

Music No. 5a: OUT OF OAKMOOR

(GORDON SHAKESPEARE and the OAKMOOR CHILDREN march off the stage. MR POPPY continues to narrate.)

PAUL MADDENS is *fuming*.)

SCENE SIX
St. Bernadette's classroom at Christmas

Lights change to reveal the Christmas classroom of St. Bernadette's Primary School. The children's artwork looks gorgeous in the form of a sparkly Christmas frieze. The children rush on with chairs, using them to dance around, stand on, jump off and slide underneath, etc., during the number.

Music No. 6: ST. BERNADETTE'S

CHILDREN OF ST BERNADETTE'S
 THINGS ARE REALLY COOL AT ST. BERNADETTE'S
 OUR SCHOOL IS DO FULL OF JOY
 FOR EVERY GIRL AND BOY
 THERE'S NO OTHER SCHOOL, LIKE ST. BERNADETTE'S
 US CHILDREN ARE REALLY GOOD,
 YOU'D FOSTER US IF YOU COULD,
 WE'RE JUST SO MISTUNDERSTOOD
 AT ST. BERNADETTE'S

(PAUL MADDENS enters the classroom. Underscore continues.)

PAUL Okay, sit down – sit down, please! Thank you for throwing that, Ollie. As you were the last one standing perhaps you can tell the class the story of the Nativity?

(OLLIE (Naughty Boy) stands up.)

OLLIE Well, Mary and Joseph get together . . . and about two days later they have a baby . . . then about a day after that Jesus dies on the cross and then he comes back to life again.

PAUL No, sit down, Ollie! What you just said is practically blasphemy! Okay – let's try our Monday morning spelling test, shall we? See who's been revising. Today's word is BETHLEHEM – Lucy?

LUCY (*Spoken in rhythm.*)

B . . .
 PAUL Yes.

LUCY
 E . . .

PAUL Yes.

LUCY
 H . . .

PAUL No! BETH-lethem – BETH-lehem! Okay, Alfie?

ALFIE (*Spoken in rhythm.*)

B . . .
 PAUL Yep.

ALFIE
 E . . .

PAUL Yes.

ALFIE
 M . . .

PAUL No!!! What is wrong with you? . . . It's not BEM-lehem, is it?!
 (PAUL marches over towards OLLIE.)

PAUL Right, Ollie – let's see if you can make up for your recent behaviour and redeem yourself – Bethlehem.
 (OLLIE stands up.)

OLLIE (*Spoken in rhythm.*)
 B . . .

PAUL Yes.

Ollie
E . . .

PAUL Yes.

Ollie
T . . .

ALL Yes!

(Ollie is so excited that he climbs further and further up his chair until he is standing on top of it. The CHILDREN stand up too with mounting excitement.)

Ollie
H . . .

ALL YES!

Ollie
L . . .

ALL YES!!

Ollie
E . . .

ALL YES!!

Ollie
NI!

ALL NOOOOOOOOOOO!!!!

(The CHILDREN resume singing as PAUL throws his hands in the air in despair and tries to keep them seated.)

CHILDREN
BERNADETTE'S, WE LOVE YOU SO
GIVES US SOMEWHERE GREAT TO GO

LITTLE SCHOOL IN A BIG TOWN
OFSTED PLEASE DON'T SHUT US DOWN
(SHUT US DOWN)

LUCY

COULDN'T BEAR TO LEAVE ST. BERNADETTE'S
I ALWAYS SAY ONE BIG PRAYER
IN HOPE WE CAN ALL STAY THERE

LAYLA

REALLY DO BELIEVE IN ST. BERNADETTE'S

ALL CHILDREN

COS WE WOULD LOSE ALL WE KNOW
IF EVER THEY LET US GO
SO LET US DO ONE LAST SHOW
AT ST. BERNADETTE'S

(The school bell signals the end of class and all the CHILDREN throw their paper airplanes.)

PAUL Right, that's detention for all of you! And Ollie – that's your parents coming in!

Music No. 7: WE WISH YOU A MERRY CHRISTMAS

(Music leads us out of the scene with the CHILDREN carrying off their seats.)

SCENE SEVEN

St. Bernadette's Assembly, School Hall

As the scene shifts from the classroom, the children start singing WE WISH YOU A MERRY CHRISTMAS and make their way to sit on the floor facing upstage in front of a large arched window and platform representing the school hall, which tracks on from two sides and joins in the middle. The TEACHERS are lined up either side on chairs – and Mrs BEVAN, the headmistress, is standing on the platform wearing a Santa hat and singing enthusiastically along with the children.

ST. BERNADETTE'S STAFF AND CHILDREN
 WE WISH YOU A MERRY CHRISTMAS
 WE WISH YOU A MERRY CHRISTMAS
 WE WISH YOU A MERRY CHRISTMAS
 AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR

GOOD TIDINGS WE BRING
 YOU AND YOUR KIN

WISH YOU A MERRY CHRISTMAS
 AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR!

MRS BEVAN Good morning, everybody!

ALL Good morning, Mrs Bevan!

MRS BEVAN Well I'm very impressed with all your uniforms this morning and isn't it lovely to see you all sitting up so nice and straight – and you teachers . . . now it's a very exciting time of year, and who can tell me what kind of play do we do at Christmas time?

(Some of the CHILDREN put up their hands.)

MRS BEVAN Yes?

ZACK

A Nativity play

MRS BEVAN That's right – a Nativity play. And some of you might remember last year's Nativity play when poor Mrs Spink had to go to that special hospital to stop her shaking and crying a lot. Anyway, this year I've decided we need a really good director for our Nativity – so that we can maybe win those five stars and pull this school out of the doldrums. So, this year I've thought very hard and I've decided that I'm giving the job to our very own Mr Maddens!

Music No. 7a: MADDENS THE DIRECTOR!

(A musical discord STAB! PAUL falls off his chair in shock and horror as the CHILDREN clap and cry "yes!".)

MRS BEVAN makes a hasty exit, swiftly followed by PAUL, who in turn is followed by the CHILDREN as they head towards MRS BEVAN'S

office. PAUL calls after her as he tries to keep up. The music is a frantic marching version of 'Nazareth'.)

Mrs Bevan – Mrs Bevan – Mrs Bevan!

(PAUL is suddenly aware of the CHILDREN behind him – he turns on them.)

Can you all just go back to the classroom – I'll be five minutes – get out your reading books. In silence, please!

(The CHILDREN turn and scatter – all except LUCY, who sneaks into the headmistress's office and hides behind her chair.)

SCENE EIGHT
Mrs Bevan's Office

MRS BEVAN is on her swivel chair, which is tucked into a pile of CHRISTMAS PRESENTS that looks like a cluttered desk. She is trying to look distracted when PAUL steps into her office

PAUL Mrs Bevan.

MRS BEVAN Yes, Mr Maddens?

PAUL I'm not doing the Nativity – I can't – can't do that again.

MRS BEVAN You went to drama school, didn't you?

PAUL That was years ago – and I wasn't any good!

MRS BEVAN So I've heard.

PAUL The last time I did this I got minus two stars – you promised you wouldn't put me through this again.

MRS BEVAN Well things change.

PAUL Please don't make me do this – I'm useless – and more to the point, those children are useless. There's not a talented one amongst them!

MRS BEVAN

Well you need to find their potential, Mr Maddens, because this school is in special measures – it's going down the pan and I need it pulled out again before we're all out of a job!

(PAUL looks shocked.)

MRS BEVAN

And anyway, I've got you some help – a new classroom assistant starting today. He will help you with the play. That should help with your panic attacks and your stress. Goodbye, Mr Maddens.

(PAUL is fuming, but has no choice but to leave the office defeated.)

MRS BEVAN takes a quick swig from her secret alcohol stash – a concealed drawer in the stack of Christmas presents that makes up her desk – and makes the sign of the cross. The school bell indicated break time. MRS BEVAN is wheeled on her chair across the stage by a CHILD during the transition to . . .)

SCENE NINE

Mr Poppy's arrival – The playground

The scene shifts to outside playground (The St. Bernadette's window parts slightly and lighting changes) as CHILDREN rush on with football, skipping rope, bean bags, hula hoop, etc. in a choreographed sequence set to music. MR POPPY makes his entrance on a child's scooter looking a little lost and shy as the CHILDREN play around him.

Music No. 8: MY VERY FIRST DAY AT SCHOOL

MR POPPY

I GOT MY LUNCH BOX IN MY HAND
I GOT THE BUTTERFLIES IN MY TUMMY
HOPE I GET TO PLAY IN THAT SAND
I WISH I COULD BE WITH MY MUMMY
IT'S MY VERY FIRST DAY
MY VERY FIRST DAY AT SCHOOL

(The CHILDREN notice him and giggle with excitement as they chase him round the playground on his scooter and he joins in their games – heading the ball, hopscotch, water bombing, skipping, etc. throughout the song.)

MR POPPY

WILL THERE BE A FRIEND FOR ME?
WILL THE TEACHER'S BE ALL SCARY?
WILL MY SINGING BE OFF KEY?
ARE THE DINNER LADIES HAIRY?
IT'S MY VERY FIRST DAY
MY VERY FIRST DAY AT SCHOOL

SEE . . .

I WANNA GO WHERE GIRLS ARE WATER BOMBING
I WANNA GO WHERE THE BOYS ALL SING AND DANCE
I WANNA GO TO A SCHOOL THAT ROCKS
WHERE NOBODY NASTY LAUGHS OR MOCKS
AND IF YOU WEE YOURSELF YOU GET A CLEAN PAIR OF PANTS

I GOT MY LUNCHBOX IN MY HAND
GOT THE BUTTERFLIES IN MY TUMMY
I JUST KNOW IT WILL BE GRAND
I DON'T EVEN NEED MY MUMMY
IT'S MY VERY FIRST DAY
MY VERY FIRST DAY AT SCHOOL

(MR POPPY does some rude and funny dancing.)

MR POPPY (Spoken in rhythm.)

MISS, MISS, I CAN'T DO THIS,
I GOT MY KNICKERS IN A RIGHT OLD TWIST!

(The CHILDREN copy his rude and funny dancing.)

CHILDREN (Spoken in rhythm.)

MISS, MISS, I CAN'T DO THIS,
I GOT MY KNICKERS IN A RIGHT OLD TWIST!

(MR POPPY does even ruder and funnier dancing.)

MR POPPY (Spoken in rhythm.)

MISS, MISS, I CAN'T DO THIS,
I GOT MY KNICKERS IN A RIGHT OLD TWIST!

(The CHILDREN copy him again in earnest.)

CHILDREN (*Spoken in rhythm.*)

MISS, MISS, I CAN'T DO THIS,

I GOT MY KNICKERS IN A RIGHT OLD TWIST!

(Mr POPPY is now doing a funny voice / comical accent along with his actions.)

Mr POPPY (*Spoken in rhythm.*)

MISS, MISS, I CAN'T DO THIS,

I GOT MY KNICKERS IN A RIGHT OLD TWIST!

ALL (*Spoken in rhythm.*)

MISS, MISS, I CAN'T DO THIS,

I GOT MY KNICKERS IN A RIGHT OLD TWIST!

(PAUL walks through the playground in astonishment. As the CHILDREN spot him they quieten down, but Mr POPPY, oblivious, continues.)

Mr POPPY (*Spoken in rhythm.*)

MISS, MISS, I CAN'T DO THIS,

I GOT MY KNICKERS IN A RIGHT OLD . . .

(Mr POPPY notices PAUL staring at him sternly. The music stops awkwardly.)

Mr POPPY

Oooooo . . . Hello!!!

PAUL

Hello.

Mr POPPY

Aaaaah, I've lost my leg . . . I don't know where my leg's gone . . . found it!

PAUL

Sorry – who are you?

Mr POPPY

I am Mr POPPY. I'm your new teaching assistant. I'm here to help you do a play. Who wants to do a play?!! Yes, we're gonna do a playyyyy!!!

PAUL

Yes, okay, okay. We are going to do a play but not right now.

Mr POPPY

Not right now.

PAUL

It's break time right now

Mr POPPY

Break time now.

PAUL

So, if you can just go inside for a moment, I'll be right with you.

Mr POPPY

Guys, guys, you need to go inside now. Break time's over . . .

PAUL

No, not them, not them, you. Mr POPPY . . . can you go inside?

Mr POPPY

. . . can you go inside?

PAUL

No, can you go inside?

Mr POPPY

No, can you go inside?

(The CHILDREN are giggling at Mr POPPY's copycat routine, much to the displeasure of PAUL. This continues until PAUL gets more and more annoyed . . .)

PAUL

GET INSIDE NOW, MR POPPY!!!

Mr POPPY

This is going so well; shall we have a selfie? YES! Come on, all in . . . (He takes a photo.) snapchat. Look at you . . . you're a fox with glasses.

(PAUL guides Mr POPPY inside as the CHILDREN all groan with disappointment.)

PAUL

Right, two minutes left of breaktime; use it wisely. Stop looking at me like that.

(The CHILDREN begin to chant, quietly at first, then more confidently.)

CHILDREN (*Spoken in rhythm.*)

POPPY! POPPY! POPPY! POPPY! (etc.)

Music No. 8a: MY VERY FIRST DAY AT SCHOOL

CHILDREN

POPPY! POPPY!

PAUL

Shhh – stop that – no – be quiet!

(MR POPPY runs back out to the theme of 'VERY FIRST DAY AT SCHOOL'. The CHILDREN scream and high five him with delight.)

MR POPPY AND KIDS

IT'S (YOUR) MY VERY FIRST DAY
MY (YOUR) VERY FIRST DAY AT SCHOOL!

MR POPPY

Who wants to make a Poppy monster?

(The CHILDREN all climb up and hang off MR POPPY as if he one giant beast – they sing the final phrase of the song.)

(PAUL is furious.)

PAUL

MR POPPY!!! PUT THE CHILDREN DOWN!! NOW!!!

(The CHILDREN groan as MR POPPY reluctantly complies.)

MR POPPY

What's the matter with him? Why is he such a grumpy guts?

(The music underscore becomes the melancholy "Wrapped in a Rainbow".)

Music No. 8b: WRAPPED UNDERSCORE

KATELYN

Because his girlfriend broke up with him at Christmas time.

MR POPPY

Shut the front door! Where is she now?

TJ

In America.

KATELYN

Yeah, she moved to Hollywood, but he was too scared to go.

MR POPPY

No way, blue coat and orange hat, who on earth told you that?

ALL

Miss Rye.

PAUL

Do you mind?

(Music stops.)

Do you think it's appropriate to discuss my personal, private details with a complete stranger?!

MR POPPY

Don't have a go at them, mate, it's Miss Rye. She's the one who's been going around giving it all that. You need to chill out a little bit. Chillin' out max and relaxing all cool and all shooting some b-ball outside of the school, when a couple of guys who were up to no good . . . you know. Hakuna matata. It means no worries for the rest of your days

PAUL

No worries, yes, thank you, Mr Poppy –

MR POPPY (Singing "The Lion King")

NANTS INGONYAMA BAGIITHI BABA . . .

PAUL

Put him down, please!

MR POPPY

A BANANA, PENGUIN A BANANA
A BANANA, PENGUIN A BANANA . . .

PAUL

Right, that's enough, enough! Inside all of you please – inside.

(The CHILDREN reluctantly make their way inside, followed by MR POPPY.)

PAUL

Not you, Mr Poppy.

(MR POPPY backtracks.)

MR POPPY

Not me, not me!!! Do you want to hear any other animals? I can do a giraffe . . . (Impression.) What about a giraffe doing an impression of a turtle? . . . (Impression.) I can do loads of them.

PAUL

I don't want to hear any more, I just want to ask you a question . . .

MR POPPY

Shoot! No, don't shoot, we're in a school. Sorry, carry on . . .

PAUL

Have you been a classroom assistant before?

MR POPPY

Yeah – loads.

(But PAUL has already gone. The OAKMOOR CHILDREN shuffle off with the huge Christmas Tree after MR SHAKESPEARE.)

Music No. 10: HOLLYWOOD ARE COMING

(MR POPPY is zooming off on his scooter, whispering with excitement.)

MR POPPY (Spoken in rhythm.)
HOLLYWOOD ARE COMING! HOLLYWOOD ARE COMING NOW!

SCENE TWELVE

The journey back to school – Hollywood Are Coming

As MR POPPY continues his journey back across the town he bumps into various people: mums on the school run with pushchairs and prams – woman waiting at the bus stop – traffic warden walking the streets – workman digging the road – newspaper seller, etc., passing on the good news.

MR POPPY (Spoken in rhythm.)
HOLLYWOOD ARE COMING! HOLLYWOOD ARE COMING NOW!
HOLLYWOOD ARE COMING! HOLLYWOOD ARE COMING NOW!

(On arrival into the school MR POPPY calls the CHILDREN.)

MR POPPY
Hey kids! Kids, kids, kids, KIDS!!!

(ST BERNADETTE'S CHILDREN run in and gather round him.)

MR POPPY
I've got something really important – I'm not allowed to tell you. Stop looking at me like that – my lips are sealed. I will not crack under the pressure . . . fine I've cracked! I was just in the Christmas Tree shop with Mr Maddens and he said that Hollywood are coming to film our Nativity and turn it into a movie!!! This is gonna be so big for all of us! We're gonna be like those stars that we see on TV.

(MR POPPY starts to pick some of the children out of the group.)

MR POPPY
Alfie, you could be like Ed Sheeran* when he randomly turned up in "Game of Thrones" and nobody really knew why. Katelyn, you could be like Debbie McGee* on "Strictly Come Dancing". (He throws her body around wildly). Ollie, you could be like James Corden* in any of the mediocre films that James Corden has ever made.

MR POPPY
The point is, we are all gonna be rich and we are all gonna be FAMOUS!!!

MR POPPY
WE'RE GONNA BE HUGE, WE'RE GONNA BE FAMOUS
WE'RE GONNA BE RICH AND WHO CAN BLAME US
HOLLYWOOD ARE COMING AND THEY'RE COMING BANG ON CUE

(The CHILDREN scream with excitement again.)

WE'RE GONNA BE HELD IN SUCH AFFECTION
WE'RE GONNA BE BIGGER THAN 'ONE DIRECTION'
HOLLYWOOD ARE COMING, AND ALL OUR DREAMS COME TRUE

(MR POPPY and the CHILDREN all run forward and sing to OAKMOOR who are marching by.)

CHILDREN / POPPY
SORRY OAKMOOR WE'RE ON OUR WAY NOW
AND WHERE WE'RE GOING WHO CAN SAY NOW?
BUT IT'S A PLACE FOR JUST A CHOSEN FEW
AND IT'S US NOT YOU!

(MRS BEVAN rushes into the hall as the LORD MAYOR OF COVENTRY enters from the opposite side.)

MRS BEVAN
Oh, Mr Mayor, Mr Mayor . . . Oh, there you are. Have you heard the news?! Hollywood – coming here – to our school – to see our Nativity!!

LORD MAYOR
Mrs Bevan this is huge – huge!! And not just for the school but for this city. It's going to put Coventry on the map – we need

* These celebrities' names are changeable, depending on cast and current relevance.

publicity, marketing, merchandising. We will need T-shirts, mugs – Mary and Joseph action figures!!

LORD MAYOR
WE ARE THE FUTURE OF THE BIG SCREEN

MRS BEVAN
HARRY POTTER? WHAT A HAS-BEEN

BOTH
HOLLYWOOD ARE COMING AND WE'RE FEELING PRETTY STRANGE

ENSEMBLE (Off stage.) OOOOOOH OOOOOOH AAAH!

(MISS RYE and other STAFF rush into the hall.)

MISS RYE
OUR NAME IN LIGHTS, WOW, WE'VE BEEN CHOSEN
WE'RE GONNA BE AS BIG AS THE CAST OF 'FROZEN'
HOLLYWOOD ARE COMING, JUST WATCH OUR WHOLE LIVES CHANGE

(MR POPPY and the CHILDREN rush back into the hall – they join Mrs BEVAN, the LORD MAYOR and the TEACHERS as they sing out to the audience, heart-felt.)

ALL
WHO'D HAVE THOUGHT ST. BERNADETTE'S
WOULD BECOME PRODUCERS' PETS
NEVER THOUGHT WE'D GET THIS CHANCE TO SHINE
AND WE'RE FEELING, AND WE'RE FEELING FINE!

(MR POPPY and the CHILDREN regroup.)

MR POPPY
And then, in the distance, making her return from Hollywood . . .
It's Princess Jennifer.

(JENNIFER arrives in a fantasy moment – she is standing on high holding an Oscar – wind machine in hair – and dressed head-to-toe in red carpet glamour. Her red satin dress has an extra-long train that makes the shape of a red carpet as it is rolled out by PAPPARAZZI.)

ENSEMBLE
AHH (etc.)

JENNIFER
I WILL GRANT YOUR HOLLYWOOD DREAMS
ON A THOUSAND SILVER BEAMS
ALL YOUR DREAMS COME TRUE
FOR YOU AND YOU AND YOU – AND YOU!

(AS JENNIFER'S light goes out Mrs BEVAN steps downstage – inspired.)

MRS BEVAN
HIT THE PAPERS, MAN THE PHONES
LOOK OUT WORLD, IT'S BRIDGET JONES!
HOLLYWOOD ARE COMING
MY CLOSE-UP'S ALL IN VIEW

(MR POPPY now involves the CHILDREN in their fantasy lifting them, swashbuckling with them, etc.)

KATELYN
A DISNEY PRINCESS – I THINK THAT'S ME

OLLIE
A PIRATE OF THE CARRIBEAN SEA

ALFIE
THE NEW JAMES BOND IS WRITTEN IN THE STARS

KIDS / ALL
AND THE WORLD IS OURS!

KIDS
THINGS ARE REALLY COOL AT ST. BERNADETTE'S
OUR SCHOOL IS SO FULL OF JOY
FOR EVERY GIRL AND BOY

ADULTS
HOLLYWOOD ARE COMING
GONNA MAKE SOME MONEY NOW
HOLLYWOOD ARE COMING
BRING ON THAT SUNSHINE!

(MR POPPY is shot down by 'James Bond' as he and the CHILDREN run around in circles, followed by the ensemble who have now

become PARENTS, still in their work clothes, following Mrs BEVAN as the CHILDREN sing.)

GORDON A red carpet? You must be kidding me, get rid of it!

CRITIC Hollywood coming to Coventry?! t's like Audrey Hepburn moving to Wolverhampton.

GORDON Patrick, please, is there any way you can you get Hollywood to come to Oakmoor to see one of my shows?

CRITIC Oh, Gordon, I do feel for you. I mean, where is your career now? It's behind you! I must dash.

(The CRITIC dashes off, chased by GORDON.)

KIDS

THINGS ARE REALLY COOL AT ST. BERNADETTE'S
OUR SCHOOL IS SO FULL OF JOY
FOR EVERY GIRL AND BOY

(At the same time the PARENTS . . .)

PARENTS

HOLLYWOOD ARE COMING, HOLLYWOOD ARE COMING NOW
HOLLYWOOD ARE COMING, GONNA MAKE SOME MONEY NOW
HOLLYWOOD ARE COMING, BRING ON THAT SUNSHINE!

(Mrs BEVAN addresses the PARENTS, who are now standing with their respective CHILDREN at a Parents' Meeting in the hall.)

Questions from the parents, please . . .

Mrs BEVAN

Will we have to relocate to Hollywood because he can't commute?

PARENT 1

Mrs Bevan – will the children be paid? They will be working.

PARENT 2

Will TJ get his own trailer? Who's going to do his hair and make-up?

PARENT 3

Mrs Bevan? Will Sherice be considered for the part of Mary, cos she's really good if she's pushed!

PARENT 4

Mrs Bevan – will they need an agent?

PARENT 5

Oh yes – we all need agents – cos Hollywood are coming, and we are all gonna be – RICH AND FAMOUS!!

Mrs BEVAN

(The entire company join together jumping up and down with excitement and joy as they sing out . . .)

ALL

WE'RE GONNA BE HUGE, WE'RE GONNA BE FAMOUS
WE'RE GONNA BE RICH AND WHO CAN BLAME US?
HOLLYWOOD ARE COMING, AND I CAN'T BELIEVE IT'S . . .

CHILDREN (Spoken in rhythm)

HOLLYWOOD ARE COMING!
HOLLYWOOD ARE COMING!
HOLLYWOOD ARE COMING!
HOLLYWOOD ARE COMING!

ADULTS

TRUE . . .

ALL

HOLLYWOOD ARE COMING!!! YEAH!

Music No. 10a: THE PRESS ARE COMING

SCENE THIRTEEN

Outside School – TV crew into press conference assembly – School Hall

The music underscore is tense / exciting. Mrs BEVAN, Mr POPPY and the CHILDREN are bunched up together, staring down an imaginary TV camera lens, waving and beaming as the TV REPORTER talks to camera.

TV REPORTER

Thank you, Rachel! With me now are some of the real stars of Nativity – the motion picture, the pupils of St. Bernadette's school. You must be very excited?

Mrs BEVAN

Oh, very excited, aren't we, children?

CHILDREN

(Cheering.) Yeah!

MALEFICENT
 Maybe you should play King Herod, sir?
 (GORDON is beside himself with excitement and glee.)

GORDON
 Of course! Why didn't I think of that? I, Gordon Shakespeare, will be playing the role of King Herod – in *King Herod the Rock Opera!*

WHO'S GOING TO WIN THAT FIVE-STAR REVIEW?

OAKMOOR
 US! US! US! US!
 GORDON
 ME! ME! ME! ME! ME!

(OAKMOOR march off stage, lead by a triumphant GORDON, over which we hear the voice of Mr Poppy, as if presenting 'The X-Factor'.)

Music No. 11b: OUT OF OAKMOOR

SCENE SEVENTEEN

The Auditions – St. Bernadette's Hall

The scene shifts to St. Bernadette's where a glitter slash curtain has been hung on a rail to form the backdrop to the school auditions.

PAUL and Mr Poppy are off centre downstage where a CHILD performs in front of the glitter slash curtain. They are tap dancing and juggling beanbags out of time with the music. The beanbags fall on their head.

Mr Poppy
 Mr Maddens, I've found a box that makes a noise, a box drum so I called it a Brum!

PAUL
 A cajon.

Mr Poppy
 A what!?!

PAUL
 A cajon.

Mr Poppy
 "You cajon touch this", "Everybody was cajon fu fighting!".

PAUL
 "I cajon't take my eyes off you" . . . I've got a cast list here.

Mr Poppy
 You can't have a cast list, we need to audition.

PAUL
 Why do we need to audition? I've cast it.

Mr Poppy
 It's a Hollywood Nativity . . . we've got to have auditions.

Music No. 12: OUR SCHOOL NATIVITY

PAUL
 It is not a Hollywood Nativity . . . it's a St. Bernadette's Nativity!

Mr Poppy
 We will do it like *Britain's Got Talent*; I will be Simon Cowell and you be David Walliams.

PAUL
 Why I am him?

Mr Poppy
 I'm still not entirely sure on, you know . . . it doesn't matter, these kids are amazing we need to let them show us what we got!

PAUL
 They can't do a lot.

Mr Poppy
 Yes, they can . . .

THEY WANT A PART IN OUR SCHOOL NATIVITY
 THEY WANNA BE THE BEST
 THEY'LL BE THE STARS OF OUR SCHOOL NATIVITY
 SINGING ABOVE THE REST

WATCH 'EM GO "OOH OOH OOH"

WATCH 'EM GO "AAH AAH AAH"

WATCH 'EM GO "FAR FAR FAR"

IN OUR SCHOOL NATIVITY

AND IF THEY GET THE CHANCE

THEY'RE REALLY GONNA SHINE

THEY'LL MAKE UP THEIR OWN DANCE

AND SHOW US THE'RE DIVINE

THEY'RE GONNA BE THE STARS – NOT USELESS ANYMORE

THEY'RE GONNA LEAVE US WANTING MORE –

LEAVE US WANTING MORE

IN OUR SCHOOL NATIVITY!

Mr Poppy
 (To a child.) Hello Alfie, what's your name?

ALFIE

Alfie.

MR POPPY What do you want to be in the Nativity?

ALFIE I really want to be Joseph.

MR POPPY He really wants to be Joseph. Okay, start by doing this for me . . .
Close your eyes, draw back the curtains to see for certain what
you thought you knew. Far, far away someone is weeping . . .

MR MADDENS What you doing?

MR POPPY The lyrics from *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat!*

MR MADDENS It's not that Joseph.

MR POPPY It's not that Joseph . . . let's see what you got . . .

HE WANTS TO BE JOSEPH THE CARPENTER
HE'S THE ROMANTIC LEAD

ALFIE

OH YEAH!

MR POPPY HE'S GOT THE SKILLS TO MAKE A GREAT CARPENTER
HE GOES RED UNTIL HE BLEEDS

WATCH HIM GO "OOH OOH OOH"
WATCH 'EM GO

MR MADDENS

"AAH AAH AAH"

MR POPPY WATCH 'EM GO FAR FAR FAR
IN OUR SCHOOL NATIVITY

MR POPPY (To a child.) Hi, Katelyn.

KATELYN (STAR)

Hello!

MR POPPY Hello! What do you want to be?

KATELYN (STAR) I want to be a star!

MR POPPY Okay, Why would . . .

KATELYN (STAR) (Interrupting him.) The STAR OF BETHLEHEM!

MR POPPY Okay, and why would you like to be the Star of Bethlehem?

KATELYN (STAR) Because I look like a pop star, sound like a pop star, I am a pop
star.

MR POPPY I think we need to work on her confidence if she goes forward.

KATELYN (STAR)

AND IF I GET THE CHANCE
I'M REALLY GONNA SHINE
I'LL MAKE UP MY OWN DANCE
I'LL SHOW THEM I'M DIVINE

I'M GONNA BE THE STAR

NOT USELESS ANYMORE

I'M GONNA LEAVE THEM WANTING MORE
LEAVE THEM WANTING MORE
OF OUR SCHOOL NATIVITY!

MR POPPY

She is going through to the next round!

PAUL

There's not a next round!!!

MR POPPY

(To child.) Hello Ollie, who do you want to play in the Nativity?

OLLIE

I know you're not gonna let me, but I really want to play Joseph.

MR MADDENS

Why do you want to play Joseph?

OLLIE

Well, because my mum has just had a baby and my dad doesn't
think it's his, so I think I know how Joseph feels . . .

MR MADDENS

Okay.

Mr Poppy Write down sob story . . . Ollie, what've you got for us?

Ollie A rap.

Mr Poppy He has a rap! 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 –

Ollie (*Rapping*)

AWAY IN A MANGER NO CRIB FOR A BED
THE LITTLE LORD JESUS LAID DOWN HIS SWEET HEAD
HIS DAD WAS ALL ANGRY LIKE JEREMY KYLE
HIS MUM WAS ALL SULKY, NOT EVEN A SMILE
HE WAS SHOT DOWN, BUT IT WASN'T ME
HE WAS SHOT DOWN, IN THE NATIVITY
HE WAS SHOT DOWN, DOWN IN THE MANGER
SHOT DOWN, FOR HIS NIKE TRAINERS!

Mr Maddens

USELESS – THAT'S WHAT WE ARE
WE'RE REALLY USELESS
WE NEED TO BE MORE RUTHLESS
THEY DONT EVEN STAND A CHANCE

HOPELESS – THATS ALL THEY ARE
THEY'RE JUST HOPELESS

THEY'RE JUST A BUNCH OF JOKERS
WHO CAN'T EVEN SING OR DANCE

USELESS – THAT'S WHAT WE ARE
WE'RE REALLY USELESS
WE NEED TO BE MORE RUTHLESS
THEY DONT EVEN STAND A CHANCE

HOPELESS – THATS ALL THEY ARE
THEY'RE JUST HOPELESS

THEY'RE JUST A BUNCH OF JOKERS
WHO CAN'T EVEN SING OR DANCE

Mr Poppy

AND IF THEY GET THE CHANCE
THEY'RE REALLY GONNA SHINE

THEY'LL MAKE UP THEIR OWN DANCE
AND SHOW US THEY'RE DIVINE

THEY'RE GONNA BE THE STARS
NOT USELESS ANY MORE
THEY'RE GONNA LEAVE US WANTING MORE
LEAVE US WANTING MORE

BOTH
IN OUR SCHOOL NATIVITY

PAUL I need five minutes!

(PAUL exits.)

Mr Poppy We are all going to Hollywood! And nothing cajon stop us!

SCENE EIGHTEEN

Church – Paul's confession

Music No. 13: MADDENS' CONFESSINARY

Church organ music (to the theme from 'Dear Father Christmas') and a stained-glass window gobo transport us into the church where a PRIEST is seated on a pew. PAUL MADDENS joins him and makes the sign of the cross.

PAUL Father, I really need your advice.

PRIEST Paul Maddens, long time no see!

PAUL I thought you couldn't see through this gauze.

PRIEST That's what we tell people, but how do you think we get the gossip?

PAUL Okay, look, say someone told this stupid little white lie and now it's grown into a very big lie and everyone is celebrating it. What would you tell them to do?

PRIEST Well that's terrible! What type of person would do that?! That person would certainly go to hell! By the way, this thing you're

doing for the kids; I don't suppose there'll be a part in it for me? I was very good in my youth, you know – I auditioned for Westlife and everything.

(Singing.) OH DANNY BOY
THE PIPES, THE PIPES ARE CALLING
FROM GLEN TO GLEN

(The PRIEST suddenly notices that PAUL MADDENS has gone.)

PRIEST WAIT! You've not seen my moves yet!

Music No. 13a: BACK TO SKOOL

Paul Maddens, you come back here. I baptized you, young man!

SCENE NINETEEN

Mary and Joseph Rehearsal – St. Bernadette's School Hall

As the lights shift onstage, we reveal MR POPPY and PAUL sitting at the keyboards, trying to write a song together. OLLIE and ALFIE are seen fighting.

PAUL What's going on here? Ollie and Alfie – did I see you fighting?

(The two boys look caught out.)

PAUL Why were you fighting?

OLLIE He said I'd be rubbish at Joseph and I'd never get a part in the school play.

PAUL Alfie – who made you director?

ALFIE No one – but he hit me.

PAUL It's not up to you to decide who's going to be good or bad in the play – as far as I'm concerned neither of you are going to do it –

OLLIE I knew you wouldn't let me!

PAUL Sit down, both of you! I was very impressed with the auditions – an awful lot of unexpected treats – so well done for that, and now

I have no doubt you'll be able to learn this song that I've been writing for the opening of the show – "Nazareth"! So, I'll tell you what; I'm going to sing you a few lines and then you can sing them back to me.

(Singing, ad lib from No. 14.)

THINGS ARE REALLY GOOD IN NAZARETH
A CITY OF HOPE AND JOY AND GIRL MEETS BOY

(The CHILDREN look blank – MR POPPY looks unimpressed.)

PAUL Now you try –

(The CHILDREN attempt to join in with him, but their hearts aren't really in it.)

CHILDREN (Singing, ad lib from No. 14.)

THINGS ARE REALLY GOOD IN NAZARETH
A CITY OF HOPE AND JOY AND GIRL MEETS BOY

(Suddenly MR POPPY takes over, playing along to his own version.)

Music No. 14: NAZARETH TEACHING

MR POPPY

THINGS ARE REALLY COOL IN NAZARETH
OUR CITY IS FULL OF JOY
COS THIS IS WHERE GIRL MEETS BOY.

You pick it up? Try it with me.

(The CHILDREN perk up and sing along confidently.)

CHILDREN

THINGS ARE REALLY COOL IN NAZARETH
OUR CITY IS FULL OF JOY
COS THIS IS WHERE GIRL MEETS BOY

(PAUL is annoyed.)

MR POPPY

Good, yeah?

PAUL

Hands up who thinks my song is better?

(The CHILDREN hesitate – then OLLIE puts his hand up.)

Ah – thank you, Ollie

OLLIE

Can I go to the toilet, please?

PAUL

No – put your hand down. Who thinks Mr Poppy's version is better?

(All of the CHILDREN's hands shoot up.)

PAUL

All of you. That's like saying Lloyd Webber is better than Sondheim!

MR POPPY

5 – 6 – 7 – 8 –

MR POPPY / CHILDREN

THINGS ARE REALLY COOL IN NAZARETH

OUR CITY IS FULL OF JOY

COS THIS IS WHERE GIRL MEETS BOY

MR POPPY

Okay, so imagine this . . . The lights go down . . . a mist covers the stage. We see twinkly lights and then, emerging from the mist, we see buildings . . . it's Nazareth. It's you lot, as buildings, as Nazareth. Your little faces pop out and you'll go "Nazareth". And then we see a camel, a real-life camel walk across the stage, and then he'll go, "Nazareth". And then the hump of the camel opens . . .

(The following section includes AD LIBS, depending on the performing cast.)*

MR POPPY

* . . . and out pops Layla, and she's like, "NAZARETH".

* . . . and then we have a star. Katelyn, would you like to be the Star of Bethlehem?! Well you, you are flying twenty foot above

everyone's heads singing a massive solo. You have the voice of an angel. You are like Charlotte Church, but before it all went wrong.

* . . . and TJ, do you want to be Angel Gabriel? How are you with heights? You are going on a death slide, man! You are gonna be zooming down at a hundred miles per hour towards the ground, towards everyone.

Boys, you are gonna be the Kings, but in a boy band. Giving it dance moves and backing moves. You're gonna be like the Backstreet Boys, but when they were relevant . . .

No, no, no, Mr Poppy, no!!! Some really good ideas there, but none of that is going to happen – and anyway these children will never be able to do that!

Yes, they will.

MR POPPY

No, we won't – we're useless – everybody knows we're useless.

JADE

You're not useless.

MR POPPY

That's what Mr Maddens always call us.

BETH

No, I don't.

PAUL

Yes, you do.

CLASS

No, I don't.

PAUL

You do.

CLASS

You told Mrs Bevan that we are – Sadie heard you.

CLASS

Well, okay, I didn't mean . . . I didn't mean useless. But Mr Poppy, these kids will never be able to do that.

PAUL

Shut up! I will not stand there and listed to that. I will not stand there and listen to that nonsense. Ladies and Gentlemen, let me introduce to you the latest character of the *Mr Men*, Mr Negative. Look at you, dressed so smugly in your varying shades of grey. That's an underwhelming book, isn't it; two shades of grey. These

MR POPPY

kids are amazing. You lot are amazing; you're brilliant and you are not useless. We just need to rehearse a little more. Let's do the Mary and Joseph song . . .

PAUL

The Mary and Joseph song. This is a duet between our leading characters. This is not a test. I don't care if you get the words wrong or the melody wrong . . . this is just for Mr Poppy and I to get an idea of who might be able to play those roles. So, who would like to play Mary and Joseph? You all do. Sit down, Ollie! Okay, you two, stand here; you be Mary and you be Joseph!

(Mr Poppy starts to play some underscoring . . .)

Music No. 15: ONE LOOK TEACHING

MR POPPY

So, let's set the mood for them. This is the first pop / rock creation by Poppy and Maddens: PADDENS!! It's a starlit night and Mary and Joseph are away in a manger somewhere. I need you two to give me vocals like the holy bible diva herself . . . Messiah Carey. Mary starts . . .

MR POPPY

1 - 2 - 3 . . .

KATELYN

HE'S NOT MY TYPE

ARCHIE

SHE'S NOT TOO BAD

KATELYN

NOT THE MOST GORGEOUS I'VE EVER HAD

MR POPPY

I'LL GROW TO LOVE HER

KATELYN

IT MIGHT WORK OUT

MR POPPY (*à la Rock God!*)

TOO YOUNG TO KNOW WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT

MR POPPY Just nice and easy on the vocals, yeah . . .

(MARY and JOSEPH go to sit down.)

Where are you going? Come back! Come back! I'm like Kate Winslet at the end of Titanic. "Come back . . . I'll never let go, Jack."

(Mr POPPY lets go of the keys.)

So, they look at each other. Look at each other, then. Joseph runs his fingers through his hair and then gives it finger guns. Mary is so impressed that she whips off her glasses and giggles. Then she pops them back on because she realises that she can't see Joseph any more. Around them are all the animals . . . the chickens, the donkeys, and then Joseph spots a dolphin. Then they take a big step in . . .

(Sung.) AND THEN THEY KISS

CHILDREN

YUCKKK!

PAUL

They don't have to kiss, Mr Poppy.

MR POPPY

Yes, they do, they do have to kiss, they do. Because, that's how babies are made . . .

PAUL

Enough, enough.

BECKY

Mr Maddens, you and Mr Poppy should kiss first.

PAUL

No, No. Absolutely not.

(The CHILDREN start to chant . . .)

CHILDREN

KISS! KISS! KISS! KISS! KISS!...

PAUL

Okay, okay . . . fine. There's nothing wrong with that, fine. Right, come here. Come here . . .

(Mr POPPY plays "Hey Big Spender", *ad lib*, on the keys.)

PAUL Just stop it. What are you doing? Close your mouth. I'm going to kiss your cheek . . .

(MR POPPY leans in, PAUL resists, but they finally kiss awkwardly. Suddenly MR SHAKESPEARE is in the hall.)

GORDON And this is what's wrong with State Education!

(And we see that the OAKMOOR CHILDREN have been spying on ST. BERNADETTE'S from behind the hall window and even from the auditorium.)

ST. BERNADETTE'S SPIES!!!

SCENE TWENTY
The fight – School playing fields

Music No. 16: THE FIGHT

Fight music to aggressive version of "One Look". The two schools rush to form two tribes and taunt each other with 'Haka'-style rituals. (OAKMOOR have war paint on their faces). ST. BERNADETTE'S beat their chests and cry out.

OAKMOOR
OAKMOOR, OAKMOOR, OAKMOOR, OAKMOOR!

ST. BERNADETTE'S
BERNADETTE'S, BERNADETTE'S, BERNADETTE'S, BERNADETTE'S!

OAKMOOR
OAKMOOR, OAKMOOR, OAKMOOR, OAKMOOR!

ST. BERNADETTE'S
BERNADETTE'S, BERNADETTE'S, BERNADETTE'S, BERNADETTE'S!

ALL
CHARGE!

(The two tribes charge at each other and begin a choreographed fight sequence. The above sequence may take place in the auditorium if theatre layout allows. Meanwhile, on-stage, MR

SHAKESPEARE pushes and shoves ST. BERNADETTE'S CHILDREN, thinking nothing of his position as adult. PAUL rushes over.)

PAUL Gordon! What the hell are you doing?
(MR SHAKESPEARE turns to reveal a small boy in a headlock.)

Gordon! Let him go!
(MR SHAKESPEARE releases the boy and pushes MR MADDENS, who shoves him back.)

Don't you push me.
(MR SHAKESPEARE gives PAUL a sly punch.)

GORDON Get your dirty children off my class!
(PAUL shoves him.)

PAUL What are you even doing here?
GORDON We're on a field trip.

PAUL You idiot!
(MR MADDENS shoves MR SHAKESPEARE again. MR POPPY is rolling on the floor. MR SHAKESPEARE lashes out at MR MADDENS.)

Come on, then!
(PAUL and MR SHAKESPEARE grapple with each other. MR POPPY runs over to them, shaking off OAKMOOR CHILDREN.)

MR POPPY Bundle!!
(MR POPPY runs in and tackles MR SHAKESPEARE to the ground. MADDENS and POPPY and the CLASS all dive on top of him.)
(Suddenly, MISS RYE is outside, blowing a whistle and pulling CHILDREN off the bundle pile.)

MISS RYE Get inside – now! Get off him! Inside!

- Mr POPPY / PAUL Yes, all fine. We're just here listening to his favourite rapper . . . Snoop Dog. Look, I was wondering if you would come and see our Nativity? It's going to be very good. There's a death slide, there's a Camel, it's probably going to be on ice.
- JENNIFER Paul, I don't know what time it is over there, but are you a little bit drunk? But, I can't pop to Coventry to see a Nativity. It's a really, really busy time over here. We've got a film opening tonight; it's the premiere, actually, and I really should be getting ready. It . . . really is good to hear from you, though, Paul . . . I hope you're okay.
- PAUL One more thing, before you go, but the main reason why you should come to see our Nativity, is because, I love you.
- (*Music cuts. PAUL can't believe what Mr POPPY has made him say. PAUL hangs up.*)
- PAUL No, no, no! Why did you make me say that?
- Mr POPPY Because you do love her.
- PAUL No, I don't.
- Mr POPPY You do. You talk about her all the time, and I talk about pizza all the time and I love pizza. So, you love her.
- PAUL It's not the same thing, though, is it!
- Mr POPPY Yes, it is!
- PAUL Just leave, Mr. Poppy.
- Mr POPPY Okay, okay, I'm sorry. I'll go! But here . . .
- PAUL What is it?
- Mr POPPY It's the letters the kids wrote to Santa; if you read them, it might help!
- (*He picks up the key.*)
- PAUL What are you doing with that?

Mr POPPY I thought I would need the key for the door!

PAUL You don't need that – just get out!

(Mr POPPY leaves. PAUL is in a state of frustration and anguish.)

SCENE TWENTY-THREE
Mr Maddens' apartment / Children in bedrooms – split focus

Music No. 20: DEAR FATHER CHRISTMAS

OLLIE

SANTA I'VE BEEN FEELING PRETTY SAD
 I THINK ITS COS MY MUM JUST LEFT MY DAD
 REALLY WANT THEM BOTH TO COME AND SEE ME IN OUR SHOW
 BUT UNLESS I'M PLAYING JOSEPH THEY WON'T GO

(OLLIE rolls off the bed as a new CHILD appears from under the duvet and stands upon it.)

LUCY

SANTA, I'VE BEEN WORRIED FOR A WHILE
 I THINK ITS COS MY TEACHER'S LOST HIS SMILE

(A different CHILD climbs up the ladder to the bunk bed.)

SHERRICE

HIS GIRLFRIEND WENT AWAY AND EVER SINCE THEY'VE BEEN APART
 HE'S NEEDED YOU TO MEND HIS BROKEN HEART

(CHILDREN slide down the slide and roll around, and change positions on the beds as they sing.

PAUL is reading and getting increasingly emotional – he is crying.)

ALL CHILDREN
 DEAR FATHER CHRISTMAS
 MAKE OUR WISH COME TRUE
 DEAR FATHER CHRISTMAS
 SEND YOUR SPIRIT THROUGH

THERE ARE CHILDREN IN THE WORLD
WHO NEED YOU WAY MORE THAN WE MAY DO
BUT FATHER CHRISTMAS, WE STILL BELIEVE IN YOU
DEAR FATHER CHRISTMAS MAKE OUR WISH COME TRUE.

(PAUL wipes his eyes and works through his decision. He knows what he is going to do.)

CHILDREN
FOLLOW YOUR DREAMS, REAP WHAT YOU SOW
WE HOPE YOUR LIFE GETS WRAPPED UP IN A RAINBOW
SAIL TO THE STARS, FLY TO THE MOON

CHILDREN / MR MADDENS
PLEASE / I'LL GO GET JENNIFER, BRING HER BACK SOON
BRING HER BACK SOON

CHILDREN (on track)
SPARKLE AND SHINE
SPARKLE AND SHINE

SCENE TWENTY-FOUR School Hall – and boarding a plane to Hollywood

PAUL has made his decision. The music changes to a building determination of "Sparkle And Shine" as he marches to the classroom (the bed slides away) where MR POPPY is rehearsing "Sparkle And Shine" with the CHILDREN.

Music No. 21: HOLLYWOOD WE'RE COMING

MR POPPY / BERNADETTES
SPARKLE AND SHINE
SPARKLE AND SHINE
LET'S ALL MAKE A DAZZLING SOUND

(PAUL bursts in and interrupts triumphantly.)

PAUL
Okay!! Who wants to go on a death slide?

(MR POPPY and the CHILDREN jump and down shouting with joy.)

MR POPPY
You're going?

PAUL
I'm going to Hollywood. I'm going to get Jennifer!

MR POPPY
I knew you would decide to go! I've already bought you a plane ticket to L.A. – Luton Airport – you can get to Hollywood from there. And I've packed your suitcase – everything is in there – your beach towel – your medication – your bikini – and a little surprise . . .

(MR POPPY opens the suitcase and two small CHILDREN jump out.)

MR POPPY
These two are coming with you.

PAUL
Woah, woah, woah – I don't think so.

MR POPPY
They can do a little bit of singing and dancing and help you out . . . (To the CHILDREN, about MR MADDENS.) Make sure he eats three times a day, okay?

(The CHILDREN nod.)

MR POPPY
And don't worry, I've got their passports and their tickets and their parents' consent forms – it's going to be amazing!

PAUL
Okay – okay – kids . . . we're going to Hollywood!

(The CHILDREN scream with excitement.)

ALL
WE'RE GONNA BE HUGE, WE'RE GONNA BE FAMOUS
WE'RE GOING TO BE RICH AND WHO CAN BLAME US
HOLLYWOOD WE'RE COMING, AND I CAN'T BELIEVE IT'S . . .

ADULTS
TRUE, TRUE, TRUE

CHILDREN
SPARKLE AND SHINE! SPARKLE AND SHINE! SPARKLE AND SHINE!

ALL
HOLLYWOOD WE'RE COMING! YEAH!