

Plays for Young Audiences

A PARTNERSHIP OF SEATTLE CHILDREN'S THEATRE AND CHILDREN'S THEATRE COMPANY-MINNEAPOLIS

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The Pied Piper of Hamelin

Story By
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By
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The Pied Piper of Hamelin was originally produced by the Children's Theatre Company in the 1977-78 season.

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Cast of Characters

Men:

Mayor
Edmund
Gerhardt
Randolph
Priest
Jacob
Benjamin, Henrik, Joseph, Samuel, etc.
Ratcatcher
Pied Piper

Women:

Jessica
Greta
Ruth, Naomi, Elizabeth, etc.

Children:

Adam
Emily
Jonathon, etc.

Sequence of Scenes

Act One

Scene One	Town square
Scene Two	Mayor's Home
Scene Three	Town square
Scene Four	Forest Clearing
Scene Five	Council Chamber
Scene Six	Town square
Scene Seven	Mayor's Home
Scene Eight	Town square

Act Two

Scene One	Town square
Scene Two	Church
Scene Three	Forest Clearing
Scene Four	Town square

Music Selections

"Yet Life Goes On"
"The Rats"

"In Simple Song"
"An Awkward Situation"

"Lullaby"

"Make A Celebration"

"Finale"

The action occurs on July, 21 and 22, 1376 A.D. in the town of Hamelin.

Production Note:

In the original staging of *THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN* by The Children's Theatre Company and School of Minneapolis, approximately three dozen live rats were used in the play. White "laboratory" rats were purchased, their fur tinted to resemble common brown rats, and used exclusively throughout Act One until the rat exodus in Scene Eight. Live rats were held in the actors' hands, allowed to scurry about on "controlled" surfaces, etc.; in particular, the escape from the cage in Scene Three was accomplished through weeks of intensive training: by following a tapping stick (US of the wall) the rat would run to the cage, stand up against it (the door opened by a latch controlled from US and behind) and then run off again, followed by the other two, where a reward of food awaited. By using live rats whenever possible, the audience is tricked into believing that real rats were also being used in the mass exodus.

Act One, Scene one

Preset fades to Blackout. Act Curtain out. In the darkness, the wind sighs loudly and the call of a pipe is heard in the distance. A flash of lightning reveals the town square of Hamelin: a well, CS; a bridge from SL to SR; medieval wood and plaster buildings SR and SL, a small church US of bridge, a backdrop - painted landscape with fields, mountains, forest, and the river. Thunder. An early morning storm. The lightning reveals two or three townspeople rushing across the stage, and scurrying rats moving across the floor and along the wall at the edge of the river. Thunder fades and the wind rises up again with the light of dawn. Music. ADAM - the crippled son of the MAYOR - appears in the empty square. He moves with the aid of a crutch; he is lame in one leg. He carries a wooden bucket in his free hand and hobbles to the well. A rooster crows as ADAM begins to draw water and TOWNSPEOPLE slowly enter the town square and sing a bittersweet song.

WOMAN: I LIVE IN HOPE TO SEE THE DAY
WHEN I MIGHT GREET THIS DAWN SO FAIR
AS ONCE BEFORE, WHEN SONGS OF JOY
WERE DAILY HEARD IN HAMELIN SQUARE

MEN: NO BITTER TEARS THEN FILLED OUR EYES
NO EVENING SOUND OF NIGHTMARE CRIES

WOMEN & MEN: NO MAN AND WIFE THEN HEAVED GREAT SIGHS
OR SPENT EACH NIGHT I N ENDLESS PRAYER
BUT NOW WE WAKEN FROM OUR BEDS
TO FACE ANOTHER DAY WITH DREAD
FOR PLAGUE HAS FALLEN 'ROUND OUR HEADS
AND MORNING BREAKS WITH DARK DESPAIR
YET LIFE GOES ON AND ON IT GOES
THE SUN APPEARS, THE ROOSTER CROWS
OUR GENTLE RIVER, STILL IT FLOWS
THE MOUNTAIN BREEZE FOREVER BLOWS
THE RATS REMAIN, THEIR NUMBER GROWS
DESPITE OUR PAIN, DESPITE OUR WOES
YES LIFE GOES ON AND ON IT GOES
DESPITE OUR PAIN, DESPITE OUR WOES . . .

The song ends abruptly with a woman's scream offstage. ADAM, startled, drops his bucket of water and TOWNSPEOPLE turn to look as RUTH - hysterical and sobbing, rushes into the square, followed by her husband.

RUTH: No . . . no . . . I can't bear it any longer . . no . . .

BENJAMIN: Ruth! Ruth - come back to home, now . . . please . . . wife . . .

RUTH: They were in our bedroom! Dozens of them! It was horrible . . . horrible . . .

BENJAMIN: *(Attempting to sooth her, and a bit embarrassed.)* Now, nm . . . you were dreaming, that's all. A nightmare. Come . . . to home now, Ruth. . .

RUTH: *(Pulling herself away.)* I'll do no such thing! "A nightmare," you say?! Husband - a dream does not crawl upon your pillow and nest in your hair!

BENJAMIN: *(Nervous now.)* Really . . . you must have imagined . . .

RUTH: On the pillow, I tell you! In our bed! God only knows how many others we slept with last night . . . *(She falls to her knees in exhaustion and tears.)* Oh, I'm so frightened . . . can't you do something? Benjamin, please . . . *(BENJAMIN takes her by the hands and helps her up and leads her offstage. Women step DS and converse.)* I tell you, another night and I'll go mad. I barely got an hour's sleep.

JOSEPH: Neither did we. Incredible, the sound they can make. mawing and shrieking all night long . . .

HENRIK: Scraping and squeaking -unbearable noise . . .

JOSEPH: By the sound of their nibbling, it's a under my house still stands . . .

A man, wife, and twin daughters enter.

SAMUEL: *(Agitated, taking one twin by the hand.)* You do as you like, I'm leaving!

NAOMI: But Hamlin is our home! (*Twin on NAOMI'S hand pulls back at her sister; a tug of war throughout their parents' conversation.*)

SAMUEL: I'm leaving.

NAOMI: We can't just up and move away.

SAMUEL: You do as you like.

NAOMI: There must be something we can do . . .

SAMUEL: Two weeks! In just two weeks' time they've destroyed over fifteen years of my hard labor. No, no . . . I'll not stay . . .

NAOMI: We can't . . .

A MOTHER and SON, who holds a rat by the tail.

MOTHER: I can't believe it!

SON: But, Ma - I wasn't going to keep it . . .

MOTHER: The idea!

SON: I was only playing . . .

MOTHER: If I ever catch you "playing" with one of them again, your father'll spank you so hard you won't be able to sit for a week!

SON: But . . .

MOTHER: Is that clear?!

All of the TOWNSPEOPLE chatter and shake their heads.

TOWNSPEOPLE: The filth! The smell! The beady little eyes! The teeth!
Disgusting! Disease! Tails! Destruction!

The Town Councilmen: RANDOLPH, EDMUND, and GERHARDT enter and attempt to cross the square without being noticed. JOSEPH steps in their path, followed by the other people in the square.

JOSEPH: *(Sarcastic.)* Well, well, well! Good morning, O Great Councilmen of Hamelin! *(A deep bow; COUNCILMEN smile weakly and nod.)* And where is your friend the Mayor?

EDMUND: I believe he's still at home. Do you wish to speak with him?

HENRIK: Ha! Do we!

EDMUND: Would you like to make an appointment? He's quite busy these days, but I'm sure we could fit you in sometime . . .

JOSEPH: *(Cutting him off,)* Oh, please, don't trouble yourselves. I ' m sure we'll run into him sometime soon.

The TOWNSMEN share a threatening laugh and sneer. RANDOLPH and GERHARDT pull EDMUND aside and whisper to one another.

RANDOLPH: Edmund, Gerhardt - listen to me. It's getting worse each day: the way they talk. I don't like it. I don't like it one bit.

GERHARDT: Neither do I. There's something wrong, Randolph - terribly wrong.

EDMUND: Well, of course there is - there are rats all over Hamelin!

GERHARDT: Edmund! We're not talking about the rats. There's more to it than that. I can't explain it, but - well, the storm last night . . . this heat . . .

RANDOLPH: That's true.

EDMUND: Yes - and the wind, how strange it blows . . . very strange . . .

GERHARDT: Something's going to happen today. I can feel it in my bones.

RANDOLPH: Indeed.

EDMUND: I'm worried.

RANDOLPH: You're always worried.

GERHARDT: *(Suddenly.)* Look! There he is!

EDMUND: *(Startled, hiding behind RANDOLPH.)* Who? !

GERHARDT & RANDOLPH: The Ratcatcher.

RATCATCHER enters, with his paraphernalia: cages, twine, bag of bait, etc .

GERHARDT: Ssst. You. Come here.

RATCATCHER: Morning, Councilman.

GERHARDT: How are you doing?

RATCATCHER: Feel just fine, thank you; and yourself?

GERHARDT: Not too ba . . . *(Stops himself and gives RATCATCHER- a little shove.)* Fool! I didn't mean "How are you," I meant "How are you doing with your work!"

RANDOLPH: The rats!

EDMUND: Have you caught any?

RATCATCHER: No. Not yet.

Cries and commotion from offstage.

RANDOLPH: Now what?

EDMUND: More trouble!

GERHARDT: Come along!

The COUNCILMEN scurry off as JACOB, carrying his little daughter EMILY, runs into the square followed by his wife GRETA. TOWNSPEOPLE gather around.

JACOB: Water! Quickly! We need water!

ADAM: (Stepping forward with his bucket.) I have some right here.

JACOB sets EMILY down beside ADAM and GRETA takes her apron and dips the end of it into the bucket, applying water to EMILY'S arm.

GRETA: Thank you, Adam!

JACOB runs offstage as a WOMAN questions GRETA.

WOMAN: Greta! What is it?

GRETA turns US and TOWNSPEOPLE crowd around her. Freeze. Adam kneels down beside EMILY.

EMILY: Morning, Adam.

ADAM: Emily! What happened to you?

EMILY: Got bit.

ADAM: What? !

EMILY: Got bit by a rat.

ADAM: How?

EMILY: Don't know. Just woke up and rolled over on it, I guess. Didn't know it was there. Was it surprised! Mad, too. That's probably why it bit me.

ADAM: Does it hurt?

EMILY: Not really.

JACOB reappears as the TOWNSPEOPLE burst into gossip and head wagging.

JACOB: Greta . . . hurry . . . the doctor will see her now . . .

EMILY: (To ADAM, as GRETA picks her up.) Gotta go. See you later.

GRETA fusses over EMILY as CROWD follows JACOB and GRETA, mumbling threats against the MAYOR, COUNCILMEN, ETC. ADAM waves goodbye to his little friend as the stage clears and the lights fade.)

Act One, Scene Two

Lights rise on MAYOR'S house. JESSICA is setting a table for breakfast, DSC. A counter is SL, a closed pantry door USC, a door to exterior SR. ADAM appears through SR door carrying the bucket of water.

ADAM Here's the water, Mama.

JESSICA (Taking the bucket.) Thank you, Adam. Breakfast will be ready in just a bit. (ADAM remains in the doorway. JESSICA turns back and notices his grave expression.) Adam? Adam - is something the matter? (ADAM shakes his head and moves DS to the table, sitting on his little stool. JESSICA sets the water bucket on the counter, then sits down next to him, taking his chin in her hand.) Come now, Adam. What is it? You can tell me.

ADAM (A sigh.) It's Emily. She . . . she was bitten this morning . . . by a rat.

JESSICA Oh, no! That's dreadful! Is she all right?

ADAM I guess so. Her folks took her to the doctor.

JESSICA Then she's being taken good care of. She'll be fine.

ADAM Do you really think so?

JESSICA (Kissing him on the forehead.) Don't you worry. I'm sure you and your friends will be playing with Emily this very afternoon, just

like always. You wait and see. *(She stands and moves back to the counter. ADAM sits in silence for a moment.)*

ADAM Mama?

JESSICA Yes, dear?

ADAM How come we don't have any rats?

JESSICA *(Surprised at the question.)* What?!

ADAM How come we don't have any rats? Everybody else seems to; why don't we?

JESSICA Well, I don't know, Adam . . . just lucky, I guess. And remember, since your Papa is mayor, we've got quite a nice house: sturdier than most others. I suppose the little creatures just haven't found a simple way to get in, that's all. *(She tickles her son under the chin and makes a little squeak. ADAM returns the tickle and they laugh. A cough from offstage; MAYOR slowly enters from DSR.)* Shhh! Your father's up. Let's not talk any more about the rats, now - you know how upset he gets. *(MAYOR sits at table.)* Good morning, William.

ADAM Good morning, Papa.

MAYOR *(A growl.)* What's so good about it? Did the rats leave Hamelin?

ADAM No, Papa.

MAYOR Well, then?

ADAM and JESSICA share a hopeless look. JESSICA sets food on table.

JESSICA Honestly, William – your son offers you a simple "good morning" and you bite his head off! Just once I wish you could come to breakfast with a civil attitude.

MAYOR And just once, Jessica, I wish you two would be still and let a man meet the day in peace! With the whole town ranting and raving at

me all day, the last thing I need is a wife and child spoiling my breakfast as well.

JESSICA William!

MAYOR Jessica! Have you any idea what awaits me whenever I leave this house? (*Mimics various townspeople.*) "Mayor! Guess how many rats I saw last night?" "Willy - the rats keep getting worse and worse; when are you going to do something about them?" "I mean, after all, William, you are the Mayor; isn't that what you're paid for? **To** keep Hamelin free from this sort of thing?" (*He stands and pounds his hand down on the table. A cry of outrage.*) Ha!

MAYOR (*Music.*)
SO WHERE DO THEY THINK THEY 'RE LIVING - PARADISE?
AND WHAT DOES HAMELIN WANT FROM ME - MIRACLES?
I ASK YOU, NOW: WHERE'S THEIR SYMPATHY?
DON'T FORGET, THERE WERE RATS AND DISEASE WHEN
THE DREADFUL BLACK PLAGUE SWEEPED OUR LAND
COULD ANYONE PUT US AT EASE THEN?
NO! AND I'VE DONE ALL I CAN!

JESSICA William, calm down now, nobody expects you to . . .

MAYOR (*Continuing.*)
AN ANGRY CROWD MOANS IN THE STREET
I HEAR BITTER COMPLAINTS FROM WHOMEVER I MEET
STILL THERE'S NO ONE WHO CAN SURELY SAY
THAT ANOTHER PLAGUE HAS COME OUR WAY
SOON, I'M SURE, THIS WILL FADE AWAY
BUT THEIR FEAR KEEPS GROWING EVERY DAY

YES, HAMELIN GRUMBLES ANGRILY
CONSTANTLY I HEAR THEIR PLEA:
"MAYOR, WE'RE IN AGONY!"
BUT WHAT DO THEY WANT FROM ME?

"THE RATS, THE RATS, THE RATS!" THEY SHOUT
"THE RATS, THE RATS!" DAY IN, DAY OUT
WHAT'S THE FUSS AND WHY SUCH A FRIGHT

IF A RAT OR TWO CROSSES YOUR PATH IN THE NIGHT?
YET THE TOWNSPEOPLE SCREAM
AND BLAME ME FOR THIS BLIGHT!

BUT REALLY, NOW – LET’S BE SENSIBLE
THERE AREN’T ANY RATS IN MY HOUSE
SO TELL ME, HOW BAD CAN IT BE?
IF THERE’S A RAT HERE, A RAT THERE
WHY TAKE IT SERIOUSLY?

"THE RATS, THE RATS, THE RATS!" THEY SHOUT
"THE RATS, THE RATS ! " DAY IN, DAY OUT
ALL THIS RACKET, WHY CAN'T IT CEASE?
WON'T YOU STOP YOUR COMPLAINING
AND GIVE ME SOME PEACE?!
WITH EACH MORNING THE RATS
AND MY HEADACHES INCREASE!

"THE RATS, THE RATS, THE RATS!"
"THE RATS, THE RATS, THE RATS!"
NO MORE, NO MORE, NO MORE, NO MORE!
I’LL HAVE NO MORE TO DO WITH THE RATS!

The MAYOR has worked himself into a mad fury and stands, breathless. His wife and son are frightened. JESSICA steps toward MAYOR.

JESSICA Willy! (He waves her away. She whispers to ADAM.) Let's be seated.
(After she and ADAM are seated.) Shall we say grace?

JESSICA and ADAM fold their hands in prayer. MAYOR explodes with renewed fury.

MAYOR Grace? Grace?! Thank God for what, may I ask?! "Thank you, God,
for sending all these rats to Hamelin?!" "Thank you, God, for
making my life so miserable?!" "Thank you, God, for food I earn
myself?" (Shoving his face into JESSICA’S.) "Thank you, God, for a
nagging wife?!" (Picking up ADAM’S crutch and shaking it in the air.)
"Thank you, God, for a cripp . . . "

MAYOR stops himself, stunned. JESSICA stands and rushes to ADAM.

JESSICA (Horrified.) William! How could you?

ADAM hangs his head in shame. MAYOR stands, trembling. A long pause.

MAYOR Adam. . . I'm . . . I . . . (He sighs, unable to apologize, and sits. He grabs a piece of bread and chews furiously.) I need something to drink.

JESSICA No! No, William!

MAYOR (An angry command.) I want a drink!

He whirls and raises his hand to strike JESSICA. She cowers in fear. ADAM stands quickly.

ADAM I'll get it, Papa!

JESSICA looks at her son, her husband, then moves to counter. MAYOR resumes eating as ADAM steps US to pantry door, lifts the latch, opens it, and takes a step to enter. He steps back with a gasp and begins to fall backward. JESSICA whirls around and catches ADAM in her arms; she releases a muffled, terrified cry. MAYOR turns to see what is the matter. The door swings open full. For just a moment, we see the pantry shelves covered with dozens of swarming rats. Blackout.

Act One, Scene Three

Church bells. Lights rise on town square. It is noon, and the stage is empty except for a few children quietly playing in the shade of the buildings. RATCATCHER enters from SL carrying a wooden cage which contains two rats, and his trapping paraphernalia.

RATCATCHER (To the cage.) Now, now, my furry little friends – I'm hungry, too, but I've got to catch at least one more of you and then we can all relax and have our lunch. (He moves US and sets the cage on the wall CS.) You two be quiet, now; I don't want to hear you warning your friends. (RATCATCHER moves DSL and begins to set a crude trap: a box propped up on a stick with a string attached to it. As he sets the trap with painstaking care, he speaks to the rats in the cage behind his back.) You know, I don't understand why people are so afraid of you fellows. You're really not so terrible. And the harm you do . . . you

don't mean to. After all, rats've got to live somewhere, right? Hamelin's as good a place as any, I reckon. I'm glad you're here. If it weren't for you, the Mayor never would have given me a job. *(He chuckles to himself.)* And what a job! There are enough of you to keep me busy for a hundred years!

During the preceding, a rat has entered from off SR, scurried along the top of the wall to the cage which holds the two captured rats. The rat opens the door of the cage, turns, and runs back off, followed by the two escapees. A little GIRL enters from SL and speaks to RATCATCHER, who is unaware of the rat activity behind him.

GIRL Not doing too well today, huh? *(RATCATCHER grunts.)* Why don't you wait until nighttime? When it's dark, they're all over the place.

RATCATCHER Just never you mind. I'm not doing so badly. I've already caught . . . *(He turns US and sees the empty cage.)* Oh no, not again!

He picks up the empty cage, then gathers his trap and runs off SR, calling "Here, rat! Here, rat!" GIRL giggles and exits. From USR, TOWNSPEOPLE and PRIEST appear on the bridge and enter the square. They linger in groups, discussing the mass. PRIEST shakes hands. JACOB, GRETA, and EMILY enter from DSL and start to cross the stage. PRIEST notices them and excuses himself.

PRIEST Jacob! *(JACOB takes his wife and daughter and urges them on. PRIEST runs DS and steps into their path. They stop.)* Jacob?

JACOB *(Surly.)* Yes, Father - what is it?

PRIEST You were not at mass this morning.

JACOB That's right.

PRIEST May I ask why?

JACOB *(A pause. He looks at GRETA, then takes a deep breath.)* Very well. If you must know, Father, my child was bitten by a rat this morning. That is why.

PRIEST Oh, Lord! I had no idea, Jacob. . . I'm so sorry. . . *(He crouches down to EMILY.)* I shall pray for a speedy recovery . . .

JACOB *(Pulling his daughter away.)* You can save your prayers, Father. They aren't necessary. The doctor has taken care of her . . .

GRETA *(A whisper.)* Jacob . . .

PRIEST *(Standing, looking JACOB in the eye.)* I see. *(To EMILY.)* You're all right? *(EMILY nods.)* Well, then . . . perhaps I'll see you at vespers... this evening . . . good day.

PRIEST offers a weak smile and begins to move away. GRETA takes her husband's arm and whispers.

GRETA Husband! I'm surprised at you, speaking to our Priest in such a fashion! As if it were his fault that . . .

JACOB *(Pulling his arm away.)* Well? Whose fault is it, then? I'd like to know! *(Stepping US and shouting angrily.)* Priest!

PRIEST *(Turning DS.)* Yes?

JACOB Why have these rats come to Hamelin? *(PRIEST looks at JACOB, puzzled.)* Why did my child get hurt? *(No answer. TOWNSPEOPLE turn their attention to the two men.)* Answer me, Father! In your sermons you speak of Moses and the Pharaoh - of how God sent down his plagues upon Egypt as punishment. But Father, twenty years ago, we ourselves suffered through one great plague - do we deserve another so soon? Have we sinned so grievously? Tell us why! You're God's priest - tell us! Why all these rats? Why Hamelin?

PRIEST Because it is God's will. That is why. And that is all. *(PRIEST turns to exit.)*

JACOB But that is not enough, Father! Not for me!

PRIEST *(Whirling around.)* Silence, Jacob! You don't know what you're saying!

JACOB *(Very loud, speaking for the other TOWNSPEOPLE as well.)* Father! It isn't just Emily, you know. There are other innocent

children in this town; what of them? Who's to say what may happen? The rats, each day, multiply in number. Our Mayor, his Councilmen - they provide no help in easing the situation. What are we to do?

PRIEST *(A plea to all.)* Trust in the Lord!

JACOB Tell us! Why must we suffer so?!

PRIEST *(A cry of anger and despair.)* I don't know!!

The square is silent for a moment. Then, the TOWNSPEOPLE murmur to one another and swiftly exit. JACOB, GRETA, EMILY exit. PRIEST stands, stunned, unable to say anything to bring them back. MAYOR, GERHARDT, RANDOLPH, and EDMUND have observed the last few moments. When TOWNSPEOPLE have exited, they swoop down upon PRIEST.

MAYOR Now what's all this about? What have you done?!

PRIEST *(Offended, angry.)* I beg your pardon; are you accusing me . . . ?!

MAYOR Just what have you been preaching anyway?

PRIEST If you bothered to attend mass once in a while, you'd know!
(PRIEST turns to return to the church.)

MAYOR Never mind about me. I want to see you in the council chamber this evening, understand?

PRIEST *(Stops and turns.)* I will not!

MAYOR *(Threatening growl.)* Be there!

MAYOR exits, followed by his COUNCILMEN. The PRIEST watches them exit, heaves a troubled sigh, then steps DS and sits at the edge of the well.

PRIEST Oh dear God. I'm frightened. Such hate . . . such anger fills their hearts, when they should be drawn ever closer to Thee. Help us, Lord. Please. Show me how to do your work, before they turn away completely. A sign. We need a sign. To show us the way. Please . . .

A few CHILDREN burst onto the stage, hand-in-hand, and run in a wide circle DS and up over the bridge, laughing and carefree. PRIEST looks at them for a moment and rubs his brow as lights fade to Blackout.

Act One, Scene Four

A clearing in the forest outside Hamelin. Afternoon. CHILDREN are playing a variation of tag: humans vs. "rats." EMILY is squealing and screaming with delight, pursued by friends who scurry at her making rodent-like squeaks. She runs USL behind a clump of trees and returns in the arms of the PIPER - a gentle looking man dressed in a cloak of many colors. A strong breeze blows through the clearing and the CHILDREN stop their playing and look silently upon the man who holds their friend.

PIPER Good afternoon.

ADAM (Somewhat timidly.) Hello.

PIPER sets EMILY down. Silence.

PIPER (Attempting to "break the ice.") I was passing by and heard the noise.
(Silence.) A game you were playing?

No response. EMILY suddenly runs back to PIPER.

EMILY (Pointing to JONATHON, the eldest boy.) He's the head rat.

JONATHON (A whisper.) Emily...!

PIPER (To EMILY.) I beg your pardon?

EMILY He's the head rat. He grabbed me and tried to take me to their nest
but I screamed.

EMILY demonstrates. PIPER winces at the shrill sound, then smiles.

PIPER I wondered where that remarkable sound came from.

EMILY I get scared sometimes, even if it is only a game. This isn't for real. Not like home.

PIPER Do you man to say that you have rats at home?

EMILY Oh, yes! Mostly at night, though.

PIPER *(PIPER looks up at the other CHILDREN.)* Is this true?

ADAM *(Nodding.)* Yes, sir.

EMILY Hundreds and hundreds! I even got bit . . . this morning . . . see?

EMILY proudly displays her bandaged wound. Suddenly, all of the CHILDREN crowd around PIPER, chattering about the rats. After a few moments, the PIPER stands and sound a shrill note from his pipe, and the CHILDREN quiet down.

PIPER Excuse me. *(To JONATHON.)* Young man?

JONATHON Yes, sir?

PIPER Where do you live?

JONATHON Hamelin, sir. Just beyond the forest . . . *(He points.)* . . . there.

PIPER *(To himself.)* I have arrived.

JONATHON Sir?

PIPER Tell me . . . Jonathon . . . ?

JONATHON *(Amazed.)* Yes . . . how did you know my na . . .

PIPER How many people live in Hamelin, would you say?

JONATHON Not very many , sir, I'm afraid. You must know that when the Black Death swept through the land, most of Hamelin did not live through it. And now, with the rats upon us, well - people are leaving every day.

PIPER I understand. Are there other children besides you?

ADAM No others, sir.

EMILY (Hopefully.) Have you come for a visit?

PIPER I guess you could say that.

BOY What for?

PIPER To help. (*The CHILDREN exchange looks as PIPER stands proudly.*) It just so happens that I am a ratcatcher!

CHILDREN gasp, whisper, giggle.

GIRL But it's impossible! There are too many!

BOY We've tried everything.

GIRL Nothing ever works!

PIPER Now, now - that may be, but let me assure you that I can take care of the situation. By tomorrow, all of Hamelin's rats will have disappeared.

BOY I don't believe you.

GIRL Are you mad?

PIPER I don't think so.

GIRL It can't be done!

PIPER Oh, no?

ADAM But how . . . ?

PIPER I'll tell you.

PIPER lifts the pipe to his lips and plays himself a fanfare, then recites his bit of verse.

PIPER Hamelin children, it's no fable; please believe that I'm quite able
Through a secret charm to draw all creatures living 'neath the sun
That creep or swim or fly or run, toward me as you never saw!
Of course, I chiefly use my charm on creatures that do people harm:
The mole, the toad, or poisonous viper, and I'm known as the
Pied Piper! (*He bows.*)

BOY The "who?"

PIPER The Pied Piper.

GIRL What's that supposed to mean?

PIPER (*Indicating his costume.*) "Pied." (*A toot on his pipe.*) "Piper."

EMILY What a silly name!

PIPER laughs. A couple CHILDREN examine his cloak.

BOY Are you poor?

PIPER Pardon me?

BOY All these patches . . . are you poor?

PIPER (*A little joke.*) Most musicians are.

ADAM Then why do you do it? Can't you find better work?

PIPER Oh, but I love my music! And besides, I've already told you that I
do other things, too. You know, helping people. But I couldn't do it
without my music.

JONATHON How can music help anything?

PIPER I beg your pardon! Why - surely you all know the wonder of music,
the joy of song!

EMILY I like music. It makes me smile.

PIPER

Then here's a song for you, Emily - and for the rest of you as well:

(Music. CHILDREN gather around PIPER.)

THERE'S NO POWER QUITE AS GREAT
AS THAT WE HAVE IN SIMPLE SONG
BROTHERS JOIN HANDS WITH YOUR NEIGHBOR
LIFT YOUR VOICES PURE AND STRONG
SING TOGETHER, "HALLELUIA!"
FORM A CHOIR FROM HILL TO SEA
MOTHERS, FATHERS , LITTLE CHILDREN
JOIN IN THE HEAVENLY SYMPHONY!

EVEN WINDS FROM UP ON HIGH
CREATE A WOODWIND LULLABY
BY BLOWING THROUGH THE LIMBS OF TREES,
'TIS NATURE'S PIPES PLAYED BY THE BREEZE
IT STIRS MY SOUL, SUCH WOND'ROUS SOUNDS;
IN JOYFUL CHORUS THE EARTH ABOUNDS!
THE MEADOWLARK AND TURTLEDOVE SING
IN PRAISE OF GOD'S GREAT LOVE

THERE'S NO POWER QUITE AS GREAT
AS THAT WE HAVE IN SIMPLE SONG
BROTHERS JOIN HANDS WITH YOUR NEIGHBOR -
(He points at half the group and they sing.)

CHILDREN

LIFT YOUR VOICES PURE AND STRONG!

PIPER

SING TOGETHER, "HALLELUIA!" *(He points at the other half.)*

CHILDREN

FORM A CHOIR FROM HILL TO SEA!

PIPER, ADAM
& EMILY

MOTHERS, FATHERS, LITTLE CHILDREN –

ALL

JOIN IN THE HEAVENLY SYMPHONY!

All laugh. PIPER jumps to his feet and plays his pipe, leading the CHILDREN around the clearing in a dance. When he sings again, the youngsters hum a descant : "The Piper's Call."

PIPER EVEN WINDS FROM UP ON HIGH
CREATE A WOODWIND LULLABY
BY BLOWING THROUGH THE LIMBS OF TRESS,
'TIS NATURE'S PIPES PLAYED BY THE BREEZE
IT STIRS MY SOUL, SUCH WOND'ROUS SOUNDS;
IN JOYFUL CHORUS THE EARTH ABOUNDS
THE MEADOWLARK AND TURTLEDOVE

ALL SING IN PRAISE OF GOD'S GREAT LOVE!

THERE'S NO POWER QUITE AS GREAT
AS THAT WE HAVE IN SIMPLE SONG
BROTHERS JOIN HANDS WITH YOUR NEIGHBOR –
LIFT YOUR VOICES PURE AND STRONG
SING TOGETHER, "HALLELUIA!"
FORM A CHOIR FROM HILL TO SEA
MOTHERS, FATHERS , LITTLE CHILDREN
JOIN IN THE HEAVENLY SYMPHONY!

CHILDREN crowd around the PIPER, laughing and smiling.

PIPER *(To EMILY.)* Well? Did I make you smile?

EMILY *(Grinning, shyly.)* Yes.

PIPER *(Tousling her hair.)* Good! *(He stands.)* But now, my friends, I have
work to do. *(The CHILDREN groan; they'd like to play some more.)*
Who can show me the way into town? *(All raise their hands and
shout, volunteering.)* I see we have no problem there. Adam?

ADAM Yes, sir?

PIPER Your father is the mayor of Hamelin, isn't that right?

ADAM *(Surprised.)* Why, yes, sir . . . he is . . . how did you . . .

PIPER May I met him?

ADAM *(Amazed that anyone would want to.)* Would you like to?!

PIPER Very much. I must speak with him if I'm to go about my work properly. Might I see him this evening? Could you meet me in the town square after dinner?

ADAM Yes, sir!

PIPER Fine! (*They shake hands.*) All right, children - lead on!

PIPER lifts his pipe again and plays as ADAM walks beside him, following the other CHILDREN off. Lights fade to Blackout.

Act One, Scene Five

The Council Chamber. Evening. Lights rise on MAYOR, GERHARDT, and RANDOLPH pacing the floor. PRIEST sits at large table C, his head buried in his hands. The door to the chamber SR flies open and EDMUND bursts in, quickly shuts the door behind him, and stands leaning against the door, breathing heavily. Pause.

MAYOR Edmund? (EDMUND just breathes.) Well? We haven't got all night; for God's sake, man – speak!

EDMUND There's a group of people assembling . . . Joseph, Henrik, others . . . you know . . . they're pretty upset . . . it doesn't look too good.

EDMUND wipes his brow and walks to table. MAYOR follows.

MAYOR Yes . . . ? Go on. More...!

EDMUND That's all. (*EDMUND sits. Pause. MAYOR bellers.*)

MAYOR That's all? "They're upset?!" What kind of report is that? What are they upset about?

EDMUND (*Puzzled.*) Why, the rats, of course! (*RANDOLPH and GERHARDT groan as MAYOR picks EDMUND up by the collar.*) And . . . and the child . . . Emily . . . you know about her . . .

MAYOR *(Releasing EDMUND and pacing angrily.)* Of course I do! The doctor took care of her this morning . . .

EDMUND Oh! But then, you don't know . . .

PRIEST What? What, Edmund . . .

EDMUND Why, Emily's terrible sick. *(All focus their attention on EDMUND.)* She seemed fine all afternoon . . . she played with the other children... but when she went home for dinner I guess she started to come down with a fever and was put to bed. Before they even had a chance to get the doctor, Emily was unconscious. Oh, no - she's real sick. *(A whisper.)* Some of the townspeople think that, well, maybe this is it. Maybe it is a plague, after all.

PRIEST Oh, no . . . Lord, please, no . . .

EDMUND Oh, yes. They're upset, all right. They want to see you, William, and the rest of us, too. They want the rats gone. Now.

A pause. MAYOR turns to PRIEST.

MAYOR Father? Father, what do you suggest we do?

PRIEST You 're asking me? *(He sighs, then stands.)* I don't know, William. I don't know. But I must go. Little Emily . . . Jacob . . . Greta . . . they may need me.

MAYOR *(Anger.)* Very well, then go! Leave! You're no help to me! *(PRIEST turns and looks at MAYOR, weary and dismayed.)* Well? Go, if you're going! *(MAYOR turns away and walks DSL.)*

PRIEST *(To COUNCILMEN.)* Goodnight, gentlemen.

COUNCILMEN mumble their "goodnights" and PRIEST exits. A moment of tense silence, then MAYOR whirls around and pounds his fist on the table.

MAYOR Men, I . . . We must . . . *(Exasperated.)* Well? Don't just sit there like a bunch of idiots! You're my councilmen; so counsel me! Say something! Anything! Gerhardt . . . ? *(GERHARDT shrugs.)*

Randolph! (*RANDOLPH shrugs. MAYOR is about to ask EDMUND, but doesn't bother.*) Please, fellows, please. Help.

GERHARDT What's to be done?

RANDOLPH What can we do?

MAYOR (*Sitting, defeated.*) I wish I knew, men - I wish I knew . . .

(Music.)

WHEN WORRY RACKS YOUR BRAIN
AND ALL SEEMS DARK AS NIGHT ALTHOUGH
YOU'VE DONE YOUR BEST TO FIGHT THE FOE
AND NOW YOU'RE HALF INSANE

A WISER THOUGHT, DESPITE THEIR WOE,
MIGHT BE TO TAKE QUICK FLIGHT, JUST GO
AND LEAVE TJB2V IN THEIR PAIN
WHY BOTHER TO REMAIN?

MAYOR &
COUNCILMEN

IN THIS AWKWARD SITUATION
OF A RODENT INFESTATION
NOW THERE'S TOO MUCH COMPLICATION
AND WE SIMPLY CANNOT COPE
WE MUST FACE THE CIRCUMSTANCES,
SEE THE HATRED IN THEIR GLANCES
OH, I DOUBT WE'D GET MORE CHANCES
IF HIRED ON THE POPE!

HERE WE SIT, GREAT MEN OF STATION,
BOUND TO FACE CRUEL DEGRADATION
THERE'S NO TIME FOR HESITATION,
WE 'VE EXHAUSTED EVERY HOPE
WITH FEVER, WILD WITH FURY,
THEY'LL RUN IN HERE IN A HURRY
FIND US GUILTY WITHOUT JURY,
'ROUND OUR NECKS THEY'LL TIE A ROPE!
A ROPE, A ROPE, A ROPE, A ROPE –
'ROUND OUR NECKS THEY'LL TIE A ROPE!

MAYOR SO MEN, OUR COURSE IS CLEAR
IN ALL MY YEARS AS HAMELIN'S CHIEF
I'VE NEVER SEEN SUCH SORROW, GRIEF
OR ANGER THIS SEVERE

SO NOW, WITH NO HOPE FOR RELIEF
I'M FORCED TO SAY, 'TIS MY BELIEF
THE TIME AT LAST IS HERE
TO FIND A NEW CAREER!

MAYOR &
COUNCILMEN WE'LLI JUST TELL THE POPULATION
WE'VE SPENT HOURS OF CONTEMPLATION
THEN SUBMIT OUR RESIGNATION:
THEY'VE NO COUNCIL

MAYOR AND NO MAYOR!

MAYOR &
COUNCIIMEN WHEN WE MAKE OUR PROCLAMATION
IF THEY ASK FOR EXPLANATION
FOR OUR SUDDEN ABDICATION
WE'LL JUST TELL THEM WE DON' T CARE!
DON'T CARE, DON'T CARE, DON'T CARE, DON'T CARE -
SIMPLY TELL THEM WE DON'T CARE!

MAYOR FOR A FOOL WITH HALF A BRAIN
SING TOGETHER, "HALLELUIA!"
FORM A CHOIR FROM HILL TO SEA
MOTHERS, FATHERS , LITTLE CHILDREN
JOIN IN THE HEAVENLY SYMPHONY!

COUNCILMEN WE HAVE NO HOPE

MAYOR HAS THE SENSE TO RUN IN FRIGHT

COUNCILMEN THEY'VE GOT A ROPE!

MAYOR OUR COURSE IS PLAIN
WE'LL NOT REMAIN
IN HAMELIN TOWN TONIGHT!

MAYOR &
COUNCILMEN OUR COURSE IS PLAIN
WE'LL NOT REMAIN
IN HAMELIN TOWN TONIGHT!

MAYOR and COUNCILMEN dash for their belongings and start to pack as music ends. A knock at the door. All freeze. Another knock. All dash to their seats at the table and sit as though nothing was going on.

MAYOR Come in! (ADAM appears through the door.) You?! What are you doing here? Does your mother know where you are?

ADAM Yes, sir. She gave me permission.

MAYOR Well? What do you want? I'm busy.

ADAM I've got wonderful news, Papa!

MAYOR (Uninterested.) Oh, really?

ADAM My friends and I met a stranger this afternoon . . . (MAYOR grunts.) . . . he's some kind of musician . . .

MAYOR That's nice.

ADAM . . . he wants to help . . .

MAYOR (Snorts.) "Help" . . . ha!

ADAM That's right. With the rats.

MAYOR The rats . . . ?

COUNCILMEN (In unison.) What?!

ADAM He said he could get rid of the rats for us.

MAYOR *(Suddenly interested.)* How?

ADAM With his pipes. His music.

MAYOR Music?! What are you babbling about, child?

ADAM He has this magic charm, you see . . .

MAYOR Oh, is that so! *(Explodes.)* You little fool! How dare you bother me with you stories about magic charms and wandering troubadours?! I don't have time for such nonsense!

ADAM But it isn't nonsense, Papa! I know he can help us!

MAYOR *(Turning away.)* Get out!

ADAM Please believe me, Papa!

MAYOR Go!

ADAM Please . . .

MAYOR Now!

ADAM Papa . . .

MAYOR No!

ADAM *(Shouting with all his might.)* YES!!! *(A moment of silence. Mayor stares at Adam, speechless, quaking with rage and disbelief. Adam stands resolute.)* Couldn't you at least speak to him, Papa? He's right outside . . .

RANDOLPH Willy?

EDMUND The boy only wants to help.

GERHARDT It couldn't hurt to just see the man.

MAYOR (*Growls.*) Oh, go ahead! Do as you like! You're all fools! (*MAYOR turns away and stands SL, fuming.*)

RANDOLPH Go ahead, Adam. Show the stranger in.

ADAM quickly exits and COUNCILMEN arrange themselves so they look "official." ADAM reappears, followed by PIPER. COUNCILMEN look at each other, a bit overwhelmed at the colorful cloak.

PIPER Good evening, gentlemen. I am the Pied Piper.

EDMUND I beg your pardon?

PIPER The Pied Piper, at your service.

PIPER steps to table and extends his hand. COUNCILMEN rise from their seats and politely shake PIPER'S hand as ADAM hobbles over to his father.

ADAM Papa? Papa - he's here now. The piper.

MAYOR turns slightly, looks quickly at the stranger.

PIPER (*Stepping toward MAYOR, extending his hand.*) Pleased to meet you, sir.

MAYOR grunts and turns away again. PIPER'S smile fades and he lets his hand drop to his side. He looks at the other COUNCILMEN, puzzled; they offer a weak smile and shrug. RANDOLPH steps forward and guides PIPER away from MAYOR.

RANDOLPH The boy said that you can help us.

PIPER Indeed I can.

GERHARDT How?

EDMUND He said that you possess . . . certain . . . "powers."

PIPER Adam speaks the truth.

COUNCILMEN share a glance of skepticism, fear, and curiosity.

GERHARDT Say, uh . . . you're not . . . you wouldn't happen to be . . .

PIPER Yes?

GERHARDT *(Afraid to ask, he blurts.)* You're not some evil sorcerer or magician or, you know, satanic arts, that sort of thing, are you? *(He laughs meekly. PIPER is silent for a moment, then laughs heartily.)*

PIPER No, no . . . nothing like that. *(COUNCILMEN heave a collective sigh of relief.)*

EDMUND All right then, when?

RANDOLPH When can you rid our town of this horrible plague?

PIPER How about this evening?

GERHARDT Tonight?!

PIPER *(Nods.)* If you don't mind; I would like to be on my way tomorrow...

COUNCILMEN *(Grinning at one another.)* Mind? Mind! *(They begin to laugh with joy.)*

MAYOR *(Turning.)* How much? *(COUNCILMEN fall silent.)* How much do you charge? Your fee, Piper; certainly so great a labor would command a great sum. How much?

PIPER *(Slightly embarrassed.)* Well, I . . .

MAYOR *(With a false smile, like a businessman.)* Name your price, Piper! Name it! Five hundred guilders? A thousand? A million? *(COUNCILMEN gasp.)* Or should we just settle on one guilder for each rat?! *(COUNCILMEN's jaws drop.)*

PIPER Good sir, I am overwhelmed; but I must protest. I have no need for such wealth. Surely, you - yourselves - could better use . . .

MAYOR *(Extending his hand to seal the bargain.)* Nonsense! Not another word - a guilder for each rat!

ADAM (To PIPER.) Don't argue with him; Papa has a terrible temper.

PIPER shakes hands with MAYOR. COUNCILMEN quickly take MAYOR aside, leaving PIPER and ADAM in silent conversation.

RANDOLPH Willy! Have you gone completely mad?

GERHARDT We don't have that kind of money!

EDMUND What if he does get rid of the rats? How would we pay him?

MAYOR Silence, fools! Do you actually think that I'm stupid enough to believe in this magic piping business?

RANDOLPH Then why...?

MAYOR Incentive. Although I know he can't ever get rid of them all, let him try. So we lose a couple dozen - we're that much better off, eh? So keep your mouths shut and leave it to me. (*MAYOR steps out of the huddle and addresses ADAM, gruffly.*) Young man! It's late; shouldn't you be in bed?

ADAM (*Disappointed.*) Yes, sir.

MAYOR Well, then? (*He points to the door. ADAM turns and starts to leave.*)

PIPER (*To MAYOR and COUNCILMEN.*) A moment, please . . . (*He steps in front of ADAM. MAYOR tenses.*) Adam. It's quite dark out now; all the rats are about. You're not afraid?

ADAM No, sir. Not really. Besides, I've got my crutch. Just let a rat get near me! (*ADAM demonstrates how he would smash a rat; PIPER chuckles and pats him on the shoulder.*)

PIPER Good man!

ADAM (*To ALL.*) Goodnight.

PIPER Goodnight, Adam. (*COUNCILMEN wave, nod "goodnight."* ADAM exits. PIPER turns to MAYOR.) A fine lad.

MAYOR (*A snort.*) Who, Adam? Is that a joke, sir? (*PIPER looks at MAYOR, stunned at his heartlessness.*) But my child is not our concern. About these rats, Piper . . .

MAYOR puts his arm around PIPER'S shoulder as lights quickly fade to Blackout.

Act One, Scene Six

The town square. Night. The sound of an approaching thunderstorm in the distance; the glow of lightning behind the mountain. Scurrying shapes and the ever-present rustling and squeaking of many unseen rats. MAYOR, COUNCILMEN, and PIPER enter from DSR; an angry mob of TOWNSPEOPLE appear US on the bridge, see the MAYOR et al, and quickly run across the bridge and surround them. They carry torches, clubs, ropes, etc.

EDMUND (*To MAYOR.*) I told you they were upset.

MAYOR (*Sneers at EDMUND, then puts on his biggest smile for TOWNSPEOPLE.*) My, my - what a surprise meeting all you nice folks like this; we were just now on our way to see you . . . (*Elbowing his COUNCILMEN.*) . . . weren't we, boys? (*COUNCILMEN nod in support.*)

JOSEPH You don't say! And what is it you wanted to see us about? Could it be this!?

He thrusts a strap upon which hang many dead rats into the MAYOR'S face. MAYOR and COUNCILMEN recoil in horror. Scornful laughter and sneers from the crowd.

MAYOR (*Regaining his composure.*) I . . . I don't understand . . . People, please . . . Joseph . . . (*Taking BENJAMIN by the arm.*) Benjamin - listen to me . . .

BENJAMIN (*Pulling his arm away.*) Listen? Listen! (*He spits in contempt.*) We've all listened to you and your excuses long enough, Willy! (*Crowd roars again.*)

MAYOR Now, wait... please . . . I beg of you . . .

HENRIK Did you hear that? The Mayor begs us! For what, Willy; more time? Another day? Another week? Another month?! Sorry. There is no more time! (*Crowd roars again.*)

JOSEPH Now, Willy, you and your friends just listen; and listen well. Either you get the rats out of Hamelin tonight, or don't you dare let us see your faces in this town again. Understand?

Another roar of support; COUNCILMEN make a move to run.

MAYOR (*A sharp snarl at COUNCILMEN.*) Stay where you are!
(*COUNCILMEN freeze. MAYOR addresses the crowd.*) Well, now - what a coincidence indeed! This is exactly what I was about to tell you good people. Tonight - this very evening - the rats will be removed from Hamelin. (*The crowd is stunned. Suspicion and uncertainty. MAYOR clears his throat, glances nervously at the silent PIPER, then continues.*) Yes, yes, it's true, my friends. As Mayor of Hamelin, I have made arrangements for the ending of this dreadful plague. Now I realize that this may be a bit difficult to believe, but please bear with me. All I ask of you is this: go home, lock your doors, go to bed and get a good night's rest. But please - make certain you are off the streets by midnight. If the rats are not gone by morning, you may deal with my councilmen and me as you see fit. But - if everything turns out as planned - why, I do hope you'll all join me right here tomorrow afternoon as my guests for a joyful celebration! (*Silence. MAYOR flashes a hopeful grin.*) Tomorrow, then?

The crowd stares in disbelief. JOSEPH steps forward.

JOSEPH Very well, Willy. Tomorrow. (*He grabs MAYOR by the collar.*) Or else.

JOSEPH releases the MAYOR and the crowd exits. Storm draws nearer with lightning and thunder. COUNCILMEN remain for a moment.

MAYOR Pack your things, just in case.

COUNCILMEN stand for a moment, then run offstage.

MAYOR Piper. (MAYOR turns to give PIPER some last-minute instructions, but PIPER is nowhere to be seen.) Piper? (MAYOR looks about the dark town square. A great gust of wind suddenly rises, and the MAYOR shields his face. MAYOR runs onto the bridge.) Piper !

A crack of lightning strikes the bell tower of the church; causing the cross to glow with ethereal electricity. The bell begins to ring of its own accord. A huge clap of thunder. MAYOR cries out, terrified .

MAYOR PIPER!!!

The wind rises higher and MAYOR holds his ears in pain and fear. Quick fade to Blackout.

Act One, Scene Seven

The Mayor's Home. Lightning through window; lights rise on JESSICA, clearing the table. The pantry door is boarded up after the morning incident; JESSICA passes it and pauses. Cautiously, she steps near to it to listen. Sudden thunderclap and JESSICA leaps back with a muffled cry, then a sigh of relief. She moves DS and sits next to the table in MAYOR's large chair; she picks up her embroidery.

JESSICA (Calling offstage.) Adam?

ADAM (From off SR.) Yes, Mama?

JESSICA Did your father say when he might be coring home?

ADAM No. Probably late.

JESSICA (To herself.) Probably. (ADAM enters, dressed in his nightshirt. JESSICA does not look up from her work.) Ready for bed?

ADAM Yes.

JESSICA Tired?

ADAM No.

JESSICA It's very late.

ADAM Aw, Mama - can't I stay up just a little while longer?

JESSICA *(Looking up at her son and grinning.) I thought you'd never ask. Come. (She puts aside her embroidery and pulls ADAM up onto her lap and kisses him. ADAM squirms.)*

ADAM Mama...!

JESSICA What? !

JESSICA gives her son a hug. Lightning. Thunder. A loud sound of nervous rats scurrying behind- the door. Both sit in uneasy silence for a moment.

ADAM Mama?

JESSICA *(Stroking his hair.)* Yes, dear?

ADAM Do you think he can do it?

JESSICA Who, dear?

ADAM The Piper. Do you think he can take away the rats, like he said?

JESSICA Now that would be some miracle if he did, wouldn't it?

ADAM *(Disappointed.)* Mama...

JESSICA Well? You must admit it is a bit fantastic: "piping" things away, just like that.

ADAM You don't believe in him, do you!

JESSICA Did I say that? I don't know, Adam; I haven't even met the man.

ADAM You'd like him, Mama. I know you would. He's awful friendly. And I know he wouldn't ever lie. If he says he'll do something, it'll get done. Why, even Papa believes; he hired him!

JESSICA That comes as no surprise. Your Papa will try anything at this point. After all, what has he got to lose?

ADAM You just wait and see. In the morning they'll all be gone.

JESSICA All of them? (*ADAM scowls at her persistent skepticism. She laughs.*) All right, all right - if you believe, I believe.

ADAM You're just saying that. (*Pause. ADAM yawns.*)

JESSICA Sleepy?

ADAM sighs in agreement and lays his head against her bosom.

ADAM Mama?

JESSICA Um, hmmn.

ADAM Are you happy?

JESSICA (*Brief pause.*) What makes you ask such a thing?

ADAM Sometimes I wonder . . .

JESSICA You make me happy. (*She kisses him on the forehead. Music in.*) Don't you worry about me. Just sleep now . . . sleep . . .

(She sings a lullaby.)

REST SAFE IN MY ARMS AND DREAM DEEPLY MY CHILD
AS I SING OF A LAND THAT'S MORE GENTLE AND MILD
'TIS A MARVELOUS PLACE ONLY CHILDREN MAY GO
WHERE THE TREES ALL BEAR SUGARPLUMS
AND SWEET WATERS FLOW

EACH DAWN BOASTS A RAINBOW
WHICH GLOWS OVER THE DEW

CAUSING FLOWERS TO BLOOM IN REMARKABLE HUE
YES EVERYTHING'S WONDERFULLY DIFFERENT AND NEW
OH, HOW I WISH I COULD GO THERE WITH YOU

AND THESE MARVELS AWAIT THERE F
OR EACH GIRL AND BOY
ALL YOURS FOR THE ASKING; RELAX AND ENJOY
NO WORK IS REQUIRED AND NO ONE GETS TIRED
A DREAM-WORLD COME TRUE –
OH, PLEASE TAKE ME WITH YOU

WHERE THE SPARROWS ARE BRIGHTER
THAN THE PEACOCKS ARE HERE
AND EACH PUPPY CAN OUTFRAN THE FASTEST OF DEER
AND ALL OF THE HORSES ARE BORN WITH GREAT WINGS
AND EVEN THE HONEYBEES HAVE NEVER HAD STINGS

ALL TROUBLES ARE BANISHED, NO SORROW OR STRIFE
CAN EVER AFFECT YOU THE REST OF YOUR LIFE
YES EVERYTHING'S WONDERFULLY DIFFERENT AND NEW
OH, HOW I WISH I COULD GO THERE WITH YOU!

ADAM is fast asleep. JESSICA kisses him as the exterior door opens and MAYOR steps in. JESSICA turns to look at him; he turns away. Lights fade to Blackout.

Act One, Scene Eight

In the blackout: wind, thunder, church bells tolling midnight. Lights rise on town square. PIPER enters DS and walks US to C of bridge. He lifts his pipe to his lips and begins to play his call. Beneath the storm and orchestra, a scratching, rumbling, squeaking din. Lightning illumines the square: teeming with rats. They slowly approach the PIPER, plunging themselves into the river. The storm builds in intensity, the orchestra crescendos, PIPER lifts his arms up to the heavens. Act Curtain falls.

Intermission