

THE PIED PIPER

A theatrical script by Jacek Zuzanski and Laura Opie
The adaptation utilizes excerpts from the Robert Browning's poem
The Pied Piper of Hamelin and children's rhyme.

SCENE 1 INTRODUCTION

MUSIC – introduction – soft, rather simple, and slow. Narrator enters. Music continues.

NARRATOR

The story of the Pied Piper of Hamelin dates back to some obscure historical event that occurred in the town of Hamelin in Germany over 720 years ago, on June 26, 1284. The oldest remaining source is a note in Latin prose that was added to a 14th century manuscript from Lunenburg, about 150 years after the Piper played his tunes. There are also reports of a glass picture in the church of Hamelin, dating from before 1300, depicting the exodus of the children. And in the "Pied Piper house" of Hamelin, built in 1603, a rhyme that tells the story is inscribed on the wall:

On the day of John and Paul
In the year of 1284
Led by a Piper dressed in all kinds of colors
130 children of Hamelin were seduced and lost.
(Music stops. Narrator exits.)

SCENE 2: The Children of Hamelin

Children run in with laugh and jumps. One is trying to make others form a semicircle. It takes a couple tries before he succeeds. Finally children are staying in a semicircle open toward audience. They are playing counting out games. When someone is pointed "out" he/she runs away, hides behind the scenery and gets ready for the next Scene.

HANS

One potato, two potato, three potato, four,
Five potato, six potato, seven potato, more.
(Olga is counted out and runs behind the screen.)

KATJA *(Jumping rope.)*

Bubble gum, bubble gum in dish
How many pieces do you wish?
Five – One, two, three, four, five...
(Petra jumps rope to go behind the screen. If she misses she runs behind.)

KURT

Monkey, monkey bottle of beer
How many monkeys are there here?
123, mother caught a flea
The flea died and mother cried
O-U-T spells out.

(Wolfgang is counted out and runs behind the scenery screen.)

GRETEL

One, two, three, four
Mary's at the kitchen door
Five, six, seven, eight
Eating cherries of a plate
O-U-T spells out goes she.

(Stephen is counted out and he takes Louisa with him when he exits behind screen.)

SCENE 3: THE RATS PANTOMIME

An actor with a rat mask comes out and skitters around the stage doing "rat actions," and then skitters back behind screen. Then next rat does a rat's pantomime, and so on, until all actors have done their pantomimes.

Basic instructions for pantomime of child's choice:

- Come out being a rat. Are you bold, scared, in pain, a little timid, curious, hungry, shy, lonely, mean, happy...
- Go to one part of the stage and do a rat action in your rat character.
- Go to another part of the stage and do another rat action. Has your mood changed?
- Go to another part of the stage and do one more rat action.
- Run back behind the screen.
- Remember to keep your rat character while running from one place to the next. Try to use the whole stage!

SOME EXAMPLES OF RAT ACIONS. PICK THREE, OR MAKE UP YOUR OWN:

Sniffing for food. Scratching an itch. Digging something up.
Sniffing after an exciting smell. Hiding from a danger. Running from something.
Chasing something. Dragging something in your mouth. Drinking from a puddle.
Chewing something that's tough. Gnawing on something big. Scratching an itch.
Licking something sweet, sour, salty... Eating something sticky. Cleaning your paws.
Rolling in dirt to scratch your back. Exploring a box. Having a tummy ache.

SCENE 4: PEOPLE FROM HAMELIN LAMENT

After rats have done their pantomime, they go behind the screen, put on their Townspeople costumes, and reenter as the people of Hamelin. All shout "rats" together.

TOWNSPEOPLE

Rats!

STEPHEN

They fought the dogs, and killed the cats,

TOWNSPEOPLE

Rats!

PETRA

And ate the cheeses out of the vats,

TOWNSPEOPLE

Rats!

OLGA

Split open the kegs of salted sprats,

WOLFGANG

Made nests inside men's Sunday hats,

TOWNSPEOPLE

Rats!

STEPHEN

And even spoiled the women's chats,

TOWNSPEOPLE

Rats!

LOUISA

By drowning their speaking

TOWNSPEOPLE

Rats!

OLGA

With shrieking and squeaking

TOWNSPEOPLE

Rats! Rats!

PETRA

In fifty different sharps and flats.

TOWNSPEOPLE

Rats! Rats! Rats! Rats!

(All exit and go behind screen to take off their Townspeople costumes and pick-up rat masks for the next scene.)

SCENE 5: THE RATS' DANCE

(After dance, all exit behind screen. Actors put down masks behind screen and put on costumes to reenter as Townspeople.)

SCENE 6: TALKING TO MAYOR

Townspeople enter, gather & talk about the Mayor, and become an angry mob.

WOLFGANG

Tis clear, our Mayor's a noddy;
And as for our Corporation -- shocking
To think we buy gowns lined with ermine
For dolts that can't or won't determine
What's best to rid us of our vermin!

STEPHEN

You hope, because you're old and obese,
To find in the furry civic robe ease?

PETRA

Rouse up, sirs! Give your brains a racking
To find the remedy we're lacking,
Or, sure as fate, we'll send you packing!

TOWNSPEOPLE

Give your brains a racking
We'll send you packing!
Give your brains a racking
We'll send you packing!
Give your brains a racking
We'll send you packing!
We'll send you packing!
We'll send you packing!
We'll send you packing!

(Town people still yelling walk down stage from one side to another and then in circle all around and then behind screen. Stephen puts on Mayor's costume and reenters. Others look around the corner at Mayor and listen to the Pied Piper in the next scene, adding their comments as indicated.)

SCENE 7: PIED PIPER'S APPEARANCE

SOUND – loud knocking – at least three times

MAYOR
Come in!
(Pied Piper enters)

OLGA
He advanced to the council-table:

LOUISA
He advanced

PIED PIPER
Please your honour...

WOLFGANG
...said he,

PETRA
He said what?

OLGA
What did he say?

WOLFGANG
Listen!

PIED PIPER
I'm able, By means of a secret charm, to draw
All creatures living beneath the sun,
That creep, or swim, or fly, or run,
After me so as you never saw!
And I chiefly use my charm
On creatures that do people harm,
The mole, and toad, and newt, and viper;
And people call me the Pied Piper."
Yet, poor piper as I am, In Tartary I freed the Cham,
Last June, from his huge swarms of gnats; I eased in Asia the Nizam
Of a monstrous brood of vampire-bats:
And, as for what your brain bewilders,
If I can rid your town of rats
Will you give me a thousand guilders?"

MAYOR
One? fifty thousand! –

WOLFGANG
Fifty thousand?

OLGA
What did he say?

WOLFGANG
He said fifty thousand.

OLGA
Fifty thousand?

LOUISA
That's what he said!
(Mayor and Piper shake hands.)

MAYOR
Into the street the Piper stept,
Smiling first a little smile,

WOLFGANG
As if he knew what magic slept
In his quiet pipe the while;

(Townspeople exit and change to rats behind screen. Piper stands center stage and lifts his pipe. Music starts.)

SCENE 8: 2nd RAT'S DANCE: RATS FOLLOW PIPER TO RIVER

SCENE 9: TOWNS PEOPLE TELL OF THE RATS' DEMISE

Piper is playing. Townspeople come out in a group, and music stops. The Townspeople relate the exodus of the rats with awe and amazement.

WOLFGANG
And ere three shrill notes the pipe uttered,
You heard as if an army muttered;

OLGA
And the muttering grew to a grumbling;

LOUISA
And the grumbling grew to a mighty rumbling;

WOLFGANG
And out of the houses the rats came tumbling:

MAYOR

Great rats,
small rats,

PETRA
lean rats,
brown rats,

MAYOR
black rats,

PETRA
gray rats,

WOLFGANG
Grave old plodders,

OLGA
gay young friskers,
Brothers, sisters, husbands, wives --
Followed the Piper for their lives.

WOLFGANG
Until they came to the River Weser
Wherein all plunged and perished

SCENE 10: THE THOUSAND GULDERS

MAYOR
Go (...) and get long poles
Poke out the nests and block up the holes!
Consult with carpenters and builders,
And leave in our town not even a trace
Of the rats!"

PIED PIPER
First, if you please, my thousand guilders!
Silence

MAYOR
A thousand guilders!

WOLFGANG
The Mayor looked blue;
So did the Corporation too.

MAYOR

To pay this sum to a wandering fellow
With a gipsy coat of red and yellow!
Beside, our losses have made us thrifty;
A thousand guilders! Come, take fifty!"

PIED PIPER

No trifling... Beside, folks who put me in a passion
May find me pipe to another fashion."

MAYOR

You threaten us, fellow? Do your worst,
Blow your pipe there till you burst!
(Mayor Exits, then People. Actors go behind screen and change into children's costumes.
Piper stays alone on side, then moves upstage center and starts to play.)

SCENE 11: CHILDREN'S DANCE: ENCHANTED CHILDREN

SCENE 12: PIPER & TOWNS PEOPLE RECOUNT THE STORY

(Piper describes scene. Actors change from Children to Townspeople enter as they are able to respond to the story...)

PIED PIPER

I stept into the street; And to my lips again
Laid my long pipe of smooth straight cane;
And ere I blew three notes
There was a rustling, that seemed like a bustling
Of merry crowds justling at pitching and hustling,
Small feet were pattering, wooden shoes clattering,
Little hands clapping, and little tongues chattering,
And, like fowls in a farm-yard when barley is scattering,
Out came the children running.
All the little boys and girls,
With rosy cheeks and flaxen curls,
And sparkling eyes and teeth like pearls,
Tripping and skipping, ran merrily after
My wonderful music with shouting and laughter.
The Mayor was dumb, and the Council stood
As if they were changed into blocks of wood,
Unable to move a step, or cry
To the children merrily skipping by –

STEPHEN

When, lo, as they reached the mountain's side,
A wondrous portal opened wide,
As if a cavern was suddenly hollowed;

WOLFGANG & PETRA

And the Piper advanced and the children followed,
(Wolfgan/Peter slips behind screen to become the lame boy. He limps back out as soon as he can with a crutch or cane. He goes to center stage as the Mayor is finishing his speech, and others form a semi-circle around him.)

STEPHEN, OLGA & LOUISA

And when all were in to the very last,
The door in the mountain-side shut fast.

STEPHEN

Did I say, all? No! One was lame,
And could not dance the whole of the way;
And in after years, if you would blame
His sadness, he was used to say, --

SCENE 13: THE LAME BOY

LAME BOY

It's dull in our town since my playmates left!
I can't forget that I'm bereft
Of all the pleasant sights they see,
Which the Piper also promised me;
And just as I became assured
My lame foot would be speedily cured,
The music stopped and I stood still,
And found myself outside the Hill,
Left alone against my will,
To go now limping as before,
And never hear of that country more!
(All freeze for a moment, then gather downstage center for a bow.)