

OVERTURE

NARR.

In 1853 – the cities of the east coast, New York, Boston, Philadelphia and others, were teeming with children – poor children living in foundling homes and urchins wandering the streets – orphans and runaways, some abandoned by parents who had no way of caring for them and some choosing the street over abusive homes. This is the story of how they survived, how they were rescued and the journey that took them west - on The Orphan trains.

CHILDREN OF THE RAIL

ADULT CHORUS

WE CAME FROM MANY CITIES
SOME WERE BABIES – SOME WERE GROWN
WHERE LIFE OUT ON THE LONELY STREET
WAS THE ONLY LIFE WE'D KNOWN
BUT SOMEHOW WE WERE CHOSEN
AND SOMEHOW WE PREVAILED
WE WERE THE CHILDREN OF THE RAIL

WE TRAVELLED FROM THE CITIES
TO PLACES WAY OUT WEST
SCARED OF WHAT MIGHT LIE AHEAD
BUT HOPING FOR THE BEST
WE WERE ORPHANS – WE WERE FOUNDLINGS (HOMELESS)
WE WERE STRONG AND WE WERE FRAIL
WE WERE THE CHILDREN OF THE RAIL

WE ALL HAVE GOT OUR STORY
OF THE JOURNEYS WE WENT THROUGH
THOUGH EVERYONE IS DIFFERENT
EVERYONE IS TRUE
FOR SOME IT WAS A BLESSING
FOR SOME IT WAS A JAIL
BUT WE WERE THE CHILDREN
THE CHILDREN OF THE RAIL

WE RODE THE TRAINS TO TEXAS
TO WISCONSIN – ILLINOIS
AS WE TRAVELED DOWN THE TRACKS
OUR HEARTS WERE FILLED WITH JOY
AS WE RODE INTO THE SUNSET
INTO HISTORY WE SAILED
WE WERE THE CHILDREN OF THE RAIL

ADULT #1: We rode the trains to towns and cities – farms and fields all across the west – to places like Dowagiac, Michigan -
ADULT #2: Albany, Missouri -
ADULT #3: Danville, Indiana -
ADULT #4: Clarksville, Texas -
ADULT #5: Pueblo, Colorado
ADULT #6: and Two Rivers, Wisconsin –
ADULT #7: We learned to plow fields,
ADULT #8 milk cows,
ADULT #9 set newspaper type,
ADULT #10 and any other chore imaginable.
ADULT #11 We all were given families,
ADULT #12 and some of us found homes.

WE ALL HAVE GOT OUR STORY
OF THE JOURNEYS WE WENT THROUGH
THOUGH EVERYONE IS DIFFERENT
EVERYONE IS TRUE
SOME OF US FOUND FAMILIES
AND SOME OF US FOUND HELL
BUT WE WERE THE CHILDREN
THE CHILDREN OF THE RAIL

WE TRAVELLED FROM THE CITIES
TO PLACES WAY OUT WEST
SCARED OF WHAT MIGHT LIE AHEAD
BUT HOPING FOR THE BEST
WE WERE ORPHANS – WE WERE FOUNDLINGS (HOMELESS)
WE WERE STRONG AND WE WERE FRAIL
WE WERE THE CHILDREN
WE WERE THE CHILDREN
WE WERE THE CHILDREN OF THE RAIL

STREET LIFE

ADULT CHORUS

GUTTERSNIPE
STREET RAT
ORPHAN
OR WOEBEGONE
STREET ARAB
OR URCHIN
ANY NAME
IT'S STILL THE SAME

YOUNG URCHINS

GUTTERSNIPE
STREET RAT
ORPHAN
OR WOEBEGONE
STREET ARAB
OR URCHIN
ANY NAME
IT'S STILL THE SAME

NARRATOR

The police called them Street Arabs. They filled every sidewalk and alley in New York – from the Brooklyn Bridge down to Battery Park. They lived in one of the many children asylums throughout the city, or they lived on the streets, relying on their wits to make it through another day - and night. They found work where they could - selling matches, carting coal or ...

MAN – That boy just picked my pocket.

ADULT CHORUS

GUTTERSNIPE
STREET RAT
ORPHAN
OR WOEBEGONE
STREET ARAB
OR URCHIN
ANY NAME
IT'S STILL THE SAME

SAVANNAH – My name is Savannah, My father died 3 years ago. My mother died just last month. I earn what money I can by singing on the street corners. It pays for a blanket on a cold night – not much more.

FIDGET - My mother and I were close. We were all we had. One day, she packed up my suitcase and took me down town to the New York Foundling Asylum. That was the last time I ever saw her.

HATTIE - I was 7 when my ma died – I don't remember pa. She had brown hair – wavy I think.

WILLIE - My father's name was Walter – and he had fists as hard as stone.

ADULT CHOIR (NEW BRIDGE)
LEFT IN THE FOUNDLING HOMES
LEFT TO MAKE IT ON THEIR OWN
CHILDREN ABANDONED AND ALONE

THESE GUTTERSNIPE
STREET RATS
ORPHANS
AND WOEBEGONES
STREET ARABS
AND URCHINS
ANY NAME
THEY'RE STILL THE SAME

IRMA - I'm Irma. This is my brother Marsh. You could say our address is a wooden crate down that empty alley. It hurts hard sometimes being alone – but together, we do alright.

KLINK – All my mother did was bring me into this world – and then she left me.

MONTANA - My father brought me here from Scotland – he was a tailor. He couldn't find a job, so he took me to his sisters and left. She took me to the streets – and left. But like Irma said – I do alright.

MY NAME IS JIMMY BROWN

MONTANA
I SELL THE MORNING PAPER
MY NAME IS JIMMY BROWN
MOST EVERYBODY KNOWS
I AM THE NEWSBOY OF THE TOWN
I LIVE DOWN IN THE ALLEY
ALMOST ALL MY LIFE
YET I SURVIVE
YES, I SURVIVE

FIDGET: Some like to walk the Bowery, but personally, I like to work up on Broadway – theatre people always got time for a shoe shine. Plus, on slow days, I sneaks

in and watches Weber and Fields or “Pecks Bad Boys.” Hey, they’re bad, but they ain’t got nothin’ on me.

I PICK A PAIR OF POCKETS
I STEAL A LOAF OF BREAD

IRMA & OTHERS

I WALK AMONG THE STRANGERS
WHO THINK THAT I AM DEAD

ALL

MY DAYS ARE FILLED WITH WAND’RING
MY NIGHTS ARE BITTER COLD
STILL I SURVIVE
YES, I SIRVIVE

MAN -Can’t someone shut those urchins up?
WOMAN – What ever happened to peace and quiet?
FIDGET – We’ll have it again, lady, as soon as you leave.

(WOMAN exits in a huff with the man. – ANOTHER MAN walks by.)

MONTANA – Need a pape, mister?
MAN -I’ve already read it.
MONTANA – Then how about a shoe shine?
MAN – How about you leave me alone and go home? (MAN exits.)
MONTANA – Go home? I am home!

STREET SONG

MONTANA

IT AIN’T MUCH – I KNOW IT
BUT IT IS ALL I GOT
THIS HERE CORNER OF THE STREET

MONTANA & FIDGET

AND ANYONE WHO TRIES TO
TAKE THIS SPOT
WILL WIND UP OFF HIS FEET
I GOT THE TOUGHEST KNUCKLES
TO BACK UP WHAT I SAY
IT AIN’T MUCH, BUT IT’S ALL I GOT

ALL KIDS

AND HERE IS WHERE I’M GONNA STAY
IT’S A HELL HOLE

IT'S A POOR PLACE
WHERE THE HOURS ARE LONG
AND THE WAGES LOW
IT'S A HARD LIFE
BUT IT'S MY LIFE
AND THERE AIN'T NO PLACE TO GO

PAPER SELLERS

I GOT PAPERS TO SELL IN THE MORNING

SHOE SHINERS

AND THERE ARE ALWAYS SHOES TO SHINE

ALL KIDS

BUT AT THE END OF THE DAY
WHEN I CHECK MY PAY
I GOT NOTHIN' BUT A LOUSY DIME

GIRLS

YOU GET TIRED OF THREADIN' BOBBINS

BOYS

YOU GET TIRED OF DIGGIN' COAL

ALL

YOU GET TIRED OF BEING HUNGRY
AND TIRED OF HOPIN' THAT THERE'S MORE

THAN THIS HELL HOLE
THIS POOR PLACE
WHERE THE HOURS ARE LONG
AND THE WAGES LOW
IT'S A HARD LIFE
BUT IT'S MY LIFE
AND THERE AIN'T NO PLACE TO GO

WHAT'S THE USE OF DREAMING
WHEN DREAMS WILL NEVER COME TRUE
OH, WHAT'S THE USE OF TRYING TO
FIND A WAY OUT
WHEN YOUR LIFE IS LAID OUT
AND YOU'RE STUCK
NO MATTER WHAT YOU DO

GOOD LADIES

BLESS THESE CHILDREN
KEEP THEM OUT OF HARMS WAY
GIVE THEM HOPE
SO AT THE END OF EVERY DAY
THEY CAN SEE A TOMORROW
SEE THE END OF SORROW
OH, BLESS THESE CHILDREN

ALL KIDS

IT'S A HELL HOLE
IT'S A POOR PLACE
WHERE THE HOURS ARE LONG
AND THE WAGES LOW
IT'S A HARD LIFE
BUT IT'S MY LIFE
AND THERE AIN'T NO PLACE TO GO

(Lights dim, kids settle down in corners to count their money and pull out their blankets – grab a bite to eat and get ready for sleep.)

MONTANA - How's about a pape, mister. Late edition. Last one. (MAN pays for the paper and leaves without saying a word.) And a good day to you, too.

FIDGET - So how'd you do today, Jimmy?

MONTANA - I told you Fidget, my name's Montana.

FIDGET - Oh yah. You read a book about Montana, so you want to go there, so now I got to call you Montana. Hey, I read a book once, too.

MONTANA - Another day done and another dime closer to freedom.

IRMA - Montana, you ain't never getting' out of here.

KLINK - You'll be dead before you save enough for a train ticket.

MONTANA – Say what you want, but someday soon I'll be riding high on the top of one of those Rocky Mountains.

WILLIE - Hey, don't kid yourself. The only thing you'll be riding is the police cart down to the pokey.

FIDGET – (Steps between the feuding boys) Break it up. We got a long day tomorrow of selling papers – so let's get some rest.

(STREET KIDS Settle down in groups in corners and such. SAVANAH enters with a bag in hand. She puts it down and looks for people passing by. A COUPLE passes by.)

SAVANNAH - A nickel for a song, mam?

LADY - Child, we just came from the theatre. They sang all night long.

(Strains of “After the Ball” are heard floating through the air. The COUPLE waltzes off. SAVANNAH watches them exit and then steps down center to sing.)

STRANGER IN THE CITY

SAVANNAH

I'M A STRANGER IN THE CITY
I AM LOST AND ON MY OWN
WITH NO MOTHER AND NO FATHER
AND NO PLACE THAT I CALL HOME

IF YOU LISTEN I WILL SING YOU
A SONG THAT SPEAKS OF WOE,
OF A GIRL WHO HAS NO FAMILY
AND NO PLACE WHERE SHE CAN GO

ON THE CORNERS I WILL SING OUT
MY SONGS FOR ALL TO HEAR
AND THE PENNIES THAT YOU TOSS ME
THEY ARE ALWAYS WELCOME HERE

WHEN I WALK THIS CROWDED CITY
I'M AWAKE, BUT NOT ALIVE
I KNOW EACH DAY WILL BE LIKE THIS ONE
STILL SOMEHOW I WILL SURVIVE

I'VE NO PLACE WHERE I CAN GO

SAVANNAH AND ADULT CHOIR

ON THE CORNERS I WILL SING OUT
MY SONGS FOR ALL TO HERE

(ANOTHER COUPLE enters and listens and then hands her a few coins and then exit.)

SAVANNAH

AND THE PENNIES THAT YOU TOSS ME
THEY ARE ALWAYS WELCOME HERE

SAVANNAH AND ADULT CHOIR

WHEN I WALK THIS CROWDED CITY
I'M AWAKE, BUT NOT ALIVE
I KNOW EACH DAY WILL BE LIKE THIS ONE
STILL SOMEHOW I WILL SURVIVE

SAVANNAH

AND THOUGH EACH DAY WILL BE LIKE THIS ONE

SAVANNAH AND ADULT CHOIR

SOMEHOW I WILL SURVIVE

WILLIE: Hey, I ain't seen you on the streets before...
SAVANNAH: I haven't been on them before.
WILLIE - Well, let me introduce myself, I'm Willie.
MONTANA: (Rushing over) Leave the girl alone, Willie.
WILLIE: I was just talkin' nice.
MONTANA: I said leave her alone. (WILLIE exits) He's not really the trustworthy kind. He's one of the bad apples of the lot.
SAVANNAH: And you, I suppose, are a good apple?
MONTANA: Only the best. And with that comes an obligation to look after the new kids – like you.
SAVANNAH: And what does that mean exactly?
MONTANA: It means exactly nothin' more than that. (Giving her a piece of blanket) Here. It's not much, but it's going to be a cold night.

(SAVANNAH finds a separate corner and settles down. MONTANA, keeping his distance, sits down and watches her.)

SAVANNAH - Thanks,...
MONTANA - Montana.
SAVANNAH - Thanks, Montana.
(ALL settle in for the night.)

BRACE

(MUSIC changes. URCHINS get up and head off to work. NARRATOR steps down.)

NARR: The lives of these young children became the obsession of a young minister, Charles Loring Brace . He would walk the city streets, horrified by what he saw.

BRACE - When a child of the streets stands before you in rags, with tear stained face, you cannot easily forget him, and yet you are perplexed at what to do. The human soul is difficult to interfere with and you hesitate as to how far you should go. These are wandering children – not more than 10 or 12 years old most of them and yet they grovel through the streets, begging for a crust of bread. These children have lost their innocence, their childhood, their dreams. I believe that the heart and soul of a society is reflected in how we treat our children. And I do not like what I see.

WHO WILL CARE

BRACE

I SEE THEM HUDDLED ON THE SIDEWALKS
I SEE THEM HIDING IN THE CORNERS OF THE STREETS
WHAT CAN WE DO FOR THEM
DO FOR THEM

THEIR RAGGED CLOTHES AND DIRTY FACES
DENY THE CHILD THAT IS LOCKED AWAY INSIDE

MY HEART GOES OUT TO THEM
WHAT CAN I DO FOR THEM

IS THERE A WAY
TO GIVE THESE CHILDREN A CHANCE
TO GIVE THESE CHILDREN A FUTURE
PAST TODAY
THERE MUST BE A WAY

RAGGED YOUNG GIRLS
WHO HAVE NOWHERE TO REST THEIR HEADS
TOUGH LITTLE BOYS
WHO USE GUTTERS INSTEAD OF BEDS
THESE ARE CASTAWAY CHILDREN
WAITING FOR SOMEONE TO CARE
WHO WILL CARE.

DEEP IN THE NIGHT
THEY STILL WANDER THE STREETS ALONE
BUT GIVEN A CHANCE
THEY WOULD ALL RATHER HAVE A HOME
THESE ARE GOD'S PRECIOUS CHILDREN
WAITING FOR FATE TO BE KIND
HOW CAN WE ALL BE SO BLIND

ARE WE SO COLD
HAVE WE ALL LOST OUR FEELINGS
HOW CAN WE LOOK BUT NOT SEE
THE PAIN IN THE EYES
THE SOUND OF THE CRIES
AND THEIR TEARS

AND EVERYDAY BRINGS
MORE CHILDREN, MORE SUFFERING
AND WHAT DO WE DO
WE WALK ON, DON'T DO ANYTHING
THESE ARE GOD'S PRECIOUS CHILDREN
WAITING FOR FATE TO BE KIND
HOW CAN WE BE SO BLIND

BRACE – I have walked the streets with these children, and I believe they need more than just food and clothing and a place to sleep. They need to regain their innocence. And I believe that the best of all asylums for the outcast child is not in the city, but in a farmer's home – out west where they can find labor and love. Can't you see that there is plenty of room at the table of life if we are willing to share just a little. And I cannot

conceive a more noble action than to open one's homes and hearts – and to devote oneself to these children.

NARR – So Brace set about creating the Children's Aid Society and organizing trains to carry these children out west.

(BRACE enters with pamphlets in hand and talks to the urchins. MONTANA and SAVANNAH stay off to the side and listen while the others gather around BRACE.)

BRACE: Children, come here. I have an idea to get you off of the streets and out of your foundling homes.

WILLIE: What – ship us to Philadelphia?

BRACE: No. I want to put you on a train – and send you west. There are families there who need help on their farms.

MONTANA – Slaves, you mean.

BRACE – No you'll be taken in as part of their family. Treated like sons...

SAVANNAH: What about the girls?

BRACE: Yes, of course, they need girls, too. These will be good Christian homes.

NOAH – Will there be horses?

BRACE – I'm sure they will.

IRMA - And cows and pigs?

MARSH – I ain't never seen a pig before.

WILLIE – What about cowboys?

KLINK – What about pigs?

BRACE – If you want pigs, young man, we'll find you pigs. So what do you say, it's a chance for you all – out of the city and out to the west?

(THEY are hesitant to take the pamphlet. EVERYONE is watching to see if MONTANA takes one. BRACE crosses over to MONTANA.)

BRACE – Montana, you lead and they will follow.

SAVANNAH – (To MONTANA) It's a train – west – maybe not Montana, but out of here.

(MONTANA finally walks over and takes a pamphlet. The rest of the kids cheer and rush over and take one as well.)

IRMA - So we're heading west

SAVANNAH - Wisconsin, here I come.

MONTANA - Montana, here I come.

FIDGET – Anywhere, here I come!

(BRACE exits)

I HEAR THERE'S A TRAIN

STREET KIDS

I HEAR THERE'S A TRAIN

THAT'S WESTWARD BOUND

THAT WILL TAKE ME FROM
THIS HEARTLESS TOWN
I HEAR THERE'S A TRAIN
THAT CAN SET ME FREE
OH TRAIN
COME AND RESCUE ME

STREET KIDS AND ADULT CHORUS

I JUST CAN'T WAIT
 (JUST CAN'T WAIT)
TILL THE DAWN APPEARS
 (DAWN APPEARS)
AND THE SUN WILL WASH
 (SUN WILL WASH)
AWAY MY FEARS
 (AWAY MY FEARS)
AND DOWN THE TRACK
 (DOWN THE TRACK)
WE'LL RIDE WITH EASE
OH TRAIN COME AND RESCUE ME

IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME COMIN'
AND I HAD MY DOUBT
THAT THIS DAY WOULD EVER APPEAR
I'VE BEEN A LONG TIME DREAMIN'
THAT THERE WAS AN OUT
BUT FINALLY THAT WAY OUT IS HERE

I HEAR THERE'S A TRAIN
THAT'S ON THE TRACK
THAT'S READY TO ROLL
AND NOT LOOK BACK
I HEAR THERE'S A TRAIN
THAT WILL SET ME FREE
OH TRAIN COME AND RESCUE ME
OH TRAIN COME AND RESCUE ME

NARR - So arrangements were made. The Children's Aid Society organized the trains and made sure that the children were well taken care of.

MS. CARLTON – My name is Miss Carlton. I will be your escort on this train. It is going to be a very long and exciting trip, so I suggest that everyone come in for a good nights sleep. We leave first thing in the morning.

(STREET KIDS all exit with MS. CARLTON.)

ADULT CHORUS

I HEAR THERE'S A TRAIN
THAT'S WESTWARD BOUND
THAT WILL TAKE ME FROM
THIS HEARTLESS TOWN
I HEAR THERE'S A TRAIN
THAT CAN SET ME FREE
OH TRAIN
COME AND RESCUE ME

I JUST CAN'T WAIT
(JUST CAN'T WAIT)
TILL THE DAWN APPEARS
(DAWN APPEARS)
AND THE SUN WILL WASH
(SUN WILL WASH)
AWAY MY FEARS
(AWAY MY FEARS)
AND DOWN THE TRACK
(DOWN THE TRACK)
WE'LL RIDE WITH EASE
OH TRAIN
COME AND RESCUE ME
OH RESCUE, RESCUE ME

THE WAY OF THE CITY WAS WEIGHING ME DOWN
I WOULD LOOK UP BUT NEVER FIND THE SKY
MY SPIRIT WAS FALLING IN PIECES ON THE GROUND
BUT NOW MY SPIRIT IS SOARING HIGH

I HEAR THERE'S A TRAIN
THAT'S ON THE TRACK
THAT'S READY TO ROLL
AND NOT LOOK BACK
I HEAR THERE'S A TRAIN
THAT WILL SET ME FREE
OH TRAIN COME AND RESCUE ME
OH TRAIN COME AND RESCUE ME
OH RESCUE, RESCUE
RESCUE ME

GETTING READY

(MONTANA enters)

MONTANA

IT DON'T TAKE LONG TO GET READY
WHEN ALL YOU GOT IS THE SHIRT ON YOUR BACK
IT DON'T TAKE LONG TO SAY SO LONG
WHEN ALL YOU NEED IS TO PICK UP YOUR HAT

MONTANA and SAVANNAH

THEN YOU'RE ON YOUR WAY
LEAVING BEHIND TODAY
FOR A CHANCE
AT A NEW TOMORROW

SAVANNAH

EVERY NIGHT WHEN I'D LAY DOWN
I'D SEE THOSE STARS SO HIGH ABOVE ME
AND I'D WONDER IF SOMEWHERE
THERE WAS SOMEONE WHO WOULD LOVE ME

MONTANA

AND EVERY NIGHT I'D CLOSE MY EYES
AND LEAVE THE CITY FAR BEHIND ME.
AND I WOULD FLY OUT TO THE WEST
WHERE I WOULD RIDE FREE LIKE THE WIND.

MONTANA and SAVANNAH

AND TOMORROW WITH THE DAWN
WE'LL ARISE AND JOURNEY ON

AND WE WILL RIDE THAT ORPHAN TRAIN
AS FAR AS IT WILL TAKE US.
AND PRAY THAT THERE WE'LL FIND OUR DREAMS
WITH SOMEONE WHO'LL TAKE ME HOME

LEAVING A CHILD

NARR: Joy was often mixed with bottomless sorrow, where desperate parents saw little hope and no future for the children. One young mother, knowing she had nothing to offer her son – late that evening – packed his belongings into a small suitcase – took him by the hand and walked him down to the Children’s Aid Office.

(MOTHER and NOAH enter)

NOAH – Mother, where are we going? Why are we out here in the middle of the night?

MOTHER – Just sit down here on this bench and go back to sleep. Rest a while, and in the morning, when you wake,

NOAH: mother...

MOTHER: shhh.

SLEEP MY CHILD

MOTHER

SLEEP MY CHILD UPON MY SHOULDER
CLOSE YOUR EYES UNTIL THE DAWN
TONIGHT I HOLD YOU CLOSE BESIDE ME
BUT IN THE MORNING WHEN YOU WAKE I WILL BE GONE

SO LET THIS BE YOUR TRAIN TO FREEDOM
LET THIS BE YOUR BRAND NEW START
BUT KNOW, NO MATTER WHERE YOU JOURNEY
I WILL ALWAYS HOLD YOU HERE, IN MY HEART

AND THOUGH IT’S BROEKN
MY SON, YOU MUST BE STRONG
AND KNOW THAT I WILL BE THERE
WATCHING O’VER TO
HELP TO SHOW YOU RIGHT FROM WRONG

(During this next verse, the MOTHER pins a note to the sleeping child)

MY WISH FOR YOU IS TO BE HAPPY
MY WISH IS THAT YOU WILL FIND JOY
AND THOUGH MILES AND YEARS MAY COME BETWEEN US
KNOW THAT YOU WILL ALWAYS BE MY BOY

(There is a noise. The MOTHER runs into the shadows. A LADY comes out and finds NOAH. She reads the note and takes NOAH in. When they are gone, the MOTHER steps forward out of the shadows.)

MY WISH FOR YOU IS TO BE HAPPY
MY WISH IS THAT YOU WILL FIND JOY
AND THOUGH YEARS AND MILES MAY COME BETWEEN
KNOW THAT YOU WILL ALWAYS BE MY BOY

THE RIDE

(TRAIN WHISTLE - Tempo changes as the children get ready to board the train.)

NARR - Finally the morning arrived. The girls were given new dresses with white pinafores. The boys wore knickers that buttoned below their knees. Miss Carlton led them down to the train – for the start of their great adventure.

(The URCHINS and MISS CARLTON bring on benches and place them center facing the audience that will represent the seats on the train.)

ADULT CHORUS

THE ENGINE ROARED
SHE WAS FILLED WITH COAL
THE WHISTLE BLEW
SHE WAS READY TO ROLL
AND AS THE DAWN
AWOKE THE DAY
THE TRAIN
ROLLED ON ITS WAY

(Now on the train, the CHILDREN settle in)

MS. CARLTON – Now, let’s everyone settle in – this is going to be a long journey.

IRMA - Will we be there tomorrow?

MS. C - No, if all goes well, we should arrive in five days.

FIDGET – Where is Wisconsin anyway, China?

(THE CHILDREN finish settling in.)

ADULT CHORUS

CLICK – CLICK – CLACK
THE TRAIN WENT CLICK – CLICK – CLACK

OH ORPHAN TRAIN
OH FREEDOM TRAIN
LET YOUR WHISTLE BLOW
ITS SWEET REFRAIN
TAKE THESE CHILDREN
BY THE HAND
AND LET THEM RIDE
TO THE PROMISED LAND

WILLIE – How long has it been now?

MS. C – Two days.

WILLIE – Only two days? That means three more to go.

SAVANNAH - Ever seen a cow?
MONTANA - Saw one in a picture once.
SAVANNAH - Well, that's a cow. (Pointing)
MONTANA - No it's not. It's a horse.
SAVANNAH - Ms. Carlton?
MS C. - (Looks) That is a cow.
MONTANA - But it's so big!

CHAS - Miss Carlton, Those trees over there have red things on them.
MS. C - Those are apples, Chas.
CHAS - You mean they grow on trees?

ADULT CHORUS
THROUGH PENNSYLVANIA
AND OHIO
THROUGH INDIANA
AND ILLINOIS
ON THROUGH THE NIGHT
AND THROUGH THE DAY
THAT TRAIN
ROLLED ON ITS WAY

WILLIE - I never thought I'd be tired and sandwiches and cheese.
MS. C. - Well, you don't have to eat them all yourself.
MARY - Miss Carlton, do you think they will like me?
MS. C. - Who wouldn't like you, Mary?
MARY - Maybe I should sing a song.
CHAS - I can tell some jokes
KLINK - I can dance a little.
MS. - No, just be yourself.
KLINK - Do you think that will be enough?
MS. C. - I'm sure it will be. Now we still have a long ride ahead of us. Let's settle down and get some sleep.

(It becomes quiet. ALL sleep on shoulders or in laps. As THEY are drifting off to sleep, THEY sing.)

IRMA
I WONDER WHAT SHE'LL LOOK LIKE

MARSH
HE'LL HAVE WISKERS

IRMA
SHE'LL BE TALL

FIDGET

I WONDER WHERE MY ROOM WILL BE

SAVANNAH

I'LL HAVE SISTERS, FOUR IN ALL

NOAH & KLINK

WE'LL HAVE DINNER AT THE TABLE

SAVANNAH

SHE'LL HAVE THE SWEETEST VOICE OF ALL

MRS. C. – Quiet now. It's time to sleep.

ARRIVAL IN TOWN

(WHISTLE BLOWS! MUSIC changes – song starts - CHILDREN and MS. C are up and remove benches.)

MAN 1 – Did you hear a whistle?

WOMAN 1 – Yes, I heard it.

MAN – Then we better let everyone know.

ADULT CHOIR - QUARTET

RING THE BELL SO ALL CAN HERE
THAT THE CHILDREN ARE COMING
THAT THE CHILDREN ARE HERE
RING THE BELL SO ALL WILL KNOW
THAT THE CHILDREN ARE COMING
HEAR THE WHISTLE BLOW

LET THEM KNOW THAT THE CHILDREN ARE COMING
LET THEM KNOW THAT THE CHILDREN ARE HERE
RING THE BELL – OUT LOUD AND CLEAR
FOR AT LAST THE CHILDREN ARE HERE

NARR - Notices had been posted for weeks at the post office and the general store. There had even been advertisements placed in the local paper. When the train finally arrived, the children were taken to the local Presbyterian church. They looked weary, travel-stained and confused by all the excitement. They were cleaned up and fed a little, and the preacher said a good prayer that they might all find homes. About 2 in the afternoon, they were marched down the street and led into the local opera house. The acting troupe had reluctantly consented to cancel their rehearsal of "Two Nights in a Barroom" for this very important event. As the children were led in, the theatre was packed with families, all looking for a son or daughter, or merely an extra hand to work the fields.

(THE CHILDREN gather in a group at center when the narrator says “marched down the street. PARENTS grouped on either side of them after the CHILDREN enter.)

HUSBAND 1– Do you see one you like?

WIFE 1 – Not yet.

KLINK – Do you see one you like?

WILLIE – Not yet!

IRMA – I like her hat!

FIDGET – You can’t go home with a hat.

ADULT WOMAN – They all look so Helpless.

MISS CARLTON - I would like to thank you all for coming. These are the children that you have been expecting. Please remember the rules of the contract –

- children under fifteen, if not adopted, must be retained as members of the family and sent to school until 18.
- Children fifteen and over must be accepted as members of the family until they are 17.
- And parents taking children must write the society at least once a year to report on their status.

Now, if you would like, you may come and examine the children.

(Slowly – some of the adults step forward and examine them during the ...

OBSERVATION DANCE

(MUSIC)

HUSBAND 2 – What’s your name?

KLINK – Klink.

HUSBAND 2 – Klink what?

KLINK – Just Klink.

(MUSIC)

MARY – I will grow.

NOAH – I like horses.

MARSH - My pa said it’s alright to cry sometimes.

(MUSIC)

MAN - How are your teeth, boy?

MONTANA - Get your filthy fingers out of my mouth!

MAN – (To MISS CARLTON) I thought you said these children were well behaved.

MISS CARLTON – Well, they are children, not horses.

(MUSIC)

THIS ONE

HUSBAND 1

HOW 'BOUT THIS ONE
HE'S A TALL ONE

HUSBAND 2

NICE AND STURDY

WIFE 2

GOOD AND STRONG

HUSBAND 3

SHOW YOUR TEETH, BOY

HUSBAND 2

HAVE SOME MANNERS

WIFE 1 & 2

I LIKE THIS ONE

HUSBAND 1 & 2

NO HE'S WRONG.

WIVES

HAVE YOU EVER SEEN SUCH CHILDREN?

HUSBANDS 4

DON'E BE SCARED, GIRL
I WON'T BITE

HUSBAND 2

TOO TALL

HUSBAND 3

TOO SHORT

WIFE 2

TOO SWEET

WIVES

SHE WOULDN'T LAST A WEEK

HUSBAND 1 & WIFE 4

THIS ONE CAN'T BE VERY BRIGHT

ALL ADULT PARENTS-TO-BE
ALL THESE CHILDREN
HOW WILL WE EVER KNOW WHICH ONE TO CHOOSE
ALL THESE CHILDREN
MAYBE TAKE TWO, THEN THERE'S NO WAY WE LOOSE
RAISED IN THE HEART OF THE CITY
WHAT DO THEY KNOW OF A FARM?
FIELDS THAT NEED TENDING
CHORSES ALL UNENDING
THAT'S WHAT WE NEED THEM FOR!

WIFE 1
(Talking about NOAH)
BUT THIS ONE
HE LOOKS LIKE AN ANGEL
HE SMILES AND YOU WANT HIM
TO BE ALL YOUR OWN.

TEACHER
(Talking about MARY ELLEN)
AND THIS ONE
WITH HER HAIR ALL IN CURLS
COULD BE MY LITTLE GIRL
CAN'T I PLEASE TAKE HER HOME

WIFE 1
CAN'T I PLEASE TAKE HIM/HER HOME

CHILDREN
SHOULD WE SMILE
SHOULD I SING A SONG
TELL A STORY
OR JUST STAND UP STRONG
HE LOOKS HANDSOME
SHE LOOKS SAD
MAYBE THE CITY WASN'T ALL THAT BAD

(Repeat ADULT CHOIR section and URCHIN section in counterpoint.)

(After the song – there is still an awkward silence. No one is quite ready to move.)

MS. C.- Would anyone like to select a child?

***** (HUSBAND 1 finally steps forward.)

HUSBAND 1 - Would you like to come home with me, boy? My Misses is a very good cook.

NOAH – Do you have horses?

HUSBAND 1 – Yes, we have five horses.

(HUSBAND 1 and WIFE 1 and NOAH go off together)

***** (WIFE 2 comes forward and talks to HATTIE)

WIFE 2 – You’re going to be my little lipchen, yes?

HATTIE – If you ever hit me, I’ll run away.

WIFE 2 – (kneeling next to her and looking her in the eye – comforting her) I will never hit you.

(WIFE 2 takes HATTIE to HUSBAND 2 and they exit.)

***** (MAN 1 steps forward and talks to FIDGET.)

MAN 1 - I have a small farm and I need a strong boy to work with me in the fields. I am a fair man – if you work hard, you’ll be treated well.

(FIDGET nods acceptance and they exit together.)

***** (WIFE 4 and HUSBAND 4 cross over to where MARSH and IRMA are still waiting to be selected.)

WIFE 4 – (To her husband - about MARSH) Here’s a sweet one.

MARSH – This is my sister.

HUSBAND 4 – We can’t afford two.

WIFE 4 – I’m sorry, we can’t take your sister.

MARSH – Then you can’t take me.

WIFE 4 – (To HUSBAND 2) Are you sure? It’s his sister.

HUSBAND 4 – (To IRMA) Can you cook?

IRMA – Yes, sir. I’m quite good in a kitchen.

HUSBAND 4 – (To MARSH) And what is your name?

MARSH – Marsh.

HUSBAND 4 – Well come along then, and bring your sister.

(HUSBAND 4 and WIFE 4 start off.)

MARSH – (To IRMA) You can’t cook.

IRMA – Ssssh. We’re together aren’t we?

(WIFE 4 and HUSBAND 4 take IRMA and MARSH off.)

***** (WIFE 3 comes to MONTANA.)

WIFE 3 – We lost our only son two years ago to diphtheria. We were hoping for a young man, about your age, to help... There is a lot of work to do on a farm. You'll have bed in the barn – but it's clean.

MONTANA – You got yourself a field hand.

(MONTANA and WIFE 3 go to the edge of the stage and meet HUSBAND 3.)

***** (MARY ELLEN steps forward and tugs on the dress of the lady school TEACHER.)

MARY - Please, could I be your little girl

TEACHER – I'm the school teacher in town, you'll have to go to school.

MARY – Every day?

TEACHER – Yes, everyday.

MARY – (Thinks a little bit) Okay. (MARY Runs over to MS. C.) Does this mean I won't be an orphan anymore?

MS. C. – Never again, Mary.

(MARY runs back over to The School TEACHER and takes her by the hand.

MARY - I'm ready now. We can go home.

TEACHER – Yes, let's go home.

(MARY and TEACHER exit. By this time all PARENTS should have taken all the CHILDREN except for SAVANNAH – who is left standing alone.)

***** (WIFE 5 comes over to SAVANNAH.)

WIFE 5 – I have seven small children and I need help with the house.

SAVANNAH – I like children.

(SAVANNAH opens her mouth wide to let the WIFE 5 take a look at her teeth. WIFE 5 is surprised and doesn't look.)

WIFE 5 – Why don't you come with me.

SAVANNAH – Thank you.

(SAVANNAH starts to exit with WIFE 5 over to HUSBAND 5. She stops and runs over to MONTANA.)

SAVANNAH – I hope you find what you're looking for.

MONTANA – Savannah, I'm still headin' out to Montana. And I want you to come with me?

SAVANNAH – No, I can't – I've got seven brothers and sisters to look after.

MONTANA – Are you sure? We could be together out on the range.

SAVANNAH – I have a family that needs me.

MONTANA - Good luck.
SAVANNAH – You too.

(MONTANA and SAVANNAH exit with their families.)