

DIFFERENT

An opera for ASD audiences

Libretto

© Tim Yealland 2017

Alona (E) *A stranger*
Tomek (J) *A non-identical twin*
Romek (M) *The other twin*

Cello
Trumpet
Guitar
Keyboard
Percussion
Recorded soundtracks

Three tents – two large and one small, as if in the middle of a forest.

As the audience comes in and is settled, two men (twins) get ready for bed, and finally disappear into their tents

1. OVERTURE

A woman with bags appears behind the audience. She stops when she sees the tents

The music is fast at first, as if she's stumbled or rolled down a hill and has stopped suddenly.

2. BISCUITS

*The woman hides behind the audience – **shhh!** – and carefully approaches the tents. She looks at the equipment scattered around them, finds a tin, shakes it first, listens to it, then opens it carefully, showing the audience the contents.*

E *Spoken to the audience*
 Do you have a biscuit? etc

Sung
I'd sell my soul
To munch a hobnob or shortbread

**Or crunch a custardy cream
I'd happily die in a Jaffa Cake dream**

**The best bits
Of a biscuit
Are the middle bit
Where the cream sits
Or the top bit
With the chocolate!**

She eats a Nice biscuit – makes notes in her notebook

Niblish, Crumscious, Crackling, Dunkable!

**Crumbly and sweet
Sugar on top
Nice – well-named
It's nice**

Spoken

What do you think?...

She shows the audience – eats it anyway

The sugary top is good, but it's a little bit bland....

She writes in her notebook

Sung

**The best bits
Of a biscuit
Are the middle bits
Where the cream sits
Or the top bit
With the chocolate!**

She eats a Rich Tea

Tangy, Pleasurable, Snambrell, Posh

**Doesn't look great
But a really good taste
Buttery, good with some tea**

Spoken

What do you think?...

She shows the audience – eats it anyway

I know it looks boring, but it has to be in the top five....

She writes in her notebook

Sung

**The best bits
Of a biscuit
Are the middle bits
Where the cream sits
Or the top bit
With the chocolate!**

She eats a custard cream

Crumblicious, Beige, Tangeroo, Chewy!

**Now this one's a cream
With a good crunchy base
It 's a biscuity hymn
With a custardy taste**

Spoken

What do you think?...

She shows the audience – eats it anyway

It's the perfect sandwich....

She writes in her notebook

Sung

**The best bits
Of a biscuit
Are the middle bits
Where the cream sit
Or the top bit....**

There's a loud bark

A large dog has been watching from a flap in one of the tents. E gives him a biscuit to keep him quiet

Sung but whispered while she feeds the dog

**I'd sell my soul
To munch a hobnob or shortbread
Or crunch a custardy cream
I'd happily die in a Jaffa Cake dream**

3. GETTING UP: CLOTHES

J crawls out of his tent, stretches. He's left most of his clothes somewhere and searches for them in the audience – even asks if he can borrow things to put on

J **Morning!**
 It's cold!
 Can't find
 My clothes!
Morning!
I've lost
All of
My clothes!

M puts his head out of his tent and shouts
M **Put your clothes on!**

J **Morning!**
 It's cold!
 Can't find
 My clothes!
Morning!
I've got
To put on
My clothes!

M **Put your clothes on!**

J **Morning!**
M **Morning!**
J **It's cold!**
M **It's cold!**
J **Can't find**
M **He can't find**
J **My clothes!**
M **His clothes!**
J **Morning!**
M **Morning!**
J **I've got**
M **He's got**
J **To put on**
M **To put on**
J **My clothes!**
M **His clothes!**

E joins in but quietly so she can't be heard by M and J

J **Morning!**

M Morning!
 E Morning!
 J It's cold!
 M It's cold!
 E It's cold!
 J Can't find
 M He can't find
 E He can't find
 J My clothes!
 M His clothes!
 E His clothes!
 J Morning!
 M Morning!
 E Morning!
 J I've got
 M He's got
 M He's got
 J To put on
 M To put on
 E To put on
 J My clothes!
 M His clothes!
 E His clothes!

The players put down their instruments and join (or one of them does)

J Morning!
 M Morning!
 E Morning!
 Player Morning!
 J It's cold!
 M It's cold!
 E It's cold!
 Player It's cold!
 J Can't find
 M He can't find
 E He can't find
 Player He can't find
 J My clothes!
 M His clothes!
 E His clothes!
 Player His clothes!
 J Morning!
 M Morning!
 E Morning!
 Player Morning!
 J I've got

M **He's got**
 E **He's got**
 Player **He's got**
 J **To put on**
 M **To put on**
 E **To put on**
 Player **To put on**
 J **My clothes!**
 M **His clothes!**
 E **His clothes!**
 Player **His clothes!**

Finally J's found his clothes

4. WASHING

He looks for the soap, and finally – though she's still hiding – E produces a bar of soap which she holds out above her head. J takes it absentmindedly. Then washes his hands in a bowl – kids help dry them with a towel.

J (M can join) **Water, a bar of fresh soap**
Hands and fingers and nails
Cross your fingers and hope
The germs have gone down the drain

Soap? Tick!
Water? Tick!
Towel? Tick!
Wash for 20 seconds!

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Then whistle 7 notes
With me: slower with everyone
5 4 3 2 1

*J then goes through the same routine –
This time drying his hands*

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Then whistle 7 notes
With me: slower with everyone
5 4 3 2 1

J **Dry your hands on a towel:**
Hands and fingers and nails

**Cross your fingers and hope
Your hands are dry as a bone**

**Hands? Tick!
Fingers? Tick!
Nails? Tick!
Dry for 20 seconds!
Here we go!**

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Then whistle 7 notes
With me: slower with everyone
5 4 3 2 1

J then goes through the same routine (faster) – everyone joins in the actions

**J Find something that's clean:
A knife and a fork and a plate
Cross your fingers and hope
The germs have gone down the drain**

**Knife? Tick!
Fork? Tick!
Plate? Tick!
Check for 20 seconds!
Here we go!**

1 2 3 4

M Stop it!! Stop it!

E mouths the same thing – without being seen

5. PANCAKES

**M Spoken
Ready?**

**J J nods
Yes!**

M Really?

J J nods

Yes!

M **Breakfast?**

J *J nods*
Yes please

M starts to robotically chop and stir while J watches expectantly

He stops then chops again while J watches

J **What are you making?**

M **What do you think?**

*J gets out his breakfast book: the audience sees and helps name:
Eggs, bacon, milk, cornflakes, muffins, toast etc.*

M shakes his head until they reach... pancakes

J **My favourite?**

M **Yup!**

J **Pancakes!**

M **Pancakes!**

*There's a big bowl, a sieve, a frying pan and the ingredients:
Milk, salt, sugar, flour, eggs and pre-made pancakes*

M *Spoken?*
Sift the flour....
He measures etc

Pinch of salt....
Adds a pinch of salt

Break the eggs...
Breaks an egg

And stir
Stirs

Pour the milk...
Pours the milk

Add the sugar...

Adds the sugar...

And stir

Stirs

Pour into the pan

Pours some into the pan

First on one side

Fries for a moment on one side

Then on the other

Tosses the pancake and catches it in the pan

And serve!

Gives J a pancake

*(Possible repeat from **Pour into the pan**)*

Pancake song (Key Club)

Children come and help – one at a time – maybe a microphone picks up the sounds

Finally J is about to eat when E grabs the pancake from behind.

J and M panic see her and disappear into the tents.

The dog barks. E gives the dog the pancake. The dog disappears and comes back for more.

J and M

Girl! Help!

Stranger! Help!

Scary! Help!

Count for 20 seconds!

Here we go!

from inside the tents

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Then whistle 7 notes

5 4 3 2 1

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Then whistle 8 notes

5 4 3 2 1

The boys put their heads out of the same flap in the tent

6. THE STRANGER

The boys are finally coaxed out of their tents.

E **Don't be frightened!**
I think I can help!
I know all sorts of things!
You know your tents?
You've not put them up right
They'll fly away in a storm!

M and J **Don't be daft!**

She pulls at a loose guy rope.
They sulk and are frightened of her.

J goes to the tin of biscuits and discovers there are some missing – glares at her
He goes to the audience as if they can help verify the theft

M has his guitar and starts to play to himself as if to calm himself down

M **Don't know you**
Don't like you
You're different
Not like us
Who are you?
Why are you?
What are you?
Please go!

M and J **Don't know you**
 Don't know you
Don't like you
 Don't like you
You're different
 You're different
Not like us

Not like us
 Who are you?
 Who are you?
 Why are you?
 Why are you?
 What are you?
 What are you?
 Please go!

E Don't know you
 I like you
 You're different
 Not like me
 Who are you?
 Why are you?
 What are you?
 Can I stay?

J *Spoken*
 You stole our biscuits.

M And my pancake.

E I'm sorry. I was hungry. Really hungry! I've not eaten for a week.

J and M *Both speak at once*
 You can't just come here and take what you like! This isn't a self-service restaurant. There are laws against this kind of thing, and anyway that's our tin of biscuits, our favourite biscuits, they're our biscuits. **OUR! BISCUITS!!**

E I like biscuits.

J and M *Both speak at once*
Our biscuits!!

E Shhhh!

7. SOUNDS

Almost to diffuse the situation E gets out her recording equipment

Do you mind?

She takes a microphone and puts it to the head of J

J's voice **Key Club inventions....**

M's voice **Key Club inventions....**

Player's voice **Key Club inventions....**

She takes the microphone into the audience and we hear beautiful and odd noise come from heads, backs, arms etc. The players join to make exquisite sounds

8. ANIMALS

E finds an animal behind someone's ear:

J covers his ears with headphones and starts rocking backwards and forwards

J

Spoken

It's an animal beginning with the letter S!

The thought makes him wash his hands

Sung

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Then whistles 7 notes

5 4 3 2 1

***There are many animals out there
And several give me the shakes
Like bouncing boks and freshwater crocs
And sn sn sn sn snakes***

Mark's words

***Being me it isn't easy
The answers deep inside
See, animals that don't begin with S
Can come along for the ride***

***Sparrows have beaks like arrows
Sheep have fleeces of snow
Scorpions tails make me wail
And then there's the horrible slooooooooth....***

**Creatures beginning with S
Nothing worse
They're a curse
They're the worst kind of worse!**

M *Spoken* Think of animals beginning with the letter B!

J **Creatures beginning with S**
Nothing worse
They're a curse
They're the worst kind of worse!

E gets out an animal book and shows him pictures

E **Try and think of bears!**
Try and think of birds!
Butterflies and bees!
What about blue sharks!

J *Spoken* You said sharks!
Sharks with an S!!

He rocks even more

E *Spoken* I did not say sharks.

M *Spoken* You did!

Players *Spoken* Yes, you did! You said blue sharks.

J *Spoken* I need animals with the letter.... The letter... H!

E *Spoken* Alright then. Err... slower...

All **Creatures beginning with S**
Nothing worse
They're a curse
They're the worst kind of worse!

E *All Spoken* Try and think of... hares

M **Try and think of... hawks**

Horses, honey bees,

E **Hippopotamuses**

E **Try and think of hares**

M **Try and think of hawks**

Horses, honey bees,

E **Hippopotamuses**

M **Hippopotami!**

E **Hippopotamuses!**

J **That's got an S on the end!! And one in the middle!**
I need animals beginning with... with... with the letter C!

E **Alright then.**
Animals with the letter C!
Anyone?
Help. Quick!!

Audience volunteer:

Cats! Chipmunks! Canaries! Caterpillars! Chickens! Crocodiles!

Etc

Animals are found on picture cards and shown to the audience as well as to J

J **Now I need letters beginning with the letter K...**

E and M **Stop it!**

J **Kittens, kangaroos, koalas.....**

9. STORM

Just at that moment there's a rumble of thunder.

The sound of rain starts. And increases.

Things on the set start flapping, there's moisture in the air, one of the players has an umbrella.

The cast look at the sky, and the two brothers rush into the tents. The players put up an umbrella

E **What about us? Looking to the audience**
Hey come on!
Someone come and see if we can hide in the tents!
She takes a child to a tent and shouts inside
Let us in!

M and J **There *might* be room for a few children. But not you! Go away!**
There's no room! Leave us alone! GO AWAY!

E takes a few children to the entrance to the tents and they go inside. E then gets a big tarpaulin or parachute and with the teachers' help covers the audience from the rain and the storm

Then the tents start shaking violently – and E has to secure them to stop them flying away

The storm abates

10. THE TENTS

M and J come out of their tents and see the rain has stopped.

M **Excuse me?**

J **Excuse me?**

E **Yes?**

M **Can you help us?**

J **Can you help us?**

E **Why?**

M **There's a mess!**

J **There's a mess!**

E **Mess?**

M and J **We don't like it.**

E **We'll sort it out then!**

M and J **We don't know how to. Please!**

E **Alright then. I'll need some help!**

M and J **By the way – the dog's had puppies!** *They give her a puppy.*

The three of them take children into the tents and the kids help tidy all the things there into piles etc – the sleeping bags, the books, the mugs etc.

*The dog has had puppies in the storm.
The children take out the puppies from the tent.*

All **Can't stand mess in a tent
Want it neat
Nice and tidy**

**Folded clothes
Everything neat
Everything where it should be**

**Mess is horrid
Mess is dirty
Mess is mess
Not nice**

**Can't stand mess in a tent
Want it neat
Nice and tidy
Folded clothes
Everything neat
Everything where it should be**

**Mess is horrid
Mess is dirty
Mess is mess
Not nice**

**Can't stand mess in a tent
Want it neat
Nice and tidy
Folded clothes
Everything neat
Everything where it should be**

**Mess is horrid
Mess is dirty
Mess is mess
Not nice**

Finally the tents are clean enough...

11. BIRTH

- E Excuse me but I don't feel well.**
- M You better go and find a doctor then.**
- J The town's over there.**
- E How far? Please! Could I have a biscuit?**
- J The town's not very far. It's that way. Bye!**

E **I think I need to stay here. It's time. I need a biscuit!**

M **No, you can't stay. We don't like illness.**

E **I'm not ill - as such. Biscuit! Now!**

They give her one.

E sits down. She points to her tummy – then to her bag.

The boys look very uncertain. Then pull out various (crazy) random things (with the children's help) and finally a stethoscope. E sings while they do this:

E **When you talk there's buzzing in my ears
When I walk there's only silver stars
That is all I hear
That is all I see
All my dreams are multi-coloured dreams
All my thoughts are multi-coloured thoughts
That is all I dream
That is all I think
Outside!
The sky's too high, the trees too tall
Outside!
Will I stay on my feet or will I fall?
Outside!
There's no way out and I want to shout
Outside! Outside! Outside! Outside!
The sky's too high, the trees too tall
Outside!
Will I stay on my feet or will I fall?
Outside!
When I'm in a crowd with no room to breathe
Someone's talking fast, can't hear a thing
That is all I feel, that is all I hear**

M and J *ignoring E entirely – E goes tries to get their attention – has thermometer in her mouth etc etc*

**When we leave the tent and go outside
And the light's too bright, it's turning hot
That is all we feel, that is all we fear
Outside!
The sky's too high, the trees too tall
Outside!
Will we stay on my feet or will we fall?
Outside!
There's no way out and we want to shout
Outside! Outside! Outside! Outside!**

**The sky's too high, the trees too tall
 Outside!
 Will we stay on my feet or will we fall?
 Outside!
 There's no way out and we want to shout
 Outside! Outside! Outside! Outside!**

*M takes the stethoscope to a child and we hear a loud heartbeat.
 Repeat a few times.*

*Finally to E – and we hear double heartbeats - one low and two faster
 and higher.*

They all look at each other.

12. BABIES

J covers his ears again and M takes charge – M and E go into a tent.

Birdsong everywhere. And a bird flies over the tent.

In shadow a baby appears. We hear the baby crying.

*The baby appears from the tent, is taken by J (who washes his hands
 first),*

J

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Then whistles 8 notes

5 4 3 2 1

Then J takes the baby to the audience.

M

There's another one!

*Another baby is born (in shadow) and appears from the tent
 – bottles, etc etc*

*Meanwhile there's a film of the KC group holding one the babies, or
 interacting with one of them.*

**Two babies born in the woods
 To the singing of birds
 The sun came out
 And the clouds disappeared
 La la la la la la
 They had no names**

And they needed some names
 Born out in the wild
 And the two boys smiled
 They'd not smiled in a while

A little child
 Another child
 They were born in the woods
 A little child
 Another child
 They were born in the woods

Instrumental only

Two babies born in the woods
 To the singing of birds
 The sun came out
 And the clouds disappeared
 La la la la la la la
 They had no names
 And they needed some names
 Born out in the wild
 And the two boys smiled
 They'd not smiled in a while

A little child
 Another child
 They were born in the woods
 A little child
 Another child
 They were born in the woods

13. NAMES

- E What shall we call them?
- J Anything but not a name beginning with S please
- E Like Sammy? Sarah? Or Susan?
- M Or Sebastian?
- E Or Stephen?
- J NO!

Very quickly we come up with names from the audience

14. PLEASE STAY

E **Right, we'll be off then.**

M and J **Ok, right, bye.**

She packs up her bags and her babies. It's a struggle obviously.

E **I'll see you soon. Thanks for your help.**

M and J **No problem. Bye again.**

*She starts to go but stops....
Then goes again. M and J look at each other*

M **Wait!**

J **Don't go.**

M **Please stay!**

E **Really?**

M and J **We need you! We like you!**

E **Well, if you're sure.**

M and J **We're sure**

M **We know you
We like you
You're different
Like we are
You're clever
Not like us
We need you
Please stay!**

M and J **We know you
 We know you
We like you
 We like you
You're different
 You're different
Like we are**

Like we are
You're clever
You're clever
Not like us
Not like us
We need you
We need you
Please stay!

E

I know you
I like you
You're different
Like I am
I'm no cleverer
Than you are
I need you
We'll stay!

We'd like some biscuits please!

M gives her biscuits.

E tries to give the babies to M and J, but M and J will have none of it at first.

They finally take the babies.

END