

Soloist 3: As I go through my years with many passing fears
I've never seen my guiding light,
The clouds in front of me won't ever let me see
And I'm so weary of the night

I've tried so many times to read between the lines
But the words keep turning round
And a thousand fears are ringing in my ears
And 'm so weary of the sound -

Soloists 1,2,3: So give me Peace enough, Peace enough, peace enough!
So give me peace enough for peace of mind,
Everything coming up sunshine. *(Repeat x 1)*

Chorus: *(Enters down the aisles, greeting the audience)*
Come into my joy,
Come into my pain
Come - you be a friend of mine
I'll be the same. *(Repeat x 1)*

Part of the chorus moves on stage forming a tableau with the soloists. Together they create a space into which the dancers process, streamers poised. The Chorus & soloists sing majestically:

Chorus: PEACE DAY PEACE DAY WE ALL SAY !
HAPPY WORLD, HAPPY DAY !
WEAR A LEAF AND SHOW THE WAY
CELEBRATING THIS PEACE DAY!

The music switches back into fast tempo: the dancers start a fast, festive dance and the whole cast sways in rhythm with the music as they sing:

Chorus: Peace Day Peace Day we all say
Happy world, holiday,
Wear a leaf and show the way
Celebrating this Peace Day!

Peace Day, Peace Day - sing and dance
It will be a big romance
People of the world as one
Peace Day, Peace Day has begun.

Celebrations, jublations
Laughter, shouting - lots of fun.
Singing dancing - take your partner
Celebrations have begun.

Celebrations, jublations
Laughter shouting - join the fun!
Smiling dancing - grab a partner
Happiness for everyone!

Peace Enough for all mankind
Healthy body, happy mind
Faith and love, the world as one -
Peace Day, Peace Day has begun.

Come into my joy,
Come into my pain
Come - you be a friend of mine
I'll be the same! *(Repeat x 2)*

As the final choruses are repeated, the chorus floods on to the stage, filling it with smiling, happy, swaying children. The number builds to a spectacular climax; the dancers form a tableau with the chorus, hold it a moment, then fall into each other's arms,

All Happy Peace Day! Happy Peace Day!

Into this, upstage center, walks the Story-teller - a fantastical figure dressed in a long robe, carrying a large storybook. He/she watches the children greeting each other, smiling happily, until a child notices him: (for the purposes of this script, I assume a male storyteller)

Child 15 Hey look! - It's the storyteller!

ST Happy Peace Day, children - !

ALL Happy Peace Day, storyteller!

They crowd round him and walk with him downstage center as he speaks:

ST Welcome to Peace Day two thousand twenty five. Let's begin as we always do with your report on the State of our Planet: how are we doing?

Child 18 There's lots of news! - most of it good - but this year we thought we'd look at things that have changed the the most since you were our age back in the 1990s.

ST. What about the vital signs?

Child 2 No problems! - World population dropping! Health, nutrition, pollution - all looking good!

Child 3 No serious wars - military spending practically zero!

Child 4 Reports of Human Rights abuses worldwide down to double figures!

Child 5 Poverty and the economic differentials of North and South are still the most troubling - but that's what our resolutions talk about.

ST Fine! So let's hear what's changed since the 1990s:

Child 1 We have a single world currency!

Child 2 China has a democratically elected government!

Child 3 Africa, with the profits from its Saharan solar energy program, this year is giving aid to parts of Asia and Eastern Europe!

Child 4 Serbia beat Belgium in the European cup and they were celebrating in the streets of Zagreb and Sarajevo! - think about that!

Child 5 Passports are a thing of the past! You can drive from Bombay to Barcelona without showing your passport once!

Child 6 Palestine and Israel are now each other's biggest trading partners.

Child 7 There hasn't been a terrorist killing in Northern Ireland for twenty years!

Child 8 The latest car from Sweden produces so little pollution, they are giving it a zero carbon tax rating.

Child 9 They finally finished the Wadesmill by-pass - *(local interest events)*

ST But are we any happier?

All YES! -

Child 9 Even the divorce rate has halved since you were our age.

ST Excellent. So there's nothing left to do? - we have a perfect world!

All No! -

Child 13 Listen to our resolutions!

Child 1 These are the priorities agreed democratically by the children in our district!

| | |
|---------|--|
| Child 2 | "Schools in the rich countries must share 50% of their resources with schools in the poor ones." |
|---------|--|

| | |
|---------|--|
| Child 3 | "Young people should all give a minimum of one year in global youth service. No Exceptions!" |
|---------|--|

| | |
|---------|--|
| Child 4 | "Anyone - be they king, company chief, president or child - should be punished if they break the Convention on the Rights of Plants and Animals. No exceptions!" |
|---------|--|

| | |
|---------|---|
| Child 5 | "Governments should make it an absolute priority to make the multi-vitamin food supplement available for children and adults everywhere!" |
|---------|---|

| | |
|---------|--|
| Child 6 | "A complete phasing out of all fossil fuels by the year 2050!" |
|---------|--|

ST That's it?! Right. Debate!! - *Silence*

Child 7 What debate?

Child 8 The resolutions are fine, aren't they?

ST Yes - but on the schedule, the next two hours before the ceremony are for debate.

Child 9 But we've been debating them for weeks. They're fine as they are, aren't they?

ST Some one must have a comment to make on them?

Child 1 Don't think so.

ST So what are we going to do for the next two hours?

All (*severally*) I don't know ...

ST Aahmmm ...

Child 10 How did Peace Day begin ?

Child 11 Yeah - what were the very first Peace Day resolutions?

Child 12 They were about Peace, weren't they?

Child 13 - yeah! and they all got done in like two months.

S.T. Not quite as quickly as that. Surely you all know the story - the Peace Child ?

Child 10 No -

Child 4 Sure you do! - We used to perform it, right here in this theatre!

Child 10 How do you mean "perform it" ?

Child 2 The story of Peace Day!

Child 3 - how it started with the Peace Child and all that....

Child 5 Surely you know it?!

Child 6 Everybody knows Peace Child!!

S. T. Why? - you haven't done it in a few years now.

Child 7 I bet all the costumes and props are still in that trunk downstairs! **(EXIT)**

Child 1 *(to the Chorus)* How many of you remember it? *(more than half raise their hands)*

Child 5 Why don't we do it for them - right now!

Child 8 We've got two hours!

Child 9 I know the girl's part...

Child 6 - and I know the boy's: I did it six times!

Children I know it too - so do I - me too!! Can't I do it?

ST You can't possibly do the play with all the music and everything -

Children Yes we can!!

ST Why don't you just let me tell the story -

Child 2 Because it's more fun this way!

Child 5 & 7 *(coming on with the trunk)* - and we've got all the props and stuff right here!

Child 8 What if we forget bits of it?

Child 1 We'll improvise!

Child 2 - just like we always did!

Child 4 I could improvise the whole show!

ST How many of you really know the boy and girl's parts

Children Me - I do! - etc.

ST - and does any one remember the adult parts ?

Children *(dragging on their parents)* My dad does !
- my mum's played all of them!

Dad It's been a few years since I did it.

Child 7 *(rummaging in the trunk, and hauling out a great book)* - and look!! We have the Peace Book!
If we get completely lost, you can prompt us! *(handing the book to the Storyteller)*

Children Please - Mr Storyteller!

ST It's very irregular.*(thinks - looks at the book)* Peace Day is the day that adults are supposed to listen to the requests of children so - I agree. **(LOUD CHEERS!!)** We'll begin in the old way - in a circle! Do you remember - ?

Children Yes!!

They move into a circle; the younger ones stand back in awe. LIGHTS change; MUSIC starts - soft, magical mysterious.

ST Very well. Kneel down - eyes closed, minds at peace. Quiet - and let the Peace Child be chosen: *(child brings him a basket of paper leaves, another takes the Peace Book from him; several children straighten his cloak and prepare him for the moment as music begins)*

SONG TWO : If you close your eyes

Now if you close your eyes, you can be what you want,
And if you close your mind, you can feel what you need -

Don't you see, it's your destiny -
Can't you see, it was meant to be -
It's happening everywhere!
People waking up!
Together facing a great new dawn -
Reaching out for Love!
Do you believe in miracles?
- have faith in things unseen?
Take a good look around your world -
- no, no! It's not a dream.

The song is sung by a quartet of singers. The storyteller takes a basket full of multi-colored fragments of paper and, after blessing the children, scatters the fragments over their heads and into their upstretched hands. During the instrumental interlude, the children gather up the fragments from the floor around them, rise to their feet and turn outward. As the song invites them to open their eyes, they do so. They examine the fragments in their hands. The two (pre-chosen) children with the large golden fragments step forward. The others are gathered into the dance by the dancers and returned to the chorus. The storyteller comes forward to greet the two Peace Children, blesses them, and joins their hands with the dancers who form a tableau around them as the song ends.

So open up your eyes - and fly beyond the sky!
And open up your mind - you can feel beyond your dreams!
Now open up your hands - you can touch the Universe!

Then put your hands in mine, and behold! - a brand new world!

Hold the tableau for a moment, then break as the lights fade. A child comes forward and takes the basket from the Storyteller. Another gives him back the Peace Book. He moves down stage right where the group of younger children who do not know the story of the Peace Child are waiting eagerly to hear the Storyteller begin:

ACT ONE, SCENE TWO

WAR

Storyteller: Once upon a time, a long time ago -
When our Universe was young
Our world was a paradise made of love
According to a heavenly plan

Soon there came a light from the universe
As bright as bright could be -
Making Man out of dust and earth
And leaving him to Destiny.

A pattern soon emerged of things to come,
 And problems Man would face:
 Tribes of men - not quite the same -
 Would compete for food
 And the best bit of land
 Starting off the game called "War"

[MUSIC starts]

It began with a stone, then came a stick
 Soon there was an axe and a spear
 Then came a club, then an arrow then a gun! -
 And bullets were the food of everyone!

Conflict raged all over the world
 Hatred and envy everywhere!
 Tribe against tribe, man against man!
 Nobody seemed to care!

With each generation passing by
 Men found new skills of war
 Hydrogen and cluster bombs,
 Mercenaries and terrorists;
 Cold wars, dirty wars,
 Underground - overground
 In the air - out in space!
 Conspired to kill the human race!

Dancers emerge, dressed as soldiers down the ages, with murderous intent. The music builds to the choral entry and the stage fills with marching people either side, with flags, banners and weapons of war.

SONG THREE : WAR

Chorus: We'll fight our way to distant hills, a bloody battle have
 We'll raise our sword and kill them all]
 We'll raise our countries flag!
 We'll kill our brothers, kill our friends,
 Kill each other till the end!
 We'll kill our women, children too,
 Kill them all until we're through
 Kill them all until we're through.

The Prayer God save our land, long live our flag,
 On to the war we go - praise to our dead
 But who says we're right, who says we're wrong
 Honour and pride - to this we belong!

The Battle - the soldiers fall on each other, murdering, maiming until all lie dead. Screams of pain, howls, wailing and crying die away, leading to the next chorus, quietly sung:

Oh come and save us! Oh come and save us!
 Oh come and save us from what we do!
 Our world is through!

The cast rise up, looking to the audience, moving down stage slowly, appealing:

But who can save us! But who can save us?
 But who can save us from what we do?
 God - where are you?

*A blast, a gunshot. The chorus hold their look a moment. A hail of machine gun fire; the chorus disintegrate in terror running from the stage through the audience or into the wings. Three lie dead on the stage. Soldiers look at them laughing, grim. They leave. One of the "dead" looks up watching them go. Lights **Fade to Black**. They **EXIT** in the blackout.*

ACT ONE, SCENE THREE

STREET SCENE

There is a sudden blast of a shell very close. A shaft of light splashes across the stage as though from an upstage right skylight. There is a crash and the Boy bursts in, rolling across the stage, as though he has fallen through the skylight. He gets up, dusting himself. He is in a cellar. There's another burst of gunfire very close, then a couple of shells exploding. He sees a pile of boxes and runs behind them. He crouches waiting, then sees the girl cowering, trying to avoid being seen:

Boy Who are you ?

She is silent, shivering. There is another burst of gunfire; she clings to him, terrified. It goes silent. The Boy walks forward.

Boy Bastards! Did you see that guy shooting straight into the crowd? The rest of them were shooting over our heads but that bastard was shooting straight at us!

Girl *(she has a slight accent)* How many were killed?

Boy I saw one guy with blood pumping out of his chest - he must be dead by now. They weren't letting any ambulances through. Did you see that guy with the steel truncheon? *(she's holding her shoulder)* - he got you? Bastard!!

Girl I saw an old lady lying on her back, her shopping all scattered around her; she had broken her leg, I think, in the first blast. Her eggs had broken, and her milk - there was a cat sipping at her milk and her blood. A black cat. She was crying out for help and I went to her - then that soldier came and told me to leave. When I'd gone, he started to beat her some more....

Boy Bastards.

Girl I could see - he was laughing!

Boy Animals.

Girl Yet he is not an animal: he has hands and feet like you and me. And a heart to love with -

Boy No. No heart.

Girl Yes - a heart.

Boy Did you see who started it?

Girl It was the bomb outside the toy shop: who knows who put it there...

Boy I don't believe these people: bastards, all of them. How did you get mixed up in it?

Girl I'm just a tourist - I was walking back to my hotel...

Boy Tourist?! Here! You must be mad.... *(Another burst of gunfire)* Ah well, you're OK here.

Girl When will it be safe to go out?

Boy Another hour or so. Hey - you're shivering! Take my coat.... *(He puts his jacket around her shoulders. Sees her clothes - pauses - steps back. Ponders, then says softly)* You're not a tourist. You're one of them -

Silence. The girl stands rooted to the spot, frozen in fear. The boy walks away, tortured with confusion and fear. The girl overcomes her fear and turns to him:

Girl So - kill me now? *(Pause - the boy stares ahead)* It's OK - I am ready. I am always ready....

I want to search far and wide
 Have the right to wonder why
 I want to glide through the air
 Like a bird in the sky,
 I want the chance to see the world
 I want to live, I want to live

Girl Bastards!

Boy Why?

Girl I let them make me so blind to Life that I could ask to Die -

Boy You begged me to kill you !

Girl But I am alive! I want to live, like you! What can we do ?

Boy *(Becomes serious)* You must go home now. Forget about this. Forget we ever met.

Girl Never! You are my friend. I am thinking - there are so many things we could do -

Boy It is better you go now....

Girl Meet me one more time - just one more: tomorrow night, here! It is safe if we meet here.

Boy Too dangerous. No point -

Girl But we must do something to stop this madness! We can do something! I show you how -

Boy We can do nothing. There's a cruel and dirty war going on here. If we try anything, we'll be crushed by the soldiers, like a butterfly.

Girl: No! - our butterfly can bring a blaze of color into the greyness, dazzling the eyes of the soldiers - showing them the madness of what they do...

Boy - but not stopping them. Your soldiers killed my brother. *(She gasps and turns away - he continues)*. Because of your people, I shall never, never see my brother again. I cannot be your friend. Ever. I hate your people.

Girl I know. That's why I want to see you again. I want to change that... You can never destroy your enemy by shooting him. You can only destroy your enemy by making him your friend....

Music - very soft: "Living Together". She takes his hand; he turns to her and tries to disengage it. She clings on:

Girl If you want to Live, be here tomorrow night at seven!

(EXIT - Black Out)

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ACT ONE, SCENE FOUR

IN THE SCHOOL YARD

Lights come up to suggest the bright lights of a school gym. A bunch of school kids come on playing basketball. They pass frenetically to one another - then the school bell goes. They relax.

Child 1 Did you hear?? Some kid from the school got caught in the riot last night!

Child 2 Is he OK ?

Child 3 Four got killed, didn't they?

Child 4 Yeah, but what was a kid from this school doing in that part of the city!

Child 5 Getting something for his bike, I should think. There's a bunch of old bikes down by the river.

Child 1 *(entering with his friend, the Boy)* Here he is! The survivor!

Child 2 It was you??

Boy Did you see my photograph in the paper, then ?

Child 3 No?

Boy Page thirteen, bottom left hand side. If you took a microscope to it, you could just see I was wearing a school tie!

Child 2 So what happened?

Boy Well I was walking back from the river - and suddenly this bomb goes off, and there's thousands of people running towards me. Then another bomb goes off, just near me and the soldiers think that one of us must have thrown it - so they start shooting into the crowd.

Child 5 At you??!

Boy Right! They got the man standing beside me...

Child 2 Dead?

Boy Before he hit the ground I should think. When we opened up his coat, blood was gushing from his chest like an oil well. I saw fifteen, twenty on the ground.

Child The paper said that four died -

Boy The paper lied. At least fifteen. Probably more.

Child 3 How did you get away?

Boy I crawled down an alley and smashed a window into a cellar - hid there until it was all over. I was lucky! I thought I was done for !

Child 1 It's too bad: things have been quiet these last few weeks, I thought it was going to get better!

Child 6 It'll never get better, you know that.

Child 5 We've been killing each other for 700 years!

Child 4 It's in our blood.

Boy But you have to admit, it's crazy.

Child 2 Why crazy? We both want this land! - to be rich, to own its sauna baths and swimming pools. If we surrender, we lose all that to the other side.

Child 3 And they'll kill us all. We're fighting for our lives here.

Child 5 There's other good reasons: war takes peoples minds off things -

Child 6 - like unemployment!

- Child 2 Yeah! War's great for unemployment! Kids leave school. You stick 'em in the army, pay 'em nothing, feed 'em garbage and with any luck they'll be dead in a few months, then you won't have to go to the expense of putting them in Universities, or pay them welfare checks!
- Boy What a bunch of cynics!
- Child 4 Come on! You'll have to become a soldier too.
- Boy Not if I can help it!
- Child 3 They'll shoot you as a deserter.
- Boy Let 'em! I want to go through my life without ever having to kill a man.
- Child 2 Even the man who killed your brother -
- Boy Killing his killer wouldn't bring him back to life! It would be like tit-for-tat. A stupid game!
- Child 5 But this all is a game - a crazy game of life and death!
- Child 2 You roll the dice and take your chances.
- Child 3 - and the chances grown-ups give you now are precious few.
- Child 4 We rolled the dice and lost ourselves a childhood!
- Child 6 Roll again! You could win yourself a war!

Music starts - very short introduction, and the group spreads across the stage, establishing sides for the Mock War which is fought through the dance.

SONG FIVE : Wargames!

The group dance the number with the Boy. To start with, he enjoys it - the familiar game with all the thrills and spills of war being played out across the stage like a cartoon show. Suddenly the boy becomes sickened, angry. He cuts short the song, shouting at them.

- Boy Cut it out! Cut - it - OUT! Can't you see how we're sucked in? - battles on the news every night. Always the other sides fault. You blame it on the grown-ups but in a couple of years, we'll be the grown ups! It'll be our war. We have to find a way to end it.
- Child 2 How exactly?
- Child 4 The last thing we need is another Peace Process !
- Child 3 What did you have in mind?
- Boy Last night, in the cellar, there were some people from the other side -
All You what - ? (*clustering round him, interested*)
- Boy - tonight, I'm going back to meet with them.
- Child 3 Don't be an idiot !
- Child 2 It's an ambush!
- Child 5 You'll end up like your brother. Very dead.
- Boy No really! They're friends -
- Child 4 Friends!!!

- Boy Young people just like us.
- Child 6 It's a trap!
- Boy - which is why I want you to come with me. Insurance -
- Child 2 Forget it! You'll get yourself killed.
- Boy *(angry)* Haven't any of you got the guts to come with me?
- Child 4 Guts?! - if you had any guts, you wouldn't sit down and chat with those guys. You'd sink a bullet right between their eyes. For your brother!!
- Child 2 Traitor.
- Child 3 Coward!
- Child 5 Go! Enjoy their company! - and give them our swimming pools while you're at it! [EXIT]
- Boy *(exasperated)* What can I do ?
- Child 1 Go, of course! Is she pretty ?
- Boy *(smiles, pauses)* Quite. She's got this incredible energy. When I realised who she was, she expected me to kill her right there in cold blood. I couldn't, could you?
- Child 1 Probably not.
- Boy She wants this madness to end immediately. She feels that if kids from each side could just get together and talk to each other, maybe
- Child 1 - we could break down the barriers and find out what's really going on. She may be right! Go see her.
- Boy Come with me!?
- Child 1 "Two's company, three's a crowd." Isn't that what they say?! Have fun! (EXIT)

Lights fade slowly on the Boy, pensive, smiling.

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ACT ONE, SCENE FIVE

MEDIA EXPLOITATION

The Storyteller comes forward:

- ST** When the Boy met his friend that evening, he hardly recognised her. She was dressed up like she was going to a high school prom. Before he could say a word, she whisked him away in a taxi and started to explain her plan. When he heard it, he laughed out loud. It had to be a joke. She glared at him: the idea might be farcical, but she was deadly serious. He tried to jump out of the car: death would come quicker and easier that way! She locked the doors. He realised there was no escape and started to listen and as she talked, her enthusiasm, her hope, her pleading took root within him. He felt himself sucked in, and yet he felt his brother smiling down approval

LIGHTS come up on a studio set. The crew come on and set 3 swivel chairs with their backs to the audience, backlit in silhouette. Down stage left, a presenter in a white tuxedo stands holding a microphone while a make-up girl dabs at his face. The Boy and the Girl come down through the audience:

Boy Down here, perhaps

Girl There's a red light up there - this must be right!

Boy Sssh! There's some one coming ! *(They cower nervously amid the audience)*

Girl *(in a whisper)* It's nobody. *(out LOUD)* So - you know what to do when you they open the curtains?

Boy Ssssh!!! - If we're caught, they'll arrest us, you know!

Girl So you get a little frightened now - ?

Boy No! No - it's just that this is the only live programme they do on this channel - and I'm sure they guard the studio with soldiers. We won't be the first to have had this idea....

Girl But we'll be the only ones who will succeed. You watch -

Boy Hey wait, there is some one coming ...

Girl *(Confidently to an adult guest who comes down the aisle)* Good Evening: do you know which studio "Guess the Guest" is in?

Guest Of course - I'm going there myself. Are you one of the other guests?

Boy Well not exactly -

Girl We need your help.... **(EXIT up on to stage and Stage Right)**

The three chairs swivel round to reveal the three panellists struggling to "Guess the Guest!" Beside them, three scorers turn over numbers each time they ask a question, descending from 20 to 1. In front, down stage left and right, two floor managers frantically work up applause. The name of the guest is held by one of the children sitting at the feet of the storyteller. In this example, it is "THE PARISH PRIEST".

| | |
|--------|---|
| Pan. 1 | So he's male this non-celebrity? |
| Host | Yes - |
| Pan. 2 | - and he's not in any way famous but I would recognise him if I saw him in the High Street? |
| Host | Yes. |
| Pan. 1 | - and he's appeared in many novels? |
| Host | Yes - |
| Pan. 2 | And many films? |
| Host | Affirmative. |
| Pan. 1 | - of which Century? |
| Host | Anyway the last ten |
| Pan. 3 | I wasn't aware they were making films in the 10th Century! |
| Pan. 2 | Does he have anything to do with sport, this character? |

Host Possibly, but that won't help you get what's on the card...

Pan. 1 The Vicar of Wakefield? *(Floor Managers urge the audience on to applause)*

Pan. 3 How can the Vicar of Wakefield be standing behind that curtain now? He's dead!

Pan. 2 He was never alive!

Pan. 1 Of course he was alive - is alive. There've been dozens of Vicars of Wakefield...

Pan. 3 Is it the Vicar of Wakefield?

Host It's not - but you're getting warm! Two questions left, Panellist One!

Pan. 1 Bishop of London ?

Pan. 2 Archbishop of Canterbury!

Pan. 3 Bishop of Galway?!

Host No! - Time's up....

Pan. 1 Bishop of Galway a celebrity?!

Pan. 3 Screaming Lord Such - and you are now out of the game.

Pan. 2 Is it by any chance just "The Vicar" ?? *(huge applause encouraged by the Floor Managers)*

Host It's not The Vicar - but you're very close. I'll let you play on: three words.

Pan. 3 The Naughty vicar - the dirty dean - the balding bishop - the ...

Pan. 2 The Parish Priest!!

Host The Parish Priest it is - you would recognise him in the High Street. Would you welcome please, our second guest this evening, a most noble and beloved Parish Priest. *(Applause)*

The curtain is drawn back but instead of revealing the Guest, the Boy and the Girl are revealed:

Host Who are you ?

Guest *(Coming forward)* I'm sorry to spoil the surprise - but these young people have, I think, an even bigger surprise for you.

Host - and what's that?

Pan. 1 Yeah! Who are you ?

Boy We're friends -

Girl - though we are supposed to be enemies.

Boy And we'd like us all to be friends.

Pan. 2 No problem with that here! There's no enemies here!!

Girl There's me. *(Silence as she takes off her coat and reveals her traditional costume.)*

Boy Her people murdered my brother. I am supposed to hate her. She wanted me to kill her. If I had, her brother would have killed me, my brother him - and so on, round and round. A never-ending spiral of revenge and death until the last one of us is killed.

Silence. Acute discomfort shows on the face of every person on the stage except the two kids.

Girl We have to break out of this madness! This war's gone on long enough. Too many years, too many deaths. If adults can't stop it, we must before we become soldiers and start killing each other.

Boy We have a plan -

Host Not another Peace Plan? - how do you think you can succeed where diplomats have failed?

Boy By keeping diplomats out of it! We want to hold a Children's Summit for Peace!

Girl We shall make the peace with each other - and we shall ask our leaders to sign it.

Host How ?

Boy Well - the young people will come in and negotiate a peace.

Girl It will take us about a day!

Boy The presidents will watch then make all their objections.

Girl That will take about a month.

Boy - but the young people will be there to sort everything out. When an agreement is reached, the Presidents will move forward to the table and sign it and we, the children, will guarantee to them and to each other to keep to it.

Host Just like that!

Pan. 1 It's a joke!

Pan. 2 Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings ...

Pan. 3 - comes utter nonsense!

Host Next guest please!!

Boy Wait!! How dare you play ridiculous panel games while there's a war going on out there? This is trash! (*tears down the game sign*) The environment is dying around us; billions of people are starving - the world could die in our life-times, but our governments, with your consent - not ours - carries on fighting this ridiculous war which completely prevents us from even looking at those problems. We don't want to die: we want to sort this thing out right now 'cos after 700 years, its clear the grown-ups never will. We announce the Children's Summit!!

A young kid in the audience and starts to applaud loudly. The parent tries to sit him/her down, but he/she carries on clapping, loudly. Others join him/her. The Host is confused, but finally he/she applauds too. The Girl silences them:

Girl If you want to be a part of this Children & Presidents' Summit, meet us outside the President's Palace in half an hour!

*LIGHTS fade on stage, studio set is cleared. **MUSIC** starts. In the darkness, phones ring around the auditorium; flashlights go on; Press Men answer phones wearily. They are dressed in the usual paraphernalia of vests and pork-pie hats, note books in their hands, cameras slung around their necks:*

SONG SIX: I gotta story

The Press (*severally*) - Who ?
 - What ?
 - Where ?
 - When ?
 - How the - ?
 - what the - ?
 - who the - ?

ALL: No! - a Children's Summit ??!!

Press 1: That's not a story!

Press 2: Children's summit? - we tried that old chestnut in the Cold War.

Press 3: Didn't fly!

Press 4: What about the President?

ALL - The President !!??

Press 4: Thousands of them are camping outside his palace.

Press 3: Tonight??!!

Press 4: Tonight.

ALL TONIGHT!!!!

Press 3: Thousands?

Press 4: Thousands!!

The children process in carrying banners: "COME TO OUR SUMMIT" "PEACE NOW" etc. The Press follow them up on to the stage; they look at the kids, pondering:

Press: (*singing thoughtfully*) It could be a story, perhaps we gotta story!
 Unusual story! - maybe even front-page news!

The Press dance in stylised formation around them then freeze, asking:

Press (*severally*) - Who are you ?
 - Where you from ?
 - Were you paid ?
 - Who's your boss ?
 - Is he rich ?
 - What's his name ?
 - Are you friends ?

ALL: - What's the game? What's the game? What's the game!?

The Press repeat their questions without waiting for the children to answer, then rush to imaginary phones and speak earnestly. The Boy and the Girl, somewhat shell-shocked, cling to each other for safety. A Pressman turns away

Press 1 President will never come!

Press 4 Nah! - it's not a story!

Press 3 Right! There's no meat! No bite - !

Press 2 Whaddya mean?!

Press 5 Course there is!

Press 1 So what's the lead?

Press 4 What's the hook?

Press 2 It's obvious!

Press 5 Romance!

Press 6 *(dumb)* You mean they're in love?

Press 2 Course they are!

All: A-aa-aaaah!!! *(singing with greater conviction now)*
It's a story! - we really gotta story!
Headline story! - definitely front page news!

Press 7: WAIT !! *(they all freeze)* - The photograph. *(They turn)*

All: *(singing)* The Photograph, the Photograph
We've got to have the Photograph!
The photo! The Photo!
We gotta have the photo!

Setting them up:
Press *(severally)*

- Side by side !
- Closer in - !
- Make 'em smile !
- Cheesey Grins!
- Outa my way !
- Whatdya say ?!
- You're blocking my frame !
- Stop being a pain !

The children pose, smiles chiselled to their faces. The other children crowd round, smiling, waving to Mum etc. Flash cubes pop. The children relax and the Press go to work typing the story:

A-tic-a-tac-a-shoo-ee! A-tic-a-tac-a-shoo-ee!
A-tic-a-tac-a-tic-a-tac-a-tic-a-tac-a-shoo-ee!
A-tic-a-tac-a-shoo-ee! A-tic-a-tac-a-shoo-ee!
A-tic-a-tac-a-tic-a-tac-a-tic-a-tac-a-shoo-ee!

The "Tic-a-tac" song continues under the following as the Boy and the Girl separate:

Girl This is where we must separate.

Boy You can't go now!

Girl I must! It won't be much of a summit if only one President comes.

Boy How will we stay in touch?

Girl With this much press, I don't think that will be a problem! *(They hug; she exits)*

The reporters finish their stories and tear the sheets out of their type-writers They hold up their "Newspapers" and rush down the aisles singing:

Extra, extra, read all about it!
Headlines, Headlines - no doubt about it!
Extra, extra - read all about it!
Headlines, Headlines - take it home and shout it! *(repeat x 2)*

Press 7: *(running on)* Ab - ab - ee-eeekh!!! It's a scoop!! Hold the Front Page!!

All *(turning in the aisles)* What??

Press 7: The President!! - The President will hold a press conference tomorrow about the situation, and he will be talking to the Boy from Guess the Guest!

All WHAT??? *(they begin to approach the stage)*

Press 7: *(breathless)* Press Conference - The President - the Boy - face to face!!

ALL: Press admitted?

Press 7: Press invited!

Press 1: I don't believe it! *(Music - the Press now build the number to a climactic tableau)*

ALL *(singing)* It's a story! We really gotta story!
 Headline Story, definitely front page news -

 Newsnight, satellite, print it right,
 Broad side, nationwide, any side!
 Front page, centre fold, get it sold!

 Extra, extra - read all about it!
 Headlines, headlines! - no doubt about it!
 Extra, extra - don't go home without it!

 Front Page!

 Build it high!
 Print it bold!
 Reach the sky!
 Make 'em shout!
 Make 'em cry!

"PEACE CHILD MEETS THE PRESIDENT"

BLACK OUT

ACT ONE, SCENE SIX **IN THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT**

MUSIC: *Loud Fanfare!! The President emerges with pomp and circumstance surrounded by mincing aides who carry sheaves of papers for him, along with a large black briefcase. The children come in, the boy at their head, carrying their banners and shouting slogans to the Press who cheer them on. The President calls for silence. They obey. He orders his notes on the desk in front of him then looks up at the children:*

President Thank you. Ladies and Gentlemen - I've called you together this morning to address a question which seems to have been causing concern, particularly amongst the younger generation - which is that many seem to think that I have been less than vigilant in my pursuit of a Peace agreement. This has manifested itself in the recent spate of desertions and suicides in the army, the difficulties we have had with draft resistance, and, most recently, this young boy's spectacular outburst on the television last night.

Our friends in the press have chosen to call this boy the Peace Child: well - I like to think of myself as a Peace Child. Every waking minute, I think about Peace. I seek it with every ounce of my being, but the Peace that I seek must be for all my people. It cannot be a peace for terrorists and criminals that seek to murder rape and kill *(Nods of approval - the Boy looks straight at the President, surprised by how much he likes him.)* And it must be a peace for all time: I don't want any quick-fix, half-baked peace agreement made for the sake of the cameras, or to save the hides of some cowardly draft resisters. *(The word "cowardly" stings the boy to attention. He becomes alert)*

So what's at stake here? Real Estate - land. Property: let me give you example - I think you'll understand what I'm driving at...

Boy What - ?

President That's a nice wrist-watch you have, boy: may I take a look at it?

Boy Why yes of course! *(he gets up and hands it to the President)*

President Thank you. Now you're happy to show this to me, but you'd be angry if I didn't give it back to you, wouldn't you. It's your's. You want to keep it, maybe give it to your child. That's exactly how I feel about our land....

Boy Not at all sir! If you need a wrist-watch - keep it. Please!

President The point is I have stolen it from you - taken it from you under false pretences, and you can never be at peace - never be friends - with me until I give it back to you! *(He makes a grand gesture to give back the watch but the boy will not take it.)*

Boy Please sir, I want you to have it! It would never do for our President to be late for a meeting just because he doesn't have a wrist-watch! *(The Press and all the kids are tittering)*

President Take the wretched thing! Give it to him! *(he gives it to an Aide)* The point I'm making is we cannot have a peace agreement while our enemies hang on to what is rightfully our's.

Boy Wrong. We cannot have a peace agreement until you sit down and talk with our enemies and make them our friends. That's what we are asking you to do at the Children's Summit.

President How can I sit down with people who have stolen our property?!!

Boy By giving it to them!! I was happy to give you my wrist-watch!

President So I must surrender - give away my people's land!!

Boy Why not? We have enough already. What we need is peace so we can trade - buy land, sell land - buy things from each other. In a few years, we will be trading so hard, we will have forgotten whose things were whose in the first place!

President Do I need to go further? This spineless attitude toward the war symbolises all that is wrong with our young people these days. This cowardly young man would roll over and play dead before the forces of our enemies and give up everything our nation stands for. I do not think his views are worthy of further attention. *(He gets up, as though to leave.)*

Boy Wait a minute! I never said I was going to roll over and play dead before my enemies!! I want to conquer my enemies every bit as much as you do but I think the way you conquer an enemy is to make him your friend. You haven't done that, and you haven't had the guts to fight it out in a real battle. Instead you run a secret, lingering dirty war from which you and your friends make a lot of money, and poor young fools like me go out and fight and die in.

President My dear child, many more lives would have been lost, and territory surrendered if I had followed your advice.

Boy *(furious)* You don't know what my advice is! I don't know what my advice is! All I know is that I want to hold a children's summit and have you to commit to come listen to the conclusions we children reach at the end of it. Will you do that?

President *(irritated and anxious to leave)* I can make no commitments to you of any kind at this time.

Aide Ladies and Gentlemen - the press conference is at an end. You can leave by the East Door...

Boy Don't leave! Today we've heard the President - Our president - even though we don't get to vote for him - refuse to comment or commit to a request which is supported by thousands of

this country's children! I give you warning, Mr President, don't come looking to us to fight your wars for you. Don't look to us to vote for you either - governments should have better things to do than build up armies and fight meaningless wars. Governments should be building new hospitals, saving the environment, providing clean water. To do that, we need Peace. A strong, lasting Peace. That's what every child in this god-forsaken country wants and would strive for, yet you are not prepared even to come and listen to us!

You never asked me who our enemies are: if you had, I would have told you - our enemy is fear, our enemy is guns - anybody's guns including our own. Our enemy is the idea of enemies itself. Mr President - my enemy is you!

The children and the Press corps applaud and cheer spontaneously. The Boy turns to go. The President stands at his desk, angry but a little amused.

President Come back here, boy! Press - you are dismissed. *(to the simpering Aides)* Get out of here everyone! Everyone - except you. **(ALL EXIT. The Boy and the president are alone.)** Sit down.

The President comes round to the front of his desk and looks at the Boy who sits down nervously on the edge of his chair wishing he could be anywhere but here right now. He shuts his eyes as though awaiting a clip on the ear.

President *(folds his arms and laughs)* You're quite a lad, aren't you?! How old are you?

Boy --- *(actual age: around 14)*

President What do you want to do when you leave school?

Boy Go to university -

President - and then?

Boy Be happy.

President Be happy, eh? Not many of us succeed in that.

Boy What do you want to be when you leave this job?

President Ha! - alive if possible!

Boy Ah. Well there's something we can agree on. Look, I'm sorry I was rude to you just then -

President Don't be: it was a good speech. People have been a lot ruder to me in my time.

Boy What are all those papers?

President Briefs prepared by my aides for this Press Conference. All useless!

Boy So those lines you spoke about " - every waking moment thinking about peace... " - wasn't true? You were reading it all from those papers?

President No. I do think a lot about the Peace process -

Boy But you think a lot about other things too?

President I think a lot about the things I could do if there was Peace! - things you were talking about, building hospitals, saving the environment. None of it can happen while we're up to our necks in war

Boy So make Peace!

President Impossible. I cannot make peace at any price!

If only I could dare
 I'm sorry, what can I do?
 If only I was young like you
 It seems so simple, it could be done
 To move a mountain, to move a sun!
 Powerless though I am
 To change a world that's upside down
 You know I want to see it through
 And believe - believe like you -
 The Impossible Dream!
 One I long to share!
 The Impossible Dream -
 (*spoken*) If only I could dare.....

- President You're right, my boy: I've seen it coming all my life - pollution, over-population, a world running out of resources. My generation has squeezed this planet dry like a sponge and soon there'll only be a parched, dry husk left behind. It may not happen in your lifetime, but it certainly will in the lives of your children.
- Boy (*gets up and walks around*) And you're prepared to sit back and let that happen?
- President Of course not! But while there are people like our enemies on the planet, I have to think we deserve it? We have to defeat those murderers first.
- Boy So nuke 'em!
- President I wish I could.
- Boy Is that what we go tell the Press ?
- President I think we can get away with telling nothing to the Press.
 Boy You might - but I'm going to say something.
- President What do you want to say? That the President thinks our world is going to hell in a handbasket and there's nothing I can do 'til he nukes the enemy? Go ahead! Tell 'em.
- Boy No. I want to say that the President approves our idea for a Children's Summit and that he will come and discuss our conclusions with us.
- President Together with my "opposite number".
- Boy Of course.
- President I can't do that!
- Boy Why?!
- President I've told you: I do know him. I hate him. He's a lyer, a murderer, a thief, - a self-opinionated, egotistical, sadistic megalomaniac. I could never sit in the same room as him. He needs to be tried and shot.
- Boy Shouldn't he also be loved and cared for? He must be a very frightened, hurting man inside - don't you ever want to dress up in disguise and go for a walk in the woods with the guy: find out what he's really like ?
- President I can think of nothing I would like less! Why don't you go and meet him - find out what you think of him?!

Boy OK I will. But I want to take him a message saying that you'll come to our Summit and listen to our conclusions.

President No.

Boy - even if you do it at a different time from him.

President *(thinking)* I could agree to that. And I could give you a letter stating our position.

Boy That would be a start - !

President More than a start: something to tell the press!! *(calling to his aides)* You can let them back in now. We have a final statement.

Boy Wait a minute - what have we agreed??

President Enough!

Aide: *(emerging from the wings)* Can you give me a copy of it to check against delivery, sir?

President Verbal only. *(The Press and kids return; the President beams happily; the Boy looks worried)* Welcome back, everyone. *(applause)* Thank you.

Aide: Silence, Please!

President Right. A brief statement. *(slipping into a presentational tone)* "Following a most interesting private chat, I have decided not to place any obstacles in the way of the so-called "Summit" planned by these children. Further, I have agreed to consider the conclusions of their meeting as long as this does not involve face-to-face meetings with representatives of our enemies. I have encouraged this young man to obtain a similar consent from those representatives and will give him every assistance to do so. I hope that you will do the same, for he is a courageous and honorable young citizen of our country. I wish you every success!"

He shakes the boy's hand as the press look on, mouths agape. They realise what he's achieved and they all cheer. The Boy and the President hold the pose for them to take photographs. There is a tremendous popping of flash bulbs. The boy is applauded by the chorus coming forward. Music starts. The soloists move to the microphones and begin to sing as the press take further photographs of the Boy and President together.

SONG EIGHT: Sing !

Soloist 1: Sing! I do wish the world would sing!
I do wish the world would say
How they love to live and play
How they need each other's -

Soloist 2: Peace! That is all we want to have,
That is all we want to share
Let us live our lives in peace
Oh let us give this life a chance to -

Chorus: Love! - love is all I need,
Love is all I want,
Love is everywhere
Peace! - Peace is all I want,
Peace is all I need,
Peace - everywhere!

During the instrumental interlude, the boy is hoisted on the shoulders of two leading chorus members. The Girl on the other side is likewise raised up, and the chorus process out through the aisles while the dancers fill the stage with a festive finale, flanked by the solo singers.

Come into my joy!
Come into my pain!
Come you be a friend of mine,
I'll be the same!

Peace! - Peace is all I want,
Peace is all I need,
Peace - everywhere!

Love! - love is all I need,
Love is all I want,
Love is everywhere!

Come into my joy!
Come into my pain
Come you be a friend of mine!
I'll be the same!

(Repeat x 3)

- END OF ACT ONE -

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ACT TWO, SCENE ONE

In the Office of the Enemy

House lights go down. Music - slow, sinister: an overture built out of the opening bars of "Mr President". There is the SOUND of clanking steel doors, chains being unlocked. Guards shouting. The stage fills with people in para-military dress, shouting orders. Dim blue light throws the soldiers into silhouette.

Into this comes the boy and his friends through the audience. The Girl waits on stage surrounded by soldiers and a few friends. The boy spots her - a soldier prevents him from going to her. The music changes - the opening bars of "Living Together". They are allowed to meet. They shake hands nervously and encourage their friends to come join them. The rest of the children come and stand in tight groups, eying each other suspiciously, firmly keeping a distance between the two groups.

Boy How do you stand this ?

Girl You get used to it. Soldiers are people too - !

Boy Not in my experience. *(MUSIC stops)*

Soldier The President will see you now.

The President comes on, escorted by more soldiers. MUSIC. The Boy moves forward to give the letter to him. The President reads it while the children sing:

Song Nine : Mr President

Child: Mr President is it true what they say,
 You can kill all the world in less than a day?

Child: Mr President, can it be what it seems,
 There will be no more love, there will be no more dreams.

Child + Child: Mr President, is it true what I hear
 Because of men's greed we must all live in fear?
[The verses should be re-written by the children to include their own questions]

Chorus: Oh No! (Oh No) It's plain to see (It's plain to see)
 But so hard to understand,
 That this world we all love
 Is fading away, dying today!
 Oh No! (oh no) It's not fair! (it's not fair)
 That mankind should have the right
 For the sake of their greed
 They can take this away
 Without asking why
 Oh NO!

Child: Mr President, is it true what I read,
 The world could be dead with a turn of your key?

Child: Mr President, can it be what it seems
 There will be no more children, no more love, no more dreams?

Child + Child: Mr President, won't you hear our small plea?
 For the millions of children, throw away your key?
[The verses should be re-written by the children to include their own questions]

Chorus: *[Repeat refrain.]*

ALL Mr President, it's a time to be brave!
 Announce to the world, this will be a Peace Day
 The First Peace Day!

- President: Peace Day! Huh! *(tearing up the letter)* This is an idle piece of grandstanding by your leader. You children are dupes, photo-fodder for the journalists. Nothing to do with making peace or bringing this tragic conflict to an end.
- Child 1 You're avoiding the issue: please answer our questions.
- President What questions?
- Child 7 It's said that cultural exchanges of young people are the first sign of an improving relationship:
- Child 8 Could you allow a youth exchange between us?
- Child 5 Maybe a football match - choral concert?
- President Our relationship is not improving. It is getting worse. Youth exchanges at this time would be entirely inappropriate.
- Child 9 The war is devastating our environment: could we do some joint actions to clean up the city's rivers?
- President Far too dangerous. I cannot place our children at risk from your snipers. Your parents would never forgive me. We have lost too many children already ...
- Child 10 You are constantly saying that atrocities are committed by soldiers out of your control. Why do we never see such men arrested and court-martialled?
- President Any soldier in my army caught breaking the rules of engagement is immediately court-martialled and shot. We've lost several over-enthusiastic soldiers in that process...
- Boy *(under his breath)* Bullshit!
- President What ?
- Boy You're lying. The soldiers who commit atrocities may be in other peoples armies but they're under your control. You don't want to listen to us. You're only seeing us for the photo-opportunity.
- President You're right. I don't. This conference is over!
- He gets up. The children are relieved to be dismissed and EXIT quickly.*
- President Wait - you! *(The girl turns.)* I knew your father in junior school.
- Girl Oh -
- President What does he feel about you being involved in this nonsense?
- Girl He doesn't know about it. He's at the front.
- President Well let's not tell him, shall we? I don't think he'd like it. You won't do anything like this again, will you? Dismiss!
- Girl *(pausing on her way out)* Do you have any children, sir?
- President Children? No -
- Girl But you were a child once. Can you remember what it felt like...

For the first time, the President is checked. The soldier hustles the girl out. Music Starts.

Song Ten : Through the eyes of a Child

During the song, the President picks up the letter. He puts it back together, places it in his inside pocket. The Boy comes on. He picks up the song. If there is an actor to play the Boy as a young man, he comes on the other side of the stage. The three finish the song together.

* * *

ACT TWO, SCENE TWO Outside the President's Office

Lights come up as the Children discuss their experience of the war. The mood is sombre, with hatred building as the children describe their own personal experience of atrocities, or stories which have particularly shocked them. [See Lesson Two]

Child 8 It wasn't true! They said that the children were killed by our soldiers, but on our TV, they said that you had killed them to make the world hate us the more.

Child 11 It works, your strategy. The world thinks it is all our fault.

Child 2 Do you believe what they tell you on Television?

Child 12 What else can we believe: you do not allow us to get any foreign newspapers. Every night, we see your people playing football with the head of one our soldiers. What can we do but hate you.

Child 4 Can't you see that's propaganda?! How do you allow yourselves to be fooled?

Child 9 You're being fooled too: don't you think your media is playing the same tricks?

Child 2 Yes - but I know from my brother who's at the front: he's found the bodies of young girls raped and mutilated by your soldiers - skinned, burned, tortured, eyes gouged out....

Child 3 When you do things like that to our people, how can there ever be peace here?

Child 7 What about what you did to our women and children?

Child 9 What about your desecration of our Holy places ?

Child 3 Who cares about a few old stones... ?

Child 1 Stop! You should be ashamed. Pretty soon, we'll be soldiers. If we feel like this now, think how we'll feel when we meet on the battlefield. We have to find another way to relate to each other ... You showed me in there, you care about the environment ... cultural exchanges ... We can be friends, can't we ?!

Music Starts: *"Living Together"* Child 1 moves towards them, hand outstretched. The kids do not feel disposed to take it. They stand at a distance from each other, morose. The girl and the boy return together with the soldiers. **Music stops:**

Soldier Your bus is ready for you. Get moving!

Child 10 See you on the battlefield!

Child 1 I'll make one promise to you: I don't want to be a soldier but if I have to become one, I will never murder a child, I will never kill old people, rape women or commit atrocities. That's a promise.

Child 12 Promises like that won't last a second when you've seen your own child killed or your own wife raped...

Child 1 No - but I pray, I pray that by the time I have a wife and a child, none of your people will ever want to rape or kill. I pray that we shall be friends.

Child 8 No child of your's will ever be a friend of mine. I pray only for your death. **EXIT**

All leave and Child 1 is left looking foolish, centre stage. The Boy and Girl come to comfort him. He runs off following his group.

Boy *(to the Girl)* See you on the battlefield - !

Girl Never! *(she hugs him, closing her eyes to the possibility)* I never never never will fight to kill people. I will only fight for peace! *(She separates, embarrassed)* You must think me very foolish. I am sorry. I have wasted your time. I'm stupid girl...

Boy You're brilliant! You've opened my eyes. You've given me something to live for -

Girl You haven't forgotten?

Boy We have a dream, you and I: if we fight for it, we will be happy, I know it.

Girl Let's not talk of fighting -

Boy You've got to fight for Peace! - it's the hardest battle of all...

Girl Not fight. Not now. I want so much to think of pine forests and strawberries ...

Soldier *(returning)* Hey you!! - c'mon, the bus is waiting.... **MUSIC starts.**

Boy *(lost for for words)* I'll never forget you! **EXIT**

The girl watches him go and starts to sing, reflectively:

Song Twelve : Reach out for a star

Girl *(singing)* Reach out for a star!
Come out from where you are
Show me what you can do
Believe in me, I believe in you!

Reach out for your dream
It's not as hard as it may seem
Together we can make it through
Together - me and you!

Wake up, open your eyes
This is our world - our paradise

The Boy walks back and joins her singing. She turns, surprised, pleased.

Boy & Girl *(singing)* Reach out, put your hand in mine!
Oh see! - see how we shine!
There's a whole new world for us to see

There's a universe in you and me!

Don't be shy, just be yourself!
You are your greatest wealth!

Reach out for a star!
Come out from where you are
Show me what you can do
Believe in me, I believe in you!
Show me what you can do
Believe in me, I believe in you!

Tableau to finish. A final embrace, then separate. They Exit to different sides. BLACK OUT

ACT TWO, SCENE THREE

Back home, some years later

The Storyteller comes forward:

Storyteller The children returned to their homes. Where before, the press had hailed them as heroes, they now wrote them off as fools. Their friends despised them; their families pretended it never happened. All talk of a Children's Summit ceased.

The war and the carnage went on. In the months and year's that followed, it got worse. Everyone was called up, including girls. There were pitched battles in different parts of the country almost every week. The death toll rose by the thousand. No one felt safe any more.

The Peace Process continued, but everybody knew it was a farce. The people struggled to get through the days, closing their minds to the fighting, the killing, the torture, unless it was actually happening to them

The Boy comes in opening a letter, older now, about 17/18. [He can be played by a different boy.] The other kids all look older. Several of them come in, their school bags slung over their shoulders.

Child 3 What's that?

Boy They've come.

Child 2 Call up papers?

Child 4 They say we'll all be getting them this year.

Child 3 Will you go ?

Child 1 *(entering in uniform with a gun)* Check it out, gang! I got the uniform! What do you think?

Boy You look ridiculous! How did you get it so quick?

Child 1 Well they told me, because my name begins with "A" and I have a birthday in April, I could sign up early and miss the exams!

Child 5 You mean you're not doing the finals?

Child 1 I'm off to training tomorrow; they say I'll be at the front in six weeks.

Boy Dead in seven. You're right - why bother with exams. You don't need any qualifications to lie in a graveyard.

Child 6 You won't get far in the army with that kind of attitude. We've got a country to defend - a nation's heritage to protect!

- Child 3 Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori!
- Child 1 Right! I've thought a lot about it. I just couldn't live with myself if I ran away to some place safe and watched my friends being raped and murdered ...
- Boy You would want to be back there raping and murdering the other side?!
- Child 1 No! - I made a promise not to do that.
- Boy But you have the gun. *(takes it)* This, my friend, is the problem. As long as you hold it in your hands, you are a problem to yourself and to humanity. *(points it at them)*
- Child 4 Hey! - watch out!
- Boy Look - you see? Instant fear! Love, friendship? - impossible. *(holds the barrel and swings it around violently: the kids scatter)* - Only danger - anger - destruction - mayhem - murder - mutilation... Death. *(stops)* This - thing! - is what should die.
- He smashes the gun on the floor. It breaks in half. A soldier comes in and stands beside Child 1;*
- Soldier You realise that vandalism of army equipment carries a death sentence, commuted to life if you sign up for long-term service...
- Boy *(interrupting)* Who are you ?
- Soldier I am shortly to become your commanding officer. You'll find my name on your papers. Think of me as a new father...
- Boy Never! *(he tears up his call up papers and runs off.)* **EXIT**
- Soldier Pity - with a temper like that, he'd have been a great soldier! Go and arrest him will you. I'll prepare the documents for the court martial! **BLACK OUT.**

ACT TWO, SCENE FOUR

The Orphans

The Story-teller comes forward:

- S.T. The Boy ran away - ran down the back streets and alleys he'd known all his life, past the houses of friends and former friends. He ran into the poorest, derelict parts of the city, keeping off the roads where the soldiers patrolled - the roads that led to the only person that he wanted to see. *[MUSIC starts - offstage singing "I believe"]* As evening came, he saw the lights of a well-known orphanage flickering in the distance. Under cover of darkness, he slipped past the guards and got in through a cellar door....

The stage fills with orphans, younger kids, with a few older, raggedly dressed homeless people, swaying and clapping as they sing the gospel number, led by a powerful Singer. [See Production Notes for alternates.] The boy enters from the other side, and waits, looking away from them, frightened. The song ends. The singer comes towards him:

- Singer: Welcome, ---- *(name)* We've been waiting for you.
- Boy I need sanctuary.
- Singer You're quite safe here.

Kid 1 You were the Peace Child, weren't you?

Boy Not any more -

Kid 2 Sure, you were! You met that girl from the other side and almost got our Presidents to make Peace.

Kid 3 You were our hero!

Boy Not even close. I'm a deserter, a traitor. A coward.

Singer Nonsense! You're an inspiration! - the leader your generation's waiting for!

Boy Oh please! I ran a little public relations exercise for our President. It didn't work. Now all I want to do is lead a normal life, feed chickens, grow vegetables - become a monk, maybe.

Singer Destiny may have other plans for you.

Boy I don't believe in Destiny. We're all alone down here - free to make any mess we like of this planet.

Kid 1 We know all about the mess. We're part of it!

Kid 5 More wars now than at any other time this century;

Kid 6 Population set to double in our life times;

Kid 7 Food production set to drop -

Kid 8 - millions of starving people on the march;

Kid 2 Oil and gas reserves used up;

Kid 3 Rain forests wiped out -

Kid 4 United Nations crumbling into irrelevance...

Kid 1 We know all about the mess all right. What we don't know is what to do about it.

Singer That's why we've been waiting for you.

Boy How do you know all that?

Kid 2 That's what you were telling all the newspapers. "We don't have time for war," you said.

Boy But that was four years ago!

Singer I kept the cuttings. I show them to every kid that comes here. Makes them feel we're all in the same boat.

Boy But - ... I - ? *(He's at a loss)*

Kid 3 Tell us about your dream!

Boy What dream?

Kid 5 You and that girl - you said you had a Dream of Peace but you never explained what it was.

Boy Yes. *[Music starts.]* I lost touch with her. Letters don't get through. It's become impossible to reach the other side. She may be dead for all I know.

Singer But the Dream lives. We believe in it, and we don't even know what it is. We believe in you! The Peace Child! Children are going to bring Peace to this poor benighted country. No one else.

There was a man once, had a dream. He's dead now, but before he died, he took his dream to his people, sowed the seed of it deep in their hearts. Remember him ?

Song Thirteen : I have a vision

Singer: *(sings)* I have a vision, I have a dream
I have the answer or so it seems.

Don't you see the truth, to fight is not right,
We shall have our rainbow, we will have our sunlight
If we unite!

Singer *(contd.)* There's a way you see, where no one gets hurt
There's a way with love if you try!
There is hope and faith to keep you alive
In your darkest day, just pray!

Reach out with love, gather all your courage,
Reach out with love, seek a brighter day!
Love as our sword, peace as our weapon
Reach out with love! Let us win this way!

Martin Luther King had a vision! He had a dream
He had the answer, or so it seemed!
He knew the truth - to fight is not right
We can have our rainbow, we can have the sunlight!
We must unite!

A new world, A new light!
A new world, A new light!
A new hope! A new light -

Reach out with love, gather all your courage,
Reach out with love, seek a brighter day!
Love as our sword, peace as our weapon
Reach out with love! Let us win this way!

I have a vision!

During the song, the Singer and the kids watch the Boy. The kids join in the chorus. The Boy stands apart in an agony of confusion:

Singer: So you know what you must do now?

Boy I can't. I'm not your person: I tried it once - I failed. I ran away -

Singer There's no one else -

Boy Sure there is! Hundreds of people. I'm a failure!

Singer You're Destiny is crying out for you! Can't you hear it calling! - calling!

Kid 5 You could at least tell us your Dream?

Boy It's so long ago, I've forgotten -

Girl *(appearing as though in his reverie. See Production Notes)* Of course you haven't! We promised we'd never forget! It would start in the schools, remember -

Boy *(not seeing her but continuing her thoughts in a reverie)* - at the end of the summer term.
We'd meet across the border and March together for Peace!

Girl That's right! Children from other countries would join us -

Boy - and rock stars, artists, circus clowns!

Girl Together we'll march to the United Nations, thousands of us!

Boy And we'll demand an end to the War.

Girl None of us will leave until we have it - even if we starve to death!

Kid 5 Sounds a pretty good dream to me. *(Kids all nod; singer smiles)*

Boy Yes! - when do we start?

Girl Today! *(she disappears)*

Boy Will you help me? *(The boy remains in his reverie until the kids jolt him out of it.)*

Kids Sure! Let's start right now! This evening! Got nothing better to do. Where do we begin?

Singer In the schools, wasn't it?

Boy You can't let the kids come. They'll get themselves killed - !

Kid 3 If you're gonna take that risk, I'm right beside you!

Singer C'mon! Get going - she'll be starting the other side even as we speak!

Boy *(smiling)* You're really up for this, aren't you??!

Kids Definitely!

Boy Let's give it a whirl! *MUSIC starts.*

ACT TWO, SCENE FIVE

The Great March for Peace

MUSIC ("I want to live II") under. The kids leave the stage as the Story teller comes forward

S.T. So began the Great March for Peace. The children fanned out all over the country and started trying to persuade their friends to join. It was no easy task:

Six of the Orphan Kids return to the stage and confront a group of children on their way to school:

Kid 1 Guys - friends - come here everyone!

Kid 2 We want to tell you about the most incredible thing that's ever happened in our country.

Kid 3 It's the kids Great March for Peace !!

Kid 4 Since the grown-ups have proved themselves incapable, we're gonna make Peace.

Kid 5 It's what we all want but - do you have the courage to stand up and ask for it?

- Kid 6 We've got a meeting in the square tonight at 8.00. Who's coming?
- Child 1 Tonight? - sorry, I've got swim practice -
- Child 2 I've got a date -
- Child 3 - I've got a whole bunch of homework.
- Child 4 It's my mum's birthday...
- Child 5 What's it got to do with us, anyway?
 Boy Everything! In a few years, you'll have to join the army, won't you? A few months after that, you'll go to the front, won't you? Shortly after that, you'll be dead, won't you? So what good will all your homework and your swim meets do you then??!!
- Kid 2 Get real, guys! This is your chance to give yourselves a future -

On the other side of the stage, the Girl is having similar difficulties:

- Girl I cannot believe you can be so dumb and stupid!! You are like cows walking meekly to the slaughterhouse.
- Child 6 But we're kids! We can't do anything about the big important things your talking about.
- Child 7 We let the grown-ups deal with all that stuff.
- Girl That is your big mistake! If you want to live, you have to start today! Look at the facts! Adults are allowing world population to double to ten billion in our life times. At the same time as we are losing our ability to feed even 5 billion! Do you understand?? We could be the last generation to live upon this planet - and we let our stupid, grown-up leaders fight over meaningless pieces of ground!! We have to stop them!! We have to make Peace - and we can, if we all ask for it!!
- Child 8 I'll join!!
- Child 9 Me too! I want to live!
- All Yes! We want to Live!! *Music again.*

Storyteller The children gathered kids, parents, politicians, artists to their cause. At night, they slept in tents and farmyards; by day, they marched - and as they marched, they sang:

The children set out around the auditorium, singing:

Song Fifteen : I want to live II

Chorus: *(marching)* I want to live, I want to live
 The right to live my life
 I want to search far and wide
 Have the right to wonder why
 I want to fly through the air
 Like a bird in the sky,
 I want the chance to show the world
 What I am before I die.

As the children march, the stage fills with soldiers armed with rifles. They line up along the sides of the stage as though in trenches, facing each other. The children march on stage and occupy the No-mans-land. The soldiers yell at them with increasing hysteria; the music and the singing peters out:

Soldier Hey stop! This is a no go area!!
 - You can't go there!! It's forbidden!! *Verboten! Defendu - interdit!* Get out!!
 - For God's sake stop or I'll have to shoot!!

- The bastards that side will kill you!

As they speak, Kid 1 crawls forward and puts a flower in the barrel of a gun. The soldiers fall silent.

Kid 1 I want to live, don't you ?

Kid 2 *(placing another flower)* It can't be much fun stuck up here, waiting to kill or be killed -

Kid 3 Come join us!

More kids take courage and approach the soldiers, placing flowers in their guns, winding ribbons round their necks, drawing them out of the trenches, dancing with them as the music picks up and a child softly sings:

Child: I want to be, I want to see
A world that's good and free
I want a home, someone to love
To share their life with me
I want to have and to hold
A child of my own
I want to live, I want to love
I want to live, I want to live -

The tempo quickens; all the children and soldiers are dancing as the Commander comes in. He goes berserk:

Commander: What's going on here?? Get back to your positions, men. Your positions, at once!! That's an order. Get these children out of here?? Get them out, I command you!! This is an outrage!!

Kid 5 No - it's a party!!

Commander: Stop! STOP!!! Please!! Oh can't you leave us alone and let us fight in Peace!

All Never!! *(the commander retreats, a broken, weeping man)*

Story teller News of the children's defeat of the two armies spread fast around the world. Gestures of support flooded in - food, transport, clothing, money. From everywhere, children came to join the March

Depending on the cultural composition of your cast, children come forward with a simple dance and a snatch of a national song, saying:

Children 1 We are from China, and we wish you live in Peace!

Children II We are from Poland: We are proud to March for Peace with you!

Children III We are from Germany. Like you, we want to Live - in Peace and Happiness.

etc. etc. See Production Notes. The MUSIC builds under as the stage fills with the whole cast, singing:

Chorus: *(marching)* We want to live, We want to live
The right to live our lives!
We want to search far and wide
Have the right to wonder why
We want to fly through the air
Like birds in the sky,
We want to live, We want to love
We want to live, I - WANT - TO - LIVE !!

The children form a tableau at the end of the song.

ACT TWO, SCENE SIX

At the United Nations

The UN Flag descends over them. The lights dim as they break and start to discuss earnestly amongst themselves, moving quietly from the stage. Storyteller moves centre stage, saying:

- Storyteller: Finally, the children came to the United Nations. They camped out in the garden and immediately began the Children's Summit. At last, the Boy and the Girl had time to talk
- Boy *(entering)* You really started that same day?!
- Girl Of course! We heard radio news from your side that you'd torn up your draft papers and run away. I knew you'd start at once.
- Boy I didn't. I was planning to give up completely. Become a monk!
- Girl Never!! I'd have killed you -
- Boy I believe that. Who did you have to help you ?
- Girl No one. Just me - and the certainty that you would be doing it too.
- Boy Incredible. But hey! - we did it! What are we waiting for now?
- Girl The UN guy. He's going to let us know when he can get the Presidents to the Children's Summit.
- Boy It better be soon. None of my lot will move 'til they get here. They have to come.
- Girl They will! Ahh - look at this place! Doesn't it feel great to be here ?
- Boy *(looking around)* The World Parliament -
- Girl Not yet, but it will be.
- Boy Our next little job, eh?
- UN Guard: The Secretary General will see you now.

The Boy holds out his hand. The girl walks purposefully past him, following the Guard. The Boy, feeling rather foolish, follows. The Storyteller comes forward:

- Storyteller The United Nations agreed to their plan. And while the children waited, their summit talks continued. They drafted plans and resolutions; they talked deep into the night; they hugged, they argued; they laughed, they cried and danced and had perhaps the time of their lives. For they were building Peace right there in the UN gardens. By the time the Presidents arrived, the atmosphere was so warm, you could boil a kettle on it.

Laughing and giggling, the children come down the aisles to the Music of Peace Day. With happy faces, they come on stage, madly excited. Then the Presidents enter. A chill descends on the stage. They stand as far apart as possible. The UN Guard comes forward:

- UN Guard You have some resolutions you wish the Presidents to consider?
- Kid 1 Where do we start?
- Boy We thank you for coming to listen to us. We have sacrificed much to get to you.
- Girl We all lost friends and relatives in this war. We've also lost our childhood, our innocence. We cannot recover these things, but we can have Peace, if you allow us to make it for you.
- Kid 1 We have some ideas how you can do this.

*The Children read the **RESOLUTIONS**, prepared with the cooperation of the whole cast. [See Production Notes.] The Final Resolution requires that the Presidents allow the children to meet with them once a year to check up on progress. The children make commitments to the Presidents about the things they will do - social programmes, environmental repair, literacy and education programmes, health care, work-sharing, - all of which adds up to much more than they are asking of the Presidents. By the end, both Presidents are stunned into silence.*

President 2 May we talk now? Thank you.

President 1 This is all your fault!!

President 2 No - it's your's for encouraging those lunatic children in the first place!

President 1 That was four years ago! Your acts of terrorism are what fuels the hatred in this war

President 2 Your occupation of our territory is what started it!

President 1 2000 years ago, this territory was our's! We are only reclaiming the land of our ancestors!!

President 2 2000 years before that, it was our's! How far back do you want to go?! When I think of the crimes you have committed against my people in my life time, I know I should not stand in the same room as you!! Your body pollutes the air!

President 1 Your people killed my father -

President 2 - your people killed two of my uncles, murdered my brother, cut off his head and sent it to my mother in a laundry basket!

President 1 Your people - animals - raped my sister and left her for dead! I should not stand here listening to you! I should cut off your ...

Girl *(forcing her way forward)* Cut it out right now! STOP!

Boy And some of us thought you grown-ups were in control! You are pathetic! 2-year olds fighting in a school playground have more control than you two!

Kid 3 Can you not find it in your hearts to forgive ?

Kid 5 Why do you have to live in the past?

Kid 4 The past we know is horrible.

Kid 2 We've got to live in the future!

Girl - and we've got to live together....

Song Sixteen : Living Together

Living together, side by side -
You with your way, I with mine;

During the song, the children take their Presidents by the hand and drag them towards each other, clasping their hands together. They face away from each other. The children form a circle round them, singing:

As the song ends, the Presidents are engulfed by the love of the children. They embrace. The children clap.

President 1 Thank you. Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings.... eh?

President 2 Why didn't we listen to them before?

President 1 They don't vote.

- President 2 I'm struggling to think of reasons why it's not as simple as they say....
- President 1 It isn't: much of what they propose is either economically or politically impossible.
- President 2 Yes -
- Kid 2 But you're going to try?
- President 2 Yes.
- President 1 - and so am I. And we shall meet again in one year's time to see how we have progressed.
- President 2 It's a deal!
- They shake on it. The kids cheer. Music starts as the Presidents move away, chatting to the children.*
- President 2 We shall meet before then: I'd like your representatives to be at all the peace negotiations.
- President 1 You'll help to keep us focussed. I begin to think that Peace is possible when you're around.
- President 2 Me too. I'll make arrangements with your school teachers to get you time off school.
- Kid 3 We're from his side -
- Pres. 2 You are? Fine! I'll make arrangements with his school teachers. We'll sort it out.

The children and the Presidents continue chatting up stage left, while the LIGHTS fade very slowly. Downstage Right, a singer comes forward and starts to sing. Behind him/her, the children and Presidents slip away into the darkness. The last to leave are the Boy and Girl - this time, she takes his hand. The song is the transition back to the future.

Song Seventeen : Child for a Day

I was a child who ran full of laughter,
I was a child who lived for a day
My eyes full of sunshine
My heart full of smiles,
I was a child for a day -

We were the children who sang in the morning
We were the children who laughed at the sun
Who listened to those,
Who spoke with their wisdom
We were the ones we would say

We're getting older as time goes by
A little older every day
We were the children - of yesterday!

ACT TWO, SCENE SEVEN

Epilogue

The cast starts to come back in their Peace Day costumes. As the song ends, the stage clears. The Story-teller and his small group come forward, downstage center:

- Child 13 So that was the First Peace Day?

- S.T. Yes! I remember all the Peace Days that came after - the one where we got all worked up about Drug abuse and wanted an immediate Death Sentence for any one caught selling drugs !
- Child 14 Didn't they ban cars once?
- S.T. Yes! Kids didn't allow their parents to buy cars until they developed the zero-polluting ones we have today.
- Child 15 Didn't they try to get every child to plant a tree in the desert?!
- Child 16 - and have every school donate half their text books to the developing world?
- Child 17 The World Peace Corps came out of a Peace Day resolution, didn't it - ?
- Child 18 - and the Neighbourhood Youth Squads.
- S.T. Many wonderful, crazy things, but you know, the ideas may sound silly when they tell them, but children have a wonderful way of knowing what's right for the world in the long term
- Child 13 What happened to the boy?
- S.T. He became a very happy old man, I think!
- Child 15 Did he and the Girl get married?
- S.T. *(Pensively)* Yes - I believe they did: had a family, two children... Very happy they were.
- Child 18 How come you know so much about it?
- Child 17 Did you know them ?
- S.T. I did, slightly....
- Child 16 *(standing)* You! You were the Boy!
- Child 14 He can't be?!
- Child 15 Were you?
- ALL Were you? Was it you all the time? Really? Tell us, Please!! *(etc.)*
- S.T. It shouldn't matter who he was - or her! They were children, like you. You could have been the little boy - you, or you, the little girl! Any one of you could have done what they did for inside each of you lives a Peace Child - in every adult too. Peace Day reminds us of that. I pray that none of you will ever have to suffer the scourge of war, as we did. Struggle with every ounce of your being to support organizations like the UN which fights for Peace. And experience today and every day the thrill of Unity - of being one family with every other being on our earth. *(Music begins, a soloist appears)*
Listen - they're coming back! Happy Peace Day, children! - Happy Peace Day, everyone!!

Applause for the Storyteller as he backs away; the dancers come forward, reprising the end of Peace Day:

Celebrations, jubilations, Laughter shouting - join the fun!
Smiling dancing - grab a partner, Happiness for everyone!

Peace Enough for all mankind, Healthy body, happy mind
Faith and love, the world as one - Peace Day, Peace Day has begun.

Come into my joy, Come into my pain
Come - you be a friend of mine, I'll be the same! *(Repeat x 2)*

The whole cast comes back on stage, forming a tableau by the end of the song. Music stops. CURTAIN CALL. Peace Day vamp continues under until the Boy and the Girl take their bow.

The End