

**National
Theatre**

LET'S PLAY

Nurseryland Revolution

Music and book by Dafydd James



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**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

Setting

Nurseryland

Cast of Characters (in order of appearance)

Chorus

Humpty's Head

Humpty's Left Arm

Humpty's Left Leg

Humpty's Right Arm

Humpty's Right Leg

Polly

Grand Old Duke of York

Little Bo Peep

Jill

Little Miss Muffet

Brian, the Spider

Claire, the Miller's Daughter

Happyeveraftersaur

Jack

Georgie Porgie

Princess Pea

Sleeping Beauty

Snow White

Rapunzel

Prince Charming 1

Prince Charming 2

Prince Charming 3

Prince Charming 4

A note on roles and casting

At the teacher's discretion, chorus lines can be split into a variety of individual parts or spoken collectively by groups. Each chorus member can be dressed as a different Nurseryland character not already named in the story. The chorus also works as a physical mass, creating scenes and effects around our protagonists.

The Happyeveraftersaur can also be played by a group of children.

Key

Character lines

Stage directions

Music cues

Director tips

Actor tips

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Prologue

SONG

PROLOGUE

*Everyone: (singing) Girls and boys come out to play
The moon doth shine as bright as day
Leave your supper and leave your sleep
And come join your playfellows out in the street
In a Nurseryland revolution!
No more will we stay quiet
It's a Nurseryland revolution
Who will come and join our riot?*

Scene 1

SOME THINGS TO WORK ON FOR THIS SCENE:

This is the beginning so you need to set the scene for the audience so they know that we are in Nurseryland.

It is important to establish the chorus as a distinct group – how will you set this up? The chorus are our narrators and give the audience detailed information, so the pace and energy of their speech needs to be animated. It is sometimes useful to cast the children with the clearest voices in the chorus.

Humpty Dumpty sits on a wall. 'Humpty' could be a puppet, played by five actors: Left Arm, Right Arm, Left Leg, Right Leg and Head.

SONG

HUMPTY DUMPTY

Everyone

*(singing) Humpty Dumpty sat on the wall
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall
All the king's horses and the king's men
Couldn't put Humpty together again*

*Humpty falls splitting into Left Arm, Right Arm,
Left Leg, Right Leg and Head.*

Depending on how you have chosen to create your Humpty you could stylise his fall by asking the children to fall in slow motion. This leaves room for some comedic facial expressions and it's a safer way for the children to fall.

Chorus	<p>But is this how it really ends? With Humpty broken, without friends?</p> <p>With Humpty down in dumpty dumps Left all alone in bits and lumps</p> <p>Which, let's admit, is rather gory Or perhaps there is a happier ending To this tragic story?</p> <p><i>Polly enters skipping.</i></p>	<p>The chorus are the first people to speak to the audience. Make sure you use loud voices to introduce your play.</p> <p>As the lines rhyme it's important for the actors to keep to the rhythm. When rehearsing these lines, the actors can practice their lines whilst marching.</p>
Polly	<p>I feel a brand-new age is dawning I walked out of my job this morning! I'm big! I'm strong! I'm in fine fettle The time was right to ditch that kettle!</p>	<p>Polly is feeling brave and proud of herself; how can you show us this through her entrance? Think how you can also show this through her facial expressions and body language.</p>
Chorus	<p>You've guessed it! Polly is her name Of 'Putting on that kettle' fame.</p> <p><i>She sees Humpty.</i></p>	<p>This is where we introduce Polly's frustrations so we need to see a contrast in how hopeful she is compared to the reaction she receives from Humpty.</p>
Polly	<p>Poor you – but hey, I need a plan! Here let me fix you, if I can?</p>	
Chorus	<p>But Humpty laughed...</p>	
Humpty's Head	<p>Ha ha ha ha! Oh what a curious thing you are!</p>	<p>Humpty doesn't believe Polly and he is taking the mickey out of her on purpose. How might your voice sound if you were being mean to somebody in this way?</p>
Humpty's Right Hand	<p>You really, really can't help me You're just a girl, ha! Honestly!</p>	
Polly	<p>Well you can't talk! You're just a hand!</p>	
Humpty's Left Hand	<p>How very rude! Please understand If all the king's men couldn't do it How can you, my girl, get to it?</p>	<p>This is the first time the gender theme of the play is raised – think about how you might highlight it by the way Humpty delivers the line 'just a girl' and the reaction of the other characters.</p>
Humpty's Right Leg	<p>You're too gentle; you're too 'nice' Made from sugar mixed with spice!</p>	
Polly	<p>Nonsense! Where've you heard such dribble?</p>	<p>Polly is very annoyed at Humpty.</p>

Humpty's Left Leg It's what the rhyme says, so don't quibble.

Everyone What are little girls made of?
What are little girls made of?
Sugar and spice
And all that's nice;
That's what little girls are made of.

This can be said is a sickly sweet voice to mock the rhyme.

Polly I've never heard such utter dross
Take that back, or I'll get cross!

Chorus But Humpty doubted all she said
And telephoned a man instead.

The following piece of dialogue is starting to build tension. Think about how you might show the difference between Humpty's doubts over Polly's skills and Polly's confidence in herself.

Right Hand *holds a phone to* Humpty's Head.

Humpty's Head *(on the phone)*
Hello? Yes... Grand Old Duke of York?
You have ten thousand men?
Come quick! You are my only chance
Please make me whole again.

Grand Old Duke of York
appears on the telephone.

Perhaps you can have the Grand Old Duke placed in the audience to represent the distance.

Grand Old Duke of York *(on the phone)* Of course, but not immediately,
We have to march from York, you see.

Chorus Angry Polly kept her cool
Although she thought the egg a fool
She made a promise, there and then

Polly I'll fix that egg before those men.
But I need help in this, I know
So to the forest I must go.

Chorus For there are others in the wood
Who also feel misunderstood.

Polly With them I'll show we're so much more
Than Humpty gives us credit for.
I'll prove to all that silly song
Has really got us girls quite wrong.

This is the moment where Polly becomes determined to prove Humpty wrong. Use facial expressions to show her determination and sing to the audience to involve them in the revolution.

SONG

WHO WILL JOIN ME?

Polly

*(singing) Who will join me?
Who will help me?
Find the right solution?
To change the way that Humpty thinks
And start a revolution!*

Everyone

*Who will join her?
Who will help her?
Find the right solution?
To change the way that Humpty thinks
And start a revolution!*

Scene 2

SOME THINGS TO WORK ON FOR THIS SCENE:

Think about the transition for this scene. Watch the 'Staging Challenges' film for ideas about how to stage transitions between the scenes. For example, if Humpty is upstage, the chorus can become trees to shield him.

Use pieces of fabric to create the forest.

The transition between songs can happen as the children are singing. The chorus can move into position while they sing and strike their tree pose as scene 2 begins.

Nurseryland forest.

The Chorus members become trees. They can also create the soundscape of the forest.

You could record the soundscape of the forest and have live voices and sounds over the top to add to the atmosphere.

Polly enters and stands on a small mound of earth (or two members of the chorus!)

Chorus Later that same day, in Nurseryland forest....

Polly shouts through a loudhailer.

Polly Who will join me? Who will help me? Find the right solution. To change the way that Humpty thinks, and start a revolution!

Little Bo Peep jumps out.

Little Bo Peep *(shouting coarsely)*
Who's making all that racket?

Chorus *(spoken or sung a capella)*
Little Bo Peep has lost her sheep
And doesn't know where to find them...

Little Bo Peep Shut up! I hate that song! Firstly, I'm not that small. Secondly, everyone thinks I lost those sheep because I'm some kind of ditzy airhead! When the truth of the matter is, it's hard keeping an eye on your flock when you're studying for a PhD in astrophysics.

Polly Well then, you're exactly the kind of girl I'm looking for! Humpty Dumpty thinks girls are completely incapable of putting him back

together again. I want to prove him wrong, Little Bo Peep.

Little Bo Peep

Dr Bo Peep, I'll have you know!

Jill enters.

Jill

I couldn't help but overhear. I'm Jill.

Little Bo Peep

As in 'Jack and Jill'?

Jill

That's the problem – I am my own person you know! But everyone just thinks of me as the girl who came tumbling down the hill after her brother Jack. And why was that? Because Jack couldn't stand the fact that I beat him to the top of the hill. Because I ALWAYS beat him. He got so cross, he threw himself down the hill, just to get there first!

Miss Muffet enters.

Miss Muffet

Well everyone thinks I'm some kind of scaredy-cat.

Chorus

(spoken or sung a capella)
Little Miss Muffet
Sat on a tuffet
Eating her curds and whey;
Along came a spider
Who sat down beside her
And frightened Miss Muffet away

Little Miss Muffet

See! But don't trust a word you hear – that spider didn't scare me! In fact, I'm rather partial to a spider. And that's why I ate it. *(beat)* I'm joking. I shared my whey with him. We're best friends now. Aren't we Brian?

A spider appears.

Spider

(munching some curds and whey) Yep.

Claire, the Miller's daughter enters.

Claire

Well at least your songs actually name you. I

You can add to the sense of building a revolution by having the characters jump out from different parts of the forest. Try experimenting with different levels.

Think about how you feel when your sibling or a friend has cheated in a game you were playing.

Ensure Miss Muffet waits a moment before revealing her joke.

don't even get a mention in my story, but
EVERYONE knows the name of
Rumpelstiltskin...

SONG

GIRLS SHOULD STICK TOGETHER

Claire

*(singing) I'd find your sheep, I'd feed you whey,
I'd fetch your pail of water,
If people called me by name
And not the Miller's daughter!*

Little Bo Peep

*(singing) Nursery rhymes have painted me
As ditzy, small and passive*

*When I'm not all that tiny
And boy my brain is massive*

Polly

Because we have all been wronged

*We girls must stick together
Let's change the way that we are seen
By everyone forever!*

Jill

*I run so very quickly
In fact I'm greyhound fast
Yet nursery rhymes have painted me
As she who got there last.*

Little Miss Muffet

*Well for the record let me say
I'm so not scared of spiders
And since I shared my tea with Bri,
I've now moved on to Tigers.*

All

*Because we have all been wronged
We girls must stick together
Let's change the way that we are seen
By everyone forever!*

**Try coming together to
create a strong tableau
to finish the song,
exploring different levels.**

Claire

My name is Claire, just so you know.

Polly

Well nice to meet you Claire. Hello!

*Polly embraces Claire.
The chorus applaud rapturously.*

Chorus So off they went in search of more
 Not knowing that behind them
 A Happyeveraftersaur
 Was praying it would find them

Happyeveraftersaur Roar, roar, roar!

SOUND CUE 5 SCENE CHANGE

This is the threat that is hanging over the characters. Think about how you might create tension.

For example, this roar could be heard from behind the audience with the chorus looking ominously in the direction of the sound.