class.
We've all been to visit in each other's homes.
Most of us have lived here
All our lives.
We are the town kids,
We've had lots of fun,
And we've had a few fights,
But we've always played together

We've never been different
Before this time.
Why are we different now?

Jchorus:

Ah shut up!

Hanna:

No I won't –

Hchorus:

Stop squawking
And get out of the way!

Hanna swivels round, determined to stand her ground.

No I won't -
Answer me!

In answer, a shot is fired from a handgun by one of the children in the Chorus. Hanna falls to the ground.

There is, for a moment, a stunned silence. Then:

A gun,
A gun,
He's got a gun.
Let me see it
Let me touch it
Let me hold it
Let me shoot it
Is it real?

Jason, horrified, runs out to Hanna.

Jason:
Hanna!

Let me see it
Let me touch it
Let me hold it
Let me shoot it

Jason: *(increasingly agitated)*
Hanna!

A gun,
A gun,
We've got a gun
Now we'll have them on the run
Now we'll chase them out of town

Jason:
HANNA!

A gun,
A gun,
We've got a gun
A gu –

During the preceding chorus, the Chorus have remained in stunned and cowed silence, but one of them also has a handgun, and very deliberately takes aim, and fires it on the final 'gu'. Jason falls down, dead.

Another absolute stunned silence. Then:

Hanna: *(weakly, still on the ground, turning towards Jason)*
Jason?

She tries to crawl to him.

Hanna:
Jason –

She slumps unconscious

The following starts very slowly and quietly, and builds up in speed and dynamics. The children are beyond their experience: they are awed but excited at the same time, so for the moment they are going to stay where they are.

Hchorus solo:

Are they -

Dead?

Jchorus, Hchorus: *(a little hushed, still awed)*

They're not dead

It's just pretend.

They'll soon get up

It isn't real.

They're not dead

It's just pretend.

They'll soon get up

It isn't real.

Why don't they move?

Why don't they talk?

Come on Hanna/Jason

Stop pretending

Why don't they move?

Why don't they talk?

Come on Hanna/Jason

Stop pretending

Why don't they move?

Why don't they talk?

They're really dead

They're really shot

It's not pretend

They won't get up

They're really dead

They're really shot

It's not pretend

They won't get up

It's all your fault

You started this

Look what you've done

You're in for it now.

It's all your fault

You started this

Look what you've done

You're in for it now.

We'll get you for this

We won't forget it
We're enemies now
For once and for all
We'll get you for this
We won't forget it
We're enemies now
For once and for all
We've got a gun and we're going to use it
We've got a gun and we're –

Hanna's father has come running out. He cannot see Jason, who is obscured by children.

Hanna's father:

Do not move!

He sees Hanna

Hanna!

He rushes over to her

Hanna –

He checks her pulse

She's still alive, she's still alive –

(as if trying to get a response)

Hanna, Hanna –

He looks up at the children

You –

Children:

Not us

just playing!

Don't know

just playing.

A shot from there!

Another there!

Didn't see.

Don't know, just playing!

Not us!

Loud bang

they fell over.

Didn't see, wasn't us!

Hanna's father:

Get help!

Go

Get help!

Hanna -

Don't know who did it.
Didn't see!
Wasn't us!
Wasn't us!
Just playing!

Hanna -
Can you hear me?

*They voices trail off as they see Jason's mother come out, unseen by Hanna's father.
Jason is still obscured.*

Hanna's mother:

What was the noise?

Children: *(hushed, horrified, not knowing what to do)*

Jason's mother!

Jason's mother: *(on seeing Hanna)*

That's Jason's mother.

Hanna!

Confusion among children around Jason

Hanna's father:

Quick. Give me a hand.

Jason's mother:

Is she badly hurt?

Hanna's father:

She's unconscious –

It looks as if
she has a bullet
here
in her leg –

Jason's mother:

She must have hit her head.

When she fell.

She takes a handkerchief or scarf, and binds the bullet wound

Some children: *(pushing one forward. Whisper)*

Go on
tell her.

Hanna's father:

Is she going to live?

Jason's mother:

I think she will be all right.

Let's
get her inside,
and send for a doctor.

Hanna's father lifts her gently. Jason's mother holds her head. As this happens, a child comes forward hesitantly, very frightened.

Hanna's father: (*tenderly*)

Hanna -

Child:

Missis -

Jason's mother:

Not now.

Child:

But Missis -

Jason's mother: (*as they move toward Hanna's house*)

She be alright. Tell them
she'll be alright.

Child:

But missis -

Hanna's father: (*angry*)

NOT NOW!

Hanna: (*regaining consciousness*)

Mama...

Jason's mother: (*as Hanna's mother comes out of her house*)

Hush child -
(*to Hanna's mother*)

She'll
be alright -

Hanna's mother:

Hanna!

Hanna's father:

She's
badly hurt -

Hanna:

Mama -

Hanna's mother cradles Hanna's head. Jason's mother takes a step back.

Hanna's mother:

Hush child,
you're safe now.
Mother's holding you
you're safe now.
(*to Hanna's father*)
Come, take her inside.

Meanwhile, the child who attempted to get Jason's mother's attention has returned to his/her group, and there has been whispered consultation. During this, the group fall back a bit, so that Jason can now be seen.

Child: *(frightened, so from the group, half shouting)*
But what about Jason?

All three adults turn, and see Jason. There is a moment of stunned silence (general pause, so that the stage director can decide the duration as appropriate)

Jason's mother: *(Great cry)*
Jason!

She rushes over to him, and repeats during the following, first pleading, then quieter, fearful, then quieter, with grief:

Jason!
Oh, Jason!

Child:
I think
he's dead -

Hanna's father:
Another child –
(to Hanna's mother)
Can you carry her?

Hanna's mother:
Yes.

Hanna's father: *(handing Hanna over)*
Take her inside.

The following all together: Hanna's mother takes Hanna into her house, Jason's father rushes out of his house, having heard Jason's mother's cry, and Hanna's father starts towards Jason but stops as he sees Jason's father come out of the house.

Jason's father:
My son!

Jason's mother: *(looking up)*
He's dead –

Jason's father:
No. No!
Not my son!

Shaking Jason

Jason!

Jason!

Jason's mother: *(restraining him. Gentle but firm and full of sorrow)*
Don't. He's dead.

Hanna's father turns sadly to go into his house.

Jason's father: *(looking around wildly, and standing up)*

You – you kids,

you all had something to do with this.

He sees Hanna's father. The children shrink back.

(loudly) You –

Yes, you. *(Hanna's father turns)*

you –

I know who you are

I know who you are

Yours is the girl that my Jason's been seeing.

You are the one

You are the one

You are the cause of the death of my son.

I know it was you

I know it was you

I told him to stay far away from that girl.

You set her to this

You set her to this

Trap the poor boy and he's out of the way.

Hanna's father:

You planned it all out

That's not true!

You planned it all out

Jason's mother: Please don't -

Find the right time to be rid of us all

You've waited for this

You've waited for this

Hanna's father: I won't

Pick on the children and watch us all leave.

hear any more of this -

You are the one

You are the one

You are the cause of the death of my son

Did you have the gun?

Did you have the gun?

Jason's mother: Don't -

Hanna's father: Wait a minute -

Jason's mother: Don't

say any more -

Child: Get rid of the gun! **Child**

with gun: No! **Child:** Just do it!

Did you pull the trigger or use someone else?
He's lying back there
He's lying back there
I see how you look and you snigger and stare

Now we all know
Now we all know
You lie and you cheat and you murder our sons
We've had enough
We've had enough
The town must be cleaned 'til there's none of you left
Starting right now
Starting right now –

Jason's mother:

Don't do it.
O please
Do not do it..
I knew
it would come
down to this.

My son is now dead
and the girl is now hurt.
No more anger and pain
No more hatred and hurt.
Do not say any more
Do not speak of revenge
Our son is now dead
and his girl has been hurt.
No more anger and pain
No more hatred and hurt.
Do not say any more
Do not speak of revenge.

repeat from 'My son' as required

Hanna's father: *(getting angrier and angrier)*

What are you saying?
What do you mean?
Don't say any more.
I've had enough.

You started all this.
You'll see where it leads.
If you want a fight
A fight it'll be.

continue as required, using any of the above in any combination

Chorus: *(to the choral line of fig.58, but at slow tempo. Words are the same except for the last line)*

They're really dead
They're really shot
It's not pretend
They won't get up
They're really dead
They're really shot
It's not pretend
They won't get up
It's not our fault.

(repeat as necessary)

Instant stop. At that moment, as Jason's father's anger boils over and he is presumably about to charge forward to strike Hanna's father, the beggar boy has appeared, bouncing the ball that Jason and Hanna played with earlier. He has arrived between the two men, and has either thrown or bounced the ball into Jason's father's hands. Terrible pause as everyone, astonished by this unexpected event, waits to see how it will be broken.

Jason's father: *(menacingly)*

Out of the way, boy!

Beggar boy:

Please can I have my ball back?

Jason's father:

Get to your own side, boy!

Beggar boy:

I don't have a side.

Jason's father: *(getting a little deflated by this upset in his momentum)*

Where is your mother?

Where is your father?

Beggar boy:

I don't have any.

They're dead.

In my town.

Back there. *(points backstage)*

Can I have
my ball back?

Jason's father stares at him, standing quite still. Jason's mother's puts her arm on his.

Jason's mother:

Husband.

Husband.

Give him the ball.

With a grunt, Jason's father throws the beggar boy the ball. The beggar boy bounces it towards backstage, and sits. He can be half-hidden.

(to Hanna's father)

You.

Go.

Now.

Hanna's father, with a semi-reluctant hard glance at Jason's father, turns and goes to his house. Jason's mother now has firm hold of her husband's arm.

(to Jason's father)

Come.

Our son is lying there. *(she starts steering him towards Jason)*

Your place
is with him now.

Jason's father: *(with a backward glance towards Hanna's house – but the force of anger has gone)*

First I must –

Jason's mother: *(Cutting him off)*

No.

This must stop.

I will not have my son
lying in the square
for all to see.

They reach Jason. The children have fallen back. Jason's mother kneels beside him.

Jason's mother:

My boy
My son.
What happened?
What happened?
(to Jason's father)
I knew this was going to happen.
Carry him inside.
lay him out.
Do it now.
I'm going to Hanna's home.
I said carry him inside.
I am going to Hanna's mother.
She will need my help.
My boy is dead.
Her child is hurt.
I will not have
another death on our hands.

Jason's father lifts Jason. Chorus below starts. Jason's mother puts her hand for a moment on Jason's brow, gazing down at him.

Jason's mother: *(Over chorus. To chorus).*

Go home, now.
All of you.
We will
talk to you later.
Find out what happened.

(To Jason's father. Slow and long, rather than command)

Go –

Jason's father goes to his house and exits. Jason's mother exits slowly to Hanna's house. Chorus continue singing, and start to exit through the auditorium.

Chorus:

What will happen next?

Will there be a fight?
Why is it like this?
Who will stop it now?
Will we all be safe?
Can't we all be friends?
What will happen next?
Who will stop it now?

Jason is dead
Hanna is hurt
All we wanted
To do was to play
Can we still be friends
After today?

They tell us you're no good
They tell us you are wrong
They tell us we are right
They tell us we are strong
But we don't want to fight
So can't we all be friends?
For you are just like us
And I don't want to hate.

Jason is dead
Hanna is hurt
All we wanted
To do was to play
Can we still be friends
After today?

As the chorus leave, the beggar-boy is seen sitting alone, contemplative, towards the back of the stage. As the final strains of the chorus are exiting the auditorium, he starts bouncing the ball.

(slow)

Three, two, one
Three, two, one...

Blackout

Librettists note: I personally would like, at the moment the Beggar Boy starts singing 'Three, two, one...', to have a U.N. officer and a couple of U.N. troops appear from backstage into the area, now empty except for that Beggar Boy. And then blackout. This would leave a powerful final visual image. However, this involves three or so supernumeraries, so I have written this ending to allow for director's discretion in this.
