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Cast of Characters

SARAH	CONDUCTOR	TROY
BOB	GEORGE	PAUL
MEGAN	MARSHA	NORA
JENNIFER	BARBARA	ROB
ERIC	KELLY	BOORMAN
DARREN	JIM	NORMA
JUNE	RON	DEREK
EDITH	SHEILA	LAURA
MIRANDA	MICHELLE	MARCUS
ALLY	KIM	JULIA
ERICA	HEIDI	MEEMIE
BILL	MARY	EBEN
RENEE	RAELYN	JORDAN
TYLER	HOST	FRANK
NICHOLE	LISA	MINDY
KRISTEN	BUCKY	CARMA

Author's Note

I deliberately omitted any specific lyrics and song titles, instead simply noting in the script when the choir would sing. This aspect of the show is very flexible. I suggest using musical numbers with which the cast, or members of the cast, might be familiar. I would only encourage the director to vary the amount of time the choir sings between the “thought” segments.

Acknowledgments

The original production of *The (Dis)Concert(ed) Choir* was presented on February 4, 2004, by Hartford High School Drama in White River Junction, Vermont, under the direction of the author. The original cast list is as follows:

SARAH (tripper)	Gabrielle Aube
BOB (laugher)	Nick Wood
MEGAN (kicker)	Liz Lofgren
CONDUCTOR.....	Chelsea Densmore
JENNIFER (soloist)	K. Bevin Ayers
TYLER (pizza troubles)	Jordan Wood
ERIC (lover)	Jon Abetti
DARREN (June's son).....	Rigel Cable
JUNE (adoring mother)	Allison Brown
EDITH (accompanist)	Kaitlin Haehnel
MIRANDA (counter)	Larissa Piwek
RENEE (panty hose)	Jessie Stuart
KRISTEN (Miss Paranoid)	Wendy Tucker
NICK (therapy girl).....	Jade Christie-Maples
MICHELLE (toe hater)	Michelle Olson
BILL (picture taker).....	Zach Mayer
HOST	Sarah Pickett
MARSHA (lovee)	Ashley Pettit
LISA (Bill's daughter)	Meredyth Smith
BUCKY.....	Lara Quillia
SHEILA.....	Sarah Laros
RON	Cassidy Scott
BILL's WIFE.....	Emily Smith
PAULA	Cass Johndrow
NORA	Hailley Therriault
ROBIN.....	Shannon Nadeau
MINDY	Emily Finnegan
BOORMAN	Brian North
NORMA	Jessy Kendall
DEREK.....	Steven Henck
LAURA	Jena Foote
ERICA	Christy Dornik
GEORGIA.....	Chrissy Hawkins
MARLENE	Hillary Hudson

JULIA Angela Christie
EBEN..... Nick Leggett
JORDAN..... Crystal Irish
FRANK Craig Olson
BARBARA (cell phone) Amy Williamson
KIM Michelle Panniello
MARY Danielle Chiasson
ALLY (bored) Angie Messina
JIM (hates swaying) Ryan Frazer
Raelyn Grace Chris
Heidi Brynn O'Neill

THE (DIS)CONCERT(ED) CHOIR

by Alan Haehnel

(The stage is set with risers and a piano, as if for a choir concert. After a moment, a group of students enters, the girls dressed in black skirts and white blouses; the boys dressed in black pants and white shirts with ties. One student, EDITH, goes to the keyboard. After everyone seems to have arrived, SARAH comes in, late. Her spot to stand is on the top row. While trying to get there, she trips and bumps into the backside of another choir member. Finally, the CONDUCTOR comes in, bows, then turns with her baton to begin. EDITH plays the introductory music. The CHOIR sings the first few words of the song, everyone in unison, loudly. Suddenly, everyone goes silent and frozen. The lights dim slightly. The convention of the play is that we are hearing the thoughts of the singers. Anyone not speaking is frozen in postures of singing or playing. The light changes and freezes should make this convention clear: lights dim, group frozen—we're hearing inner thoughts; lights full, group unfrozen—we're witnessing "normal" happenings at a choir concert.)

SARAH. I did not just trip.

BOB. I can't think about Sarah tripping.

SARAH. Because, if I just actually tripped and actually practically rammed my head up Carma's butt, I would die from embarrassment. I would be dead right now.

BOB. Uh-oh. I'm getting a vision of Sarah tripping and then knocking everybody over like a bunch of human dominoes. Oh, man, that is funny. Can't laugh. Cannot laugh!

(The lights come back up to full. The CHOIR sings for a few notes, then freezes again.)

SARAH. I tripped! I can't believe it! I'm going to die!

BOB. Can't laugh, can't laugh!

SARAH. Maybe nobody saw it. It wasn't a big deal. Nobody even noticed.

(CHOIR sings.)

MEGAN. What is he laughing at? Greenfield is giving him the evil eye. Bob, shut up!

BOB. Got to get it under control. Got to cool it. Okay. I'm okay.

(CHOIR sings.)

BOB. I'm not okay! I can't stop laughing! Have to stop. Have to stop!

MEGAN. Greenfield is going to kill him.

BOB. Greenfield is going to kill me.

CONDUCTOR. I'm going to kill him.

(When the CONDUCTOR expresses her thoughts, she turns quickly to face the audience, then turns back around when finished.)

MEGAN. If he doesn't quit it, I'm going to kick him.

(CHOIR sings. MEGAN kicks BOB.)

BOB. Ow! Man, that hurt.

MEGAN. It was for his own good.

(Singing.)

JENNIFER. I am going to die.

ERIC. *(Looking toward MARSHA:)* I love thee.

DARREN. I wonder where Mom is?

(Singing.)

JUNE. *(In audience:)* Where's my baby? Where is my...Oh, there he is!

(Singing.)

EDITH. *(At the piano:)* Oops!

MIRANDA. One and two and three and rest, two, three.

ALLY. I am so bored. Bo-word.

RENEE. Panty hose are creations of the devil.

(Singing.)

TYLER. Whoa. Note to self: Never eat half a large hot Italian pizza just before you have to stand and perform for a long time without being able to go to the bathroom.

(Singing.)

CONDUCTOR. Why am I up here swinging my arms like an idiot?

KRISTEN. I wonder when the last time was these risers had a safety inspection. If they collapsed, someone would be impaled on a jagged metal rod, right through their spleen.

NICHOLE. I hate this.

JIM. Why did Greenfield have to switch my place? I was perfectly happy standing over there next to Sheila.

DARREN. I wonder where Mom is sitting?

JUNE. Look at him looking for me. I'm here, Baby, row five, on the right, Sweetie! You look so good up there! I'm right here.

(Singing.)

JENNIFER. I am definitely going to die. My solo is coming.

CONDUCTOR. Nobody is paying the slightest bit of attention to me.

EDITH. Whoopsie, missed that note. Little bugger.

TYLER. *(As if feeling a gas pain:)* Oh, man. Oh, I hate that feeling. Ooh, it shoots from one side of my gut to the other. It's like the Indy 500 in there. Nice. This is killing me.

(Singing.)

JUNE. Oh, dear, he doesn't see me. He's got that look of panic in his eyes, like that time it was below zero and he licked the lock on the garage door and got his tongue stuck and I had to spit on it to get him free. I'm here, Darren! Look over here! Maybe if I just waved, just a teensy bit.

DARREN. What is that movement? Someone waving? Mom? Mom, stop that!

(Singing to end of first song. The CONDUCTOR walks to the side of the group and bows.)

CONDUCTOR. *(Smiling:)* Thank-you and welcome to our annual Spring Concert. As always, I feel it my privilege to work with this fine group of musicians. *(Lights dim.)* Musicians? That is one major stretch! *(Lights full.)* As I draw nearer to retirement, I find that the generation gap tends to widen between myself and these young people, but this I can say: no matter what the difference between my age and theirs, music will always bring us together. *(Lights dim.)* I'm shameless! How can I spout such drivel and still live with myself? *(Lights full.)* I would like to recognize, on the keyboard, our student accompanist, Edith Nixon *(Lights dim.)* who seems to be working with the every-other-note-is-close-enough theory of music performance.

EDITH. Hi, hi! Sorry for the goofs. I need a smidge more practice.

(Lights full.)

CONDUCTOR. *(Smiling:)* Edith will be busy tonight, traveling between her soprano duties during the a cappella pieces and the keyboard when we need her accompaniment. *(Lights dim.)* She will be equally inept in both places.

EDITH. *(Getting up from the piano and joining the choir:)* Busy me. Busy, busy, busy. Now I am a soprano *(Singing a quick high note:)* Aaahh! Next I am a piano. Plink, plinkety, plink.

(Lights full.)

CONDUCTOR. And now, a bit of background on our next piece.

(The CONDUCTOR freezes. Lights dim.)

MICHELLE. I wish we didn't have to wear black and white. I mean, that's so winter. I'm a summer, definitely.

JUNE. Oh, doesn't he look ever-so-perfect up there. I remember when he was just a tiny, tiny baby in my arms. I remember how he used to drool, how he'd get the corner of his little pink blanky with the fuzzy bears on it just soaking wet with drool.

(Lights full.)

CONDUCTOR. Well, you didn't come to hear me talk, so let's get on with the music! (*Lights dim.*) If these nearsighted chipmunks could just follow me for at least 1/3 of the time, we might be able to approximate something like a song for you people.

(Lights back to full. The CONDUCTOR begins the next song. After the opening first few words, the CHOIR freezes.)

BILL. (*In audience:*) If I were a religious man, I would say a prayer of thanks right now. Dear God, thank-you for letting us get these seats smack-dab in the middle of all these people, safe, at last, for once, from The Nudge. For the first time since our little girl was in kindergarten in that amazingly horrible play when she was dressed as a banana, my wife is not going to be able to give me The Nudge.

(Singing.)

NICHOLE. My mother says it's good for my college applications, singing in the choir, so I can appear well-rounded. I hate singing.

JUNE. Oh, my Darren, you were such a wonderful drooler!

RENEE. Whoever invented panty hose should have been shot. Dead.

KRISTEN. I don't like singing in this air. I suspect it's heavily laden with pollen and dust particles and—I don't care what they say about its eradication from public buildings—I can taste asbestos.

(Singing.)

JUNE. Oh, my baby, I don't know how people can stand to be next to you without just falling over in adoration! If you only knew my dreams for you.

(Light change—dream sequence. The CHOIR reconfigures into a talk show setting, with DARREN as the guest.)

JUNE. I can see you on one of those talk shows, like with Jay Leno or Oprah.

HOST. (*As the CHOIR sits and claps and claps and claps:*) Well, they do love you, don't they? Darren Hornblatt, ladies and gentlemen!

DARREN. Oh, thank-you. Thank-you, really.

(The CHOIR/studio audience finally stops clapping.)

HOST. Whew. I have had guests on before, Darren, some big names—Michael Jackson, Bill Clinton—but I have never seen a response like that. Never.

DARREN. Oh, well, thank-you. You're all so kind. I don't deserve it.

HOST. Tell me, Darren: I was reading in a recent interview you had in Time Magazine, the one where they named you Man of the Year.

DARREN. Oh, that.

HOST. And you mentioned some of your musical inspirations. I'm more interested, though, in the people who have inspired you in a more general sense—the people who have really helped you become who you are.

DARREN. I have only one definite inspiration. My mother, June Hornblatt.

CROWD. *(Applauding:)* Aww!

JUNE. Oh, Sweetheart!

HOST. Is she in the audience, Darren?

DARREN. She certainly is. Right over there, fifth row back. Hi, Mom!

(A spotlight picks up JUNE in her seat.)

JUNE. Hello, Baby! You look so good up there!

HOST. Mrs. Hornblatt...

JUNE. Call me, June, please. Oh, that light is so bright. It feels good, actually.

HOST. June, tell us about yourself.

JUNE. Well, you know, I'm just Darren's mother. What more can I say?

DARREN. She's just being modest. Everything I am, every one of my numerous talents, I owe to my mother, June Hornblatt.

JUNE. Oh, Honey, that is so sweet! You're going to make me cry! You are perfect!

HOST. June, in my experience, no one gets to be a success without support, which leads me to believe that you, June Hornblatt, must be one of the greatest, most supportive mothers in the history of this country!

(Loud applause from the CHOIR. They rise to their feet.)

DARREN. Yay, Mom!

JUNE. Please, please, I don't deserve this. *(Standing and applauding:)* I applaud you, my wonderful Darren. I love you, Sweetie!

(She continues to applaud as the CHOIR moves back into its normal formation as the lights change. The CHOIR begins to sing again. The spotlight goes off JUNE. JUNE remains standing, clapping. DARREN is mortified. JUNE slowly realizes she has been carried away by her daydream. She stops clapping and sits down. Lights dim.)

NICHOLE. Well-rounded. Well-rounded! How is standing up here in complete and total misery and embarrassment supposed to make me well-rounded?

MICHELLE. I think my hair turned out really nice tonight. It's got just that nice blend of curly and straight. I bet it's really shiny under the lights.

JIM. Granted, Sheila didn't sing very well. In fact, Sheila sounded an awful lot like a hump-backed whale calling for a mate.

MIRANDA. C natural here, not C flat. Careful not to go too low. Hold for a full three counts. And breathe.

BILL. My wife is not going to jab me with that pointy little elbow of hers. She is not going to whisper to me in a voice that cannot be denied, "Get up there! Get close! Get her picture. Go on!" We are too far away this time. We are land-locked. Hallelujah and amen.

JIM. But at least Sheila stood still.

TYLER. Uh-oh. Major bubble. I'm in trouble. Maybe a little belch, just sneak it out the side of my mouth during a rest here. Release a little pressure.

(Singing.)

TYLER. Nope, didn't do it for me.

(Singing to end of song. CONDUCTOR acknowledges the crowd for moment, then the lights dim.)

CONDUCTOR. *(As she is taking a bow and acknowledging the choir:)* Applaud, applaud, applaud. Thank-you. Thank-you for being the parents and relatives of these delinquents who can't carry a tune in a bucket. Otherwise we would have no audience at all. Thank-you. *(Lights full.)* And now, for our next selection...

(She freezes.)

BILL. Go ahead, Lisa, Sweetheart—be bad! Be terrible! I won't mind a bit. Whatever you do, I'm gonna love it because I am just going to sit here. Nudgeless. Still. Relaxed.

(The CONDUCTOR turns to the choir, raises her arms to begin, makes the downbeat for the piano. EDITH is not there. She looks over at her.)

EDITH. She's looking at me. Mrs. Greenfield is looking at me funny. Why are we not singing? Now she's jerking her head. Is she having a seizure? *(Screaming:)* What is it? What's the matter? *(Sudden realization:)* Why...? Oh, oh, that's right! I'm supposed to play for this one. *(Moving over to the piano:)* Oh, yes, oh, yes. Plinkety-me this time, not *(Singing:)* aaahh-me. I practiced this little number. Uh-huh! This one I definitely practiced. A little.

CONDUCTOR. Anyone out there hiring? At this point, I will work for food.

(Once EDITH is settled, she nods to the CONDUCTOR. The CHOIR begins the song.)

KRISTEN. These lights! I know they're doing damage to my retinas, probably irreversible. But will anyone do anything about it? Oh, no. No, they just laugh.

JIM. Mindy sways when she sings. Why does Mindy sway when she sings? Does Mindy sway to show just how much she is “into” the music? Is Mindy swaying to be impressive? Or is Mindy swaying because she has an imbalance in her inner ear?

(The CHOIR comes in. A cell phone rings. Several choir members' eyes shift nervously to their pockets.)

KIM. Mine?

HEIDI. Mine?

MARY. Mine?

RAELYN. Mine?

BARBARA. Oh, my gosh, it's mine. Shut it off, shut it off, shut it off.

(As the CHOIR continues to sing, she reaches in her pocket and shuts off the cell phone.)

BARBARA. There. Whew.

MICHELLE. Uh-oh. Tingle. Tingle on my forehead. I know that feeling. A zit will arrive up there tomorrow morning unless I apply some cleanser within the next hour.

NICHOLE. Doing something you detest makes you well-rounded. What kind of logic is that?

RENEE. It was a guy. A woman-hater. He invented panty hose out of revenge.

TYLER. I don't dare, do I? Oh, that would be terrible. That would be possibly deadly. No, I can't.

(Singing.)

ALLY. I am bored out of my underwear! Out of my brain, out of my ears, out of my eyeballs, out of my pet ferret, out of my future first-born child I am bored, bored, bored.

BILL. Oh, this is so nice. Not a care in the...ow. What was that? Ow! She did it again. She nudged me. In the middle of this row, a thousand people to either side of us, no room to get out, my wife just gave me The Nudge!

JENNIFER. Okay, there's this song, and then one more and then...my solo! Help! I can't remember the words. I can't do this. I am going to die. It's that simple. They'll have to carry my stiff corpse out of here on a stretcher!

(Singing.)

BILL. *(From the audience:)* She's got to be out of her mind. I can't move; I can't...ow! All right, all right, I'm moving! I'm up! *(Starting to work his way out of the row with his camera:)* Unbelievable. Absolutely unbelievable. After 19 years of marriage, you think you know a person! Oh, geez; sorry, lady—I hope your high heels have steel toes. Sorry. This isn't my fault. Excuse me. Sorry. Don't give me that look. I'm the victim here, believe me.

(Singing.)

ERIC. I love thee with every molecule, every atom, every subatomic particle of my being. Canst thou sense it, dear Goddess?

MARSHA. Ew. I feel something. What is that?

NICHOLE. Okay, so if doing things I can't stand will make me well-rounded, why don't I, say, go bungee-jumping with the cord hooked into my nostril? That should really round me out as a person.

BILL. *(In the aisle:)* And why is this my job anyway? I'm the lawnmower; I'm the car-fixer; I'm the gravy-maker at Thanksgiving; I'm the trash taker-outer...where and when did it get put down that I'm the commando picture-taker?

(Singing.)

EDITH. Oops. Whoops. Whoa! That was a bad part. Ouch.

CONDUCTOR. Would it be possible for me to have an accompanist without a lobotomy?

EDITH. Oh, darn it. Sorry! Well, I got that one right anyway.

JENNIFER. Okay, relax. I need to relax. Let's see, let's see...I should think of the audience in their underwear. I can't see them. I only see lights, bright lights. I can't think of bright lights in their underwear. That doesn't make any sense. I'm losing my mind.

MIRANDA. One-e-and-a, two-e-and-a, three-e-and-a (*Holding the word:*) foouooooouuur.

RENEE. If I could find even the distant relative of the guy who invented panty hose, I would strangle him with his great-great-grand-uncle's invention. Oh, they itch!

JIM. It's a new song, and yet Mindy continues to sway. Swaying Mindy, blowing to a wind no one else feels.

(Singing.)

BILL. All right. Here I go again, on another photographic mission, sent out by General Nudge back there. Oh, what's the use? I'll take the shot, I'll go back to my seat, and she'll still say, "Why didn't you get closer?" and when we get the pictures back from Wal-Mart, double prints, she'll say, "What is this?" and I'll say, "That's Lisa. That's a picture of our daughter singing in the choir" and she'll say, "No, that's a picture of the whole choir singing. You can barely see Lisa!" and I'll say, "What are you talking about, she's right there" and she'll say, "But she's not the center of the picture—that other girl is the center of the picture. I don't even know who that girl is. Did you find that girl more attractive than your daughter?" and I'll say, "Oh, forget it. You take the picture next time" and then she'll be silent for two days until I bring her flowers and grovel like a beaten dog.

(Singing.)

BARBARA. Who could have been trying to call me? (*Quickly, as if flipping through a file:*) Michelle? She's here. Nora? She's here. Maria's parents took her phone away because of that \$400.00 bill; Greg was grounded for a month and he's still got a week left; Allison broke her jaw so she can't talk; Winny's cell phone plan won't let her call me before nine; and Rocko's still in jail. Who could it have been? I hate missing calls!

(Singing.)

BILL. No. No, not this time. If I had to get The Nudge even when I thought I was safe, if I had to wade through that swamp of legs and feet to get to the aisle, I am sure as shooting not going to come back from this mission with anything less than a great picture of Lisa.

I'm going in and I'm going in close. Yeah. I'll get in so close even General Nudge will think I've gone too far and she won't send me out again! Okay, Lisa, get ready—Daddy's coming in for a close-up shot of your nose hairs!

(BILL goes in very close, eventually climbing onto the stage to get a good photo.)

LISA. Who is that? Daddy? No, it can't be. It can't be. It is! Daddy? Oh, no—Mom must've given him a big time Nudge if he's getting this close! Daddy, go back. Go back! You're getting too close!

BUCKY. What is that guy going to do, climb on the stage?

CONDUCTOR. Who is this? Since when do we get paparazzi at a high school choir concert?

LISA. At least turn off the flash, Daddy! You don't need it in this light. Turn off the flash!

(Singing.)

BILL. Let's see, now; I've got to turn off the flash. I don't need it in this light. Oh, this is going to be a nice shot. This is one for the Christmas Cards, General Nudge! You're going to love it!

LISA. No flash! No flash! No...

(Singing.)

(BILL takes the picture with a gigantic flash. CHOIR members blink their eyes.)

BILL. Did that flash? I don't think so. I'm taking another. I'm here; I might as well.

LISA. Daddy! Go sit down! No more! No...

(Singing. Another flash.)

BILL. There. There. How about them apples, huh? That was a photo session. General Nudge, that was not merely a commando raid. That was kamikaze action. Nudge me again, will ya? I don't think so.

LISA. Daddy, that was the most embarrassing thing you've ever done!

BILL. Boom, Baby! Up close and personal, that one is for the record books. Boom! I'm going to the bathroom.

BUCKY. Man, what a nutball.

(Singing to the end of the song.)

JENNIFER. All right. One more song and then comes the song with my solo in it. Deep breaths, deep breaths.

(Lights to full.)

CONDUCTOR. I think you'll find our next piece to be a bit more upbeat than the last.

(Lights dim.)

JENNIFER. *(Like a baby:)* Maaaamaaaa!

EDITH. *(Leaving the piano:)* I just played that one so I don't play this one. I plinkety-plinked, so now I singety-sing. Busy little Edith, back to the choir.

NICHOLE. Years of therapy may be in my future just because I was forced to sing in the choir.

BARBARA. *(After a sharp intake of breath:)* What if it was Raymond? Oh, that would be so amazingly, ridiculously, impossibly awesome if it was Raymond!

(The CONDUCTOR begins the next number.)

KRISTEN. All of these people in this heated, enclosed space, every one of them breathing out their foul soup of bacteria-laden breath. This is like one giant, germ-breeding Petri dish in here!

ERIC. *(Staring at MARSHA:)* If my love for thee were water, thou wouldst be drenched with a tidal wave at this moment.

MARSHA. I swear I keep feeling something. Ew...it's like slug-slime on my neck.

ERIC. How canst thou not sense the energy of my adoration, dearest one?

MARSHA. Geek eyes. That's what I'm feeling. Geek eyes are staring at me. Oh, and I know who it is, too.

(Singing.)

TYLER. All right. Things have settled down a bit now. I think I'm going to make it. Phew.

BARBARA. I've got to check after this song. Got to, got to, got to!

MICHELLE. I'm a little worried about my toes. They seem out of proportion with the rest of my body. I mean, I don't want to, like, be on the beach in my bikini and have some hot guy looking at me thinking, "Yeah, nice, yeah, good, yeah, oh, yeah, beautiful, yeah, I like that," and he goes all the way down to my legs and then he looks at my feet and he goes, "Ooh, what are those? Guess I'll pass." My toes are definitely a problem.

(Singing.)

ALLY. I could scream, I'm so bored. I could light my brother's hair on fire, I'm so bored. I could clean my room, I'm so...no, that's not true.

(Singing.)

KRISTEN. They call me "paranoid." They call me "hypochondriac." One day, though, they will learn the truth. One day they will wake up in a nightmare.

(The lights shift to an ominous red; members of the CHOIR huddle together, suddenly scared during KRISTEN's fantasy.)

KRISTEN. Who will they turn to for guidance? Who? The truth will slowly descend upon them like a shroud; they will begin to sense the truth—that the world is a dangerous place, a sinister collection of unseen perils that, at any moment, could swallow them up!

SHEILA. Do you feel that?

RON. Yeah, I do feel something.

SHEILA. It's as if...as if I suddenly realize that the world is a dangerous place, a sinister collection of unseen perils that, at any moment, could swallow me up!

RON. I was just thinking that, too.

SHEILA. Oh, Ron—I'm scared.

RON. Oh, Sheila, so am I.

KRISTEN. Then will they remember, in the backs of their clouded minds, the voice of a girl, a girl they used to call Scaredy Cat and Miss Hypersensitive.

SHEILA. Who was that girl who used to always claim to feel this way?

RON. That's right! I remember calling her Scaredy Cat and Miss Hypersensitive.

SHEILA. What was her name? She knew the truth all along, didn't she?

RON. Good Golly, Sheila, you're right! She did! Her name was...it was...

KRISTEN. Then will I, Kristen the Sickly Girl, become Kristen the Prophetess of Doom!

ALL. Kristen!

TROY. Kristen, I have this cough, and so do several of my friends. What do you think it could be?

KRISTEN. You have...the bubonic plague!

TROY and OTHERS. The plague!

PAUL. Kristen, there was a funny smell in the Chemistry Room the other day.

KRISTEN. It was a rare fungus germinating in the poorly washed vials.

PAUL. Is it dangerous?

KRISTEN. It will eat the very flesh from your bones!

PAUL and OTHERS. Flesh-eating fungus!

NORA. Kristen, I have a pimple.

KRISTEN. It's cancerous!

NORA and OTHERS. Cancer!

ROB. Kristen, I just noticed a crack in the ceiling of the band room.

KRISTEN. The structural integrity of the entire west wing of the school has been severely compromised. If we get one more drop of rain, one...more...drop...the roof will collapse and drop tons of steel and debris upon us all!

KELLY. But Kristen, it just started to rain!

KRISTEN. Then prepare for your doom.

ALL. *(Falling as if the roof has collapsed:)* Nooooo!

KRISTEN. *(Looking around at the bodies littering the stage:)* I told you so.

(Lights back to full. The CHOIR quickly gets to its feet and finishes the song.)

CONDUCTOR. In this next number, we will be privileged *(Lights dim.)* cursed *(Lights full.)* to hear a solo from junior Jennifer Meekman.

JENNIFER. She said it! She announced my solo! *(She begins to hyperventilate.)* No, no, no, no, no!

BARBARA. *(Looking at her cell phone and screaming:)* It was Raymond! Oh, yes! Oh, no! I hung up on him!

EDITH. *(Moving over to the piano:)* Oh. Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh. I play for Jennifer's solo. Mrs. Greenfield told me to pound out the notes like crazy for Jennifer's solo so maybe she could hear them and stay in tune, if we were all very lucky. So here I go to pound out those notes!

(The CONDUCTOR begins the song.)

CONDUCTOR. How did I ever choose Meekman for this solo? This is one of the most disastrous mistakes of my career.

RENEE. I'm going to become a lawyer. And then a judge. I'm going to learn everything I can about law. And then I'm going to get elected to the legislature.

JENNIFER. Somebody help me!

RENEE. And then I'm going to become an influential figure in national politics.

JENNIFER. Somebody shoot me!

RENEE. And then, when I've done all that, I'm going to pass a law banning the manufacture and sale of panty hose!

(Singing.)

EDITH. Whoopsie!

(Singing.)

NICHOLE. *(With an Austrian accent, imitating a psychologist:)* "So, Nichole, why do you think you're feeling this great sense of anxiety that makes you want to shed your own skin?" *(As herself:)* "Well, Doctor, it's because I was forced to sing in the choir." *(Doctor:)* "I'm going to show you these pictures. Tell me what you see." *(Herself:)* "I see a twisted eighth note choking an innocent child." *(Doctor:)* "Oh? And how about this one?" *(Herself:)* "I see a piece of sheet music making deep paper cuts into the side of the world." *(Doctor:)* "Oh, dear. You are sick. I'm afraid we must put you away for many, many years."

(Singing.)

TYLER. Oh, no—it's back again! I've got to do something. I'm dying up here! I'm singing about daffodils and I'm going to explode from sausage gas!

MICHELLE. Would I look better without toes at all or with the deformed toes I have?

(Singing.)

NICHOLE. That's right, Mom and Dad, your well-rounded girl is going to have to be institutionalized because you insisted she sing in the choir! Harvard? No. Yale? No. State College? No. Community College? No way. The only place that will accept me will be our local Looney Bin.

JENNIFER. Here it comes. Three measures until my solo.

(Singing.)

CONDUCTOR. Two measures until her solo. Take cover.

(Singing.)

JENNIFER. One measure. Don't let me puke!

(The CHOIR sings one more note and then JENNIFER opens her mouth as if beginning her solo.)

EDITH. Pound the notes, pound the notes! Here's busy Edith, pounding the notes!

CONDUCTOR. Everyone, I apolo...wait a minute! That almost sounded decent!

BOORMAN. All right, Jen-Jen...let it fly, dude!

JENNIFER. Hey, I'm not nervous anymore now that I've actually started singing. I'm grooving with this. In fact, I'm loving it.

CONDUCTOR. Careful, now; careful. Don't get carried away!

BOORMAN. Ouch. Ooh. Oh, that one really stunk.

JENNIFER. I think I'm going to do this for a living. American Idol, here I come!

MICHELLE. If I ever looked as bad as she sounds, I would donate my body to science before I was dead.

TYLER. Oh, man, that noise is definitely not helping my digestion.

JENNIFER. Before, I didn't want this moment to come. Now, I want it to stretch on forever! Greenfield may not like it, but I feel the audience with me. I'm holding the last note extra long.

(The CONDUCTOR and CHOIR look as if they are being administered an electric shock as JENNIFER holds the final note for far too long. At last she stops. The CONDUCTOR finishes the song with the CHOIR.)

BOORMAN. Wow, dude, you really killed that one.

JENNIFER. Man, I really nailed that one.

(Lights full.)

CONDUCTOR. We'd like to recognize our soloist in that last number. (*Lights dim.*) We'd like to put her on the FBI's Ten Most Wanted List for the brutal slaying of an innocent solo. (*Lights full.*) Jennifer Meekman.

(Lights dim.)

JENNIFER. (*Bowing:*) Thank-you! Thank-you! You'll be hearing a lot more of me in the future!

CONDUCTOR. We have sunk to a new low.

JENNIFER. I have found my calling.

EDITH. (*Crossing back to the choir:*) Here goes little Edith, back to the choir. And this is where little Edith will spend the rest of the night. Or, the rest of the concert. I'm not going to sleep here, of course. (*She giggles to herself.*) Right. I'll just lay my little sleeping bag out on the floor here, set up my night light and snuggle right down. No, no, no, no. Little Edith has her own little bed at her own little house, thank-you very much.

(The CONDUCTOR raises her hands and begins the next song.)

TYLER. I seriously think I'm doing some internal damage.

JENNIFER. Man, I was good!

RENEE. Women of the world, unite! Down with panty hose!

ALLY. Bored, bored, bored, bored, bored, bored, bored.

BARBARA. What if he calls me back during the concert again? I can't hang up on him, not twice. Call me back, Raymond, please! You are a god! Call me back! Later. Pretty please, later.

(Singing.)

BILL. One perfect photo taken, one long session in the bathroom, just a few minutes more standing here waiting for the concert to be over...all in all, a very productive evening.

(Singing.)

CONDUCTOR. You know, I dreamt, when I was in college, of being a choir director. But this (*Indicating the choir:*) ragtag bunch of

hormonally-unbalanced termites was not what I envisioned. No, in my dream...

(In this sequence, the CHOIR formation is broken. The students sit and gaze at the CONDUCTOR in abject adoration.)

CONDUCTOR. I am the master teacher. The students hang on my every word. *(To the CHOIR:)* And why do you think the composer chooses to put the fermata here, as opposed to in measure 13, where, as we have established, he might justifiably have done so?

(All hands are raised, trying desperately to be heard. She chooses one.)

NORMA. Well, Mrs. Greenfield, first I wanted to tell you how much I appreciated the extra reading you suggested we do last night.

(The class nods in affirmation; some applaud.)

DEREK. I loved page 13. I memorized it because I was so captivated.

CONDUCTOR. Splendid. But back to the question of the fermata.

LAURA. Oh, yes...my feeling is that the fermata is in measure 26 as opposed to measure 13 because the theme of the piece has been fully recapitulated by that point.

(ERICA raises her hand.)

CONDUCTOR. Erica?

ERICA. I'm afraid I don't agree with that analysis at all.

CONDUCTOR. Your reasoning, Miss Stripling?

ERICA. Last week-end, after you talked to us about gaining a greater historical reference, I went home and spent 12 hours composing a piece in the vein of Hoptmann. I had a fermata issue come up.

CONDUCTOR. Tell us about it.

ALL. *(Ad-libbing:)* Yes, yes...tell us!

ERICA. The explanation is fairly long. I don't think I'll get through it before the bell.

ALL. Aww!

GEORGE. And it's Friday, darn it! We'll have to wait the whole week-end!

ALL. (*Ad-libbing:*) Oh, no! I can't stand the suspense! That's terrible!

CONDUCTOR. People, people. I understand your frustration. However, I have made arrangements for a special workshop meeting on Saturday night, from 6:00-10:00. How many of you might have an interest in that?

(All hands raise enthusiastically.)

CONDUCTOR. Well, I guess I might have to ask the administration for a larger room.

NORMA. Could we hold the workshop on Sunday, too?

CONDUCTOR. That was my dream—eager students, absolutely captivated by music and by my personality.

(As she is speaking, the students slouch on the risers, the epitome of boredom and restlessness.)

CONDUCTOR. In reality, I have been reduced to calling a fermata “the little eyeball over the note that means look up at me, please.” When I mention the term to them, they say things like...

MARCUS. Fermata? Isn't that an Italian race-car?

JULIA. No, it's a mattress: “You haven't slept till you've slept on a Fermata!”

CONDUCTOR. Yes. Well.

(The CHOIR goes back to formation.)

CONDUCTOR. I work my way toward retirement one half-baked song at a time. Eyes on me, future criminals of America. Let's see if we can finish off this one with a bang.

(The CONDUCTOR finishes the song, then steps aside and bows.)

TYLER. Okay, okay, what do I do? Do I leave?

(Lights full.)

CONDUCTOR. For our final number this evening *(Lights dim.)* our final crime against the world of music *(Lights full.)* we will be performing...

TYLER. I'll tough it out. One last number. I can do this.

CONDUCTOR. ...and we thank you for your continued support of our program.

(The CONDUCTOR turns and begins the song.)

TYLER. I can't do this. Man, this is bad!

(Singing.)

JENNIFER. Man, was I good!

(Singing.)

BILL. Man, I was cool!

(Singing.)

RENEE. Man, my legs itch!

JIM. Could Mindy sing and not sway? One would like to find out. One would like to find out by encasing Mindy in a solid block of concrete, all except for her mouth, and then telling her, "Sing, Mindy, sing without swaying!" And if she couldn't do it, if one were left standing next to Mindy as a solid block of concrete with only a mouth showing and that block of concrete were silent because Mindy, in fact, could not sing without swaying, well...one would be perfectly okay with that.

(Singing begins; BARBARA's cell phone goes off again. She answers it and talks quickly.)

BARBARA. Hello? Raymond? I'm so glad you called but I can't talk now; I'm in the middle of singing in a choir concert but I will definitely call you later. But I gotta...

(Everyone stops singing during a dramatic rest in the music. BARBARA looks around self-consciously as she says these final words:)

BARBARA. ...go right now, Raymond. 'Bye.

(She grins self-consciously and puts the phone away quickly. The CHOIR continues to sing.)

TYLER. Maybe if I just sneak one out...sometimes they don't smell that way. Houston, we just need to release a little pressure to avoid a blowup on the launch pad. Okay, here we go. 5-4-3-2-1. We have ignition. Oh, that's better. Now, let it be a harmless one, I'm praying to the gods of pizza—let it be harmless!

(Singing.)

MEEMIE. Who did that?

TYLER. That was not harmless. That was very bad. Which way does the ventilation blow in here?

GEORGE. All right, who's playing Pumbaa?

TYLER. Look innocent. Look innocent.

EBEN. I'm going to pass out! That's disgusting!

JORDAN. Somebody call the EPA! This is a clear violation of the clean air act.

(Singing.)

CONDUCTOR. Why do they all look like they're in pain up there?

TYLER. It'll never be traced to me. They can't do a DNA test on that sort of thing, I hope.

(Singing.)

CONDUCTOR. Oh, for crying out loud, somebody passed gas!

MARSHA. Ew, sick!

ERIC. Oh, dear maiden, my Marsha, I would slay the evil being who caused thy discomfort just now.

TYLER. I feel much, much better, thank-you.

ERIC. I pine for thee, my love!

MARSHA. Men are such pigs.

(Singing.)

THIS PLAY IS NOT OVER!

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