

BABES IN THE WOOD

A PANTOMIME BY

STEPHEN DUCKHAM

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*BABES IN THE WOOD***CAST (in order of appearance)**

| | | |
|---------------------|---|------------------------------|
| FLOGGEM |) | |
| WHIPPEM |) | The Sheriff's Henchmen |
| SIR SILAS SKINFLINT |) | The Sheriff of Nottingham |
| ROBIN HOOD | | |
| MAID MARION | | |
| JACK |) | |
| JILL |) | The Babes |
| NURSE JEMIMA JOLLOP | | |
| NELL NIGHTSHADE | | The Witch of Sherwood Forest |
| GREENWILLOW | | A Woodland Sprite |

A GHOST
A SKELETON
HEADLESS

| | | |
|--------------|---|----------|
| FRIAR TUCK |) | |
| WILL SCARLET |) | Men of |
| ALAN-A-DALE |) | Sherwood |
| LITTLE JOHN |) | |

KING RICHARD THE FIRST

CHORUS AND DANCERS: TOWNSPEOPLE OF NOTTINGHAM, ROBIN'S GANG and BALLET CHARACTERS.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENESACT ONE

| | |
|---------|--|
| SCENE 1 | NOTTINGHAM TOWN |
| SCENE 2 | THE LONG CORRIDOR IN NOTTINGHAM CASTLE |
| SCENE 3 | THE HAUNTED WEST WING |
| SCENE 4 | THE LONG CORRIDOR IN NOTTINGHAM CASTLE |
| SCENE 5 | DEEP IN SHERWOOD FOREST (Into Transformation.) |

ACT TWO

| | |
|---------|---|
| SCENE 1 | NOTTINGHAM GOOSE FAIR |
| SCENE 2 | THE OUTSKIRTS OF TOWN |
| SCENE 3 | ROBIN HOODS HIDE-OUT IN SHERWOOD FOREST |
| SCENE 4 | ON THE WAY HOME |
| SCENE 5 | THE GREAT HALL AT LOCKSLEY CASTLE |

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PRODUCTION NOTES

SCENERY

ACT ONE

- SCENE 1 NOTTINGHAM TOWN
A full stage set with medieval buildings R & L including a pub and a house with a practical door. The backcloth shows other parts of town.
- SCENES 2&4 THE LONG CORRIDOR IN NOTTINGHAM CASTLE
Front cloth
- SCENE 3 THE HAUNTED WEST WING
A half stage bedroom set with practical doors R & L and one UC with a trick panel to one side. The NURSE should open the UC door wide covering the trick panel so the actor playing HEADLESS can slip through it and be revealed when the door is shut.
The wall behind the bed head should have an opening to enable a stagehand to pull the sheets through.
The trunk at the foot of the bed should be hollow so the actor playing the SKELETON/GHOST can exit under the bed and through the back of the set.
- SCENE 5 DEEP IN THE FOREST
Two part scene. The first part is a set with trees etc. As the Ballet starts the backcloth flies away to reveal the ballet setting. If possible a star cloth to back this scene would be most effective. The use of dry ice or smoke will add to the transformation effect.

ACT TWO

- SCENE 1 NOTTINGHAM GOOSE FAIR
Same as Act 1 Scene 1 with bunting and stalls added for the fair.
- SCENE 2&4 OUTSKIRT OF NOTTINGHAM/ON THE WAY HOME
Front cloth.
- SCENE 3 ROBIN HOODS HIDE-OUT
Basic setting can be the same as Act 1 Scene 5 with the addition of bushes and a fire.
- SCENE 5 THE GREAT HALL AT LOCKSLEY CASTLE
Walk down. This scene can be as impressive as possible with heraldic banners showing various 'Coat of Arms' etc.

CHARACTERS

Robin can be played by either a man or woman, but must always have that strong determined character. The Sheriff is the villain of the piece who always leaves himself open to ridicule. Floggem and Whippem are the knockabout comedy characters who, although at first in the employ of the Sheriff, should always have the audience on their side. Whippem usually has the upper hand with Floggem getting most of the knocks! Marian is a spirited Principal Girl – please don't play her too demure or wet. Nell Nightshade is an old crone – warts and all! She has a cackle-like laugh and dreadful halitosis. Greenwillow is the *Good Fairy* of the piece – a loveable character who gives the impression she always likes a good gossip! Jack and Jill should be around the age of ten or eleven. And finally Nurse Jemima Jollop, the comical Dame and should always be played by a man. A large character in every sense of the word and always played for laughs.

The company can be as large as you like with as much individuality as possible. Robin's Band of Men is made up of the Male Chorus but only take on their individual characters in Act Two.

The placing of musical numbers and who sings them is suggested in the script, but it is up to the director to decide what to use. A word of advice: Pantomime audiences – particularly the younger members – like the story to keep moving, so don't make the musical sequences too long, especially ballads.

I hope you enjoy doing this version of 'Babes in the Wood' and have a great success with your production.

Stephen Duckham

AUTHOR'S NOTE

This pantomime of *Babes in the Wood* has an alternative version entitled *Robin Hood*.

I was asked to write *Robin Hood* to avoid casting children in the *Babes in the Wood* story. Both scripts have a number of similarities in the dialogue and characters, but where the plot in this version centres around the Babes and the Sheriff trying to get his hands on their inheritance, *Robin Hood* has Robin as the central character and Maid Marion the object of the Sheriff's greed. In both scripts the use of a junior chorus is optional.

ACT ONE
SCENE 1 NOTTINGHAM TOWN

[A typical Medieval Town Centre with various buildings including a pub called 'The King's Arms'. On the backcloth in the distance can be seen Nottingham Castle. There is a large pot by the pros. down right. This contains a trick tree that is required to grow and has leaves resembling ears. The CHORUS of TOWNSFOLK sing the opening song depicting life in Nottingham.]

OPENING NUMBER – CHORUS

[At the end of the number, FLOGGEM and WHIPPEM are heard shouting off.]

- BOTH Make way, make way. [*THEY enter and cross through the crowd, ending C.*]
- FLOGGEM Clear a way there.
- WHIPPEM Come on you lot, shift!
- FLOGGEM Messers. Floggem and Whippem here.
- WHIPPEM He's Floggem.....
- FLOGGEM and he's Whippet!
- WHIPPEM Whippem!
- FLOGGEM And we are the Sheriff's henchmen.
- WHIPPEM I'm his right hand man.
- FLOGGEM And I'm his left one!
- WHIPPEM No, no. You're a right one.
- MAN You can say that again! [*ALL laugh.*]
- WHIPPEM All right, all right. That's enough from you peasants. [*HE starts to make an announcement.*] Hear ye all. Draw near and give full attention for here comes his most malicious mountainship –
- FLOGGEM His awesome awfulness –
- WHIPPEM His noble nastiness –
- FLOGGEM His deep down, dirty double-crossing, disgusting, dastardly.....[*WHIPPEM hits him and he falls. ALL laugh.*]
- WHIPPEM Get up! [*FLOGGEM stands and they announce:*]
- BOTH His *warship*, Sir Silas Skinflint, the Sheriff of Nottingham. [*ALL boo as the SHERIFF enters.*]

- SHERIFF Greetings you pathetic populace. I'm sure you all know why I'm here and what today is. *[ALL moan.]* Yes that's right. You've got it in one. Its tax-collecting time!
- MAN But you've taken taxes twice this year. You're nearly as bad as – *[Name of Chancellor of the Exchequer.]*
- SHERIFF True – but I'm much better looking! *[HE licks a finger and brushes his eyebrows.]*
- WOMAN It's just not fair.
- SHERIFF I know, I know. But life isn't fair, is it? You see with our dear King Richard away at the Crusades his brother, Prince John, has to keep the country going. And what with the cost of living, inflation, the upkeep of two or three castles, the chateau in the South of France..... er I mean – times *is* hard, dear people times *is* hard!
- 2nd WOMAN Yes, and they'll be even harder for us.
- 3rd WOMAN With hungry kids to feed.
- 2nd MAN And hardly any work around. *[ALL moan.]*
- SHERIFF Oh do stop all this whinging and empty your pockets. *[Boos from the CHORUS. They encourage the audience to boo, also. The SHERIFF comes to the edge of the stage and addresses the audience.]* And you can shut up as well, or I'll double the tax on a new – *[HE names the latest children's electronic game. FLOGGEM and WHIPPEM push the CROWD back.]* But to show I'm not the heartless meany you all think I am, I've devised a little sporting entertainment for you all. Men, read the announcement.
- WHIPPEM Oh yez, oh yez.
- FLOGGEM Oh no! Oh no!
- WHIPPEM What's the matter?
- FLOGGEM I've lost the scroll!
- WHIPPEM Oh you idiot. You must have dropped it. *[THEY run around looking for the scroll, which is tucked into the back of FLOGGEMS breeches.]*
- ALL It's behind you!
- WHIPPEM Oh come on, we're not falling for that old gag!
- SHERIFF You pair of bungling buffoons! *[HE pulls out the scroll.]*
- FLOGGEM Ooooh! That really hurt! *[The SHERIFF hits him and he falls. SHERIFF gives the scroll to WHIPPEM. An OLD WOMAN appears in the crowd.]*
- SHERIFF Here, read it out.

- WHIPPEM Oh yez, oh yez. In keeping with your noble Sheriff's kind and considerate nature – *[CROWD reacts.]* – he is holding a grand archery contest to celebrate the opening of the Nottingham Goose fair this Saturday. The winner of the contest will receive a prize of 100 crowns. *[Big reaction.]*
- OLD WOMAN And where's the prize money coming from? Our taxes?
- SHERIFF What are you talking about, old woman?
- OLD WOMAN You'll just take the money you collect and give it back to us as the prize! *[ALL react.]*
- SHERIFF Listen you lot, it's not me who takes other people's money. That honour goes to your *friend* Robin Hood, that unscrupulous outlaw. And just remember there is a price on his head, so anyone found consorting with him will hang from the gibbet next to him when he is caught!
- MAN You'll never catch Robin Hood.
- WOMAN He's always one step ahead of you.
- SHERIFF He may be a master of disguise, but never fear, I'll catch him one day – and when I do.....*[HE mimes a noose around his neck, his head to one side and tongue hanging out.]* Ha ha ha! *[HE turns to leave and bumps into FLOGGEM and WHIPPEM.]* Come on you nauseating numbskulls! *[SHERIFF, FLOGGEM and WHIPPEM exit.]*
- WOMAN Oh if only Robin was here. He'd win that archery contest with ease.
- MAN But he wouldn't dare come into town while he knows the Sheriff and his men are on the look out for him.
- ROBIN *[Throwing off Old Woman disguise.]* That's where you're wrong, my friends!
[ALL gather around ROBIN and welcome him.]
- 2nd MAN Robin, you should be careful. The Sheriff will be coming back soon to collect the taxes.
- ROBIN Don't worry about him. He hasn't managed to catch me yet and I don't intend to let him.
- 2nd WOMAN It's good to see you again, Robin.
- ROBIN And it's good to see all of you.
- MAN But where have you been these past few days?
- ROBIN Well, I heard a rumour that the Bishop of Nottingham has been making collections after the Sunday service that somehow end up in his vaults instead of being distributed amongst the poor. So when he made his annual visit to London yesterday, laden down with

moneybags, my gallant band of men and I decided to lighten his load!
[HE takes out money bags from inside his cloak and throws them to the CROWD.] Here my friends. Now you've no need to worry about buying food or paying taxes!

- 3rd WOMAN Oh Robin, how can we ever repay you?
- ROBIN Well I didn't come into town just to bring you this good fortune. I was hoping to see the fair Maid Marion. *[MARION enters up stage unseen by ROBIN. SHE "Shh's" the CROWD.]* I don't suppose any of you have seen her today?
- WOMAN And what would such a high born lady be doing with the likes of you?
- ROBIN Well she has shown some interest.....
- MAN Besides, she's the Sheriff's ward and you know what would happen if he found her walking and talking to an outlaw.
- ROBIN Outlaw indeed! Why, everyone knows he stole my lands and title after my father was killed fighting along side King Richard in the Holy Land.
- 2nd MAN That's all very well, but how does Marion feel about you?
- 2nd WOMAN Does she think you are brave?
- ROBIN Yes.
- 3rd WOMAN And bold?
- ROBIN Yes.
- 3rd MAN And fearless?
- ROBIN Yes.
- 4th MAN And trustworthy?
- ROBIN Yes.
- 4th WOMAN And handsome?
- ROBIN Yes.
- MARION And just a little bit conceited?
- ROBIN Yes! No! *[HE turns and sees MARION.]* Marion! *[ALL laugh.]* How long have you been there?
- MARION Long enough my brave, fearless, handsome outlaw.
- ROBIN Oh Marion, it is good to see you.
- MARION But Robin, you shouldn't come into town in broad daylight, you know how dangerous it is.

- ROBIN How can I stay away if it means not seeing you? Besides, the good people of Nottingham are always looking out for me.
- CROWD Of course we are, Robin. You can always count on us. Etc.
- ROBIN I've also been hatching a plan not only to get your taxes back, but also to win that archery contest on Saturday.
- MARION But Robin, I heard the Sheriff telling his henchmen that he has rigged the match so that he will win.
- ROBIN Has he indeed? Well, I'll just have to make sure his plans come to nought. Never fear my friends; with your help – and yours Marion, we will put an end to all this tyranny and injustice. *[ALL cheer.]*

SONG – ROBIN, MARION & CHORUS

[At the end of the number they ALL exit as the BABES – JACK and JILL – run on.]

- JACK Oh Jill look, we're finally in Nottingham.
- JILL But where's nurse? I knew we shouldn't have run on so fast. We've lost her.
- JACK *[Looking around.]* She'll be here in a minute. I heard her say she needed something to settle her stomach after that long coach ride from Lincoln. She's just popped into that chemist called 'The King's Arms'!
- JILL Jack, do you think we'll be all right living here in Nottingham with our uncle Silas? I feel rather afraid. He is the Sheriff you know.
- JACK I'm sure he'll be fine. After all, he's the only family we've got.
- [NURSE JEMIMA JOLLOP is heard talking off.]*
- NURSE *[Off.]* Oh, you are saucy! You really know how to flatter a girl!
- JILL Oh look, here comes nurse.
- JACK Quick, let's hide and surprise her. *[THEY hide up stage as NURSE JEMIMA JOLLOP backs out of the pub carrying a crate of beer. She is a typical Dame wearing an outrageous costume and sporting a large bosom.]*
- NURSE *[Talking to someone in the pub.]* Thank you for this. It'll do wonders for my equilibrium! I'll pop in tomorrow for a repeat prescription! *[SHE turns and looks round.]* Now where are those two Babes? Jack – Jill. *[SHE sees the audience.]* Oh hello. Have you come here specially to welcome me to Nottingham? Oh how nice. *[SHE puts the crate down*

centre.] Well let me introduce myself. I'm Nurse Jemima Jollop and I've just arrived here from Lincoln with my two charges, Jack and Jill. [SHE sits on the crate.] Mind you, I don't know where they've got to. They're always running off. You haven't seen them have you? [Audience reacts.] What? Where are they? [JACK and JILL creep down to R of NURSE.] Over here? [SHE looks left.] No they're not. [BABES move to L of her, as SHE looks right.] They're not over here, either. [The BABES jump down either side of her SHE falls back over the crate with her legs in the air. THEY help her up.] Oh you two! Fancy giving me a scare like that. You know I get palpitations! I shall have to have one of my tonics. [SHE takes a bottle out of the crate, knocks the top of and downs it in one. Sound effect of "glugging" noise. SHE then staggers L & R and finally back C. A sound effect accompanies this.] Oh that's better. I've fortified my follicles and bolstered my bu.....[SHE goes to adjust her bust then starts some exercises.]er, constitution! Now you two, have you found the castle and your uncle Silas yet?

- JACK No, we've been waiting for you.
- JILL It must be around here somewhere.
- NURSE Well why don't you go and look for it while I wait here? The journey has quite worn me out.
- JACK All right nurse. Shall we take your medicine with us?
- NURSE Oh that is kind of you dear. *[BABES pick up crate.]* But I'd better have another dose first, just to be on the safe side! *[SHE downs another bottle. Same effect.]* Oh that's revitalised my varicose veins! *[BABES exit with crate.]* Mind you I haven't felt right since we left home yesterday. As I said we had a terrible journey. We were reducing our carbon footprint you see. The Babes came on the local donkey, while I travelled by ass! It looked comfy on the donkey, but it certainly wasn't comfy on my a..... *[SHE claps her hand to her mouth.]* Mind you we girls have to keep ourselves looking our best, don't we? You never know when the man of your dreams is going to pop into your life. *[SHE starts to exit as the SHERIFF enters and they bump into each other.]* Oh girls look – it's – *[SHE says the name of a current pop or film star.]*
- SHERIFF Out of my way, you old hag!
- NURSE Oh you do have a way with words!
- SHERIFF Remove yourself from my presence, you fossilised old relic!
- NURSE Here, who are you calling old?
- SHERIFF Do you know who I am?
- NURSE No, but if you have a lie down I'm sure you'll remember.
- SHERIFF Who are you?

- NURSE I am Nurse Jemima Jollop, BBC, ITV, TSB and RAC! And spinster of this parish!
- SHERIFF Well I am Sir Silas Skinflint, The Sheriff of Nottingham.
- NURSE The Sheriff? Well what a co-in-ci-dence! I've been looking for you.
- SHERIFF [*Suspiciously.*] You have? Why?
- NURSE Well, until recently I was in the employ of your dear departed brother, Sir Bertram the Benevolent.
- SHERIFF Departed? Do you mean the old swine..... er – my brother is no longer with us?
- NURSE That's right dear. Popped his clogs a month ago. And as you are his only living relative, naturally he wanted his two children to come and live with you.
- SHERIFF Children??
- NURSE Yes. Such sweet little terrors..... er treasures they both are.
- SHERIFF But I hate children. I loathe and detest them. [*Audience reaction.*]
- NURSE Well dear, you're stuck with them. I have his last will and testament with me. [*From her vast apron pockets she pulls out various items including a frying pan, pair of bloomers and a bottle of gin. SHE gives them to the SHERIFF to hold.*] I'm sure it's here somewhere. [*SHE finds the will.*] Ah, here it is. [*SHE puts all the items back and hands the will to the SHERIFF.*]
- SHERIFF [*Reading quickly.*]..... and so my dear brother, I give into your safe keeping my two dear Babes and their trusted nurse – [*SHE beams at him and HE shudders and crosses away to the side of the stage.*] – each of the Babes will receive an annual allowance of 2,000 crowns! If anything unforeseen should happen to them, the money will of course come to you as my only surviving relative. [*HE can hardly contain his glee.*] I know I am leaving the Babes in safe hands and that you will give them a good home. Your loving brother, Bertram. [*Aside.*] Ooooh, just think, all that money and only two rag-a-muffin brats standing between it and me. But not for long. I shall have to devise a plan to get rid of them as soon as possible. But first I must gain the confidence of this weather beaten old witch. [*HE starts to cry loudly.*] Oh Bertram, my dear, dear brother. Gone, gone never to be seen again. Oh what am I to do? What am I to do?
- NURSE There, there dear. Don't upset yourself. Just come to nursie. She'll comfort you. [*SHE grabs his head and pushes it into her ample bosom.*] I know how it is, but just remember you've got me to turn to in your hour of need. [*HE comes up for air and SHE pulls him back.*] After all, if I can't give succour to someone like you at a time like this, I would be failing in my duties as a nurse!
- SHERIFF [*Pulling away.*] Madam please! I need assistance, not asphyxiation!

NURSE Oh I'm sorry, I was forgetting myself. Please forgive me your majesticals, but it has been so long since I've had a big, strong man to look after!

DUET – NURSE & SHERIFF

[At the end of the number NURSE exits blowing a kiss to the SHERIFF. HE shudders then looks around. Seeing HE is alone HE calls.]

SHERIFF Nell. Nell Nightshade where are you? I know you're around here somewhere. You're always lurking in the shadows.

NELL *[Off.]* Not lurking. Never lurking!

SHERIFF Come here. I want to talk to you.

[NELL enters. SHE is a cross between a witch and an old crone. Slightly wild in appearance and able to make mischief at any time. Around her neck she wears a necklace of bones which she often rubs her fingers over. It is a source of her power.]

NELL Hello, my dear. What do you want with old Nell? Something underhand no doubt. *[Fingering the necklace of bones.]* Or so the bones of my ancestors tell me. *[SHE laughs in his face and obviously has a problem with halitosis as the SHERIFF grimaces and covers his mouth and nose.]*

SHERIFF Ooh, your breath could strip paint. *[Pointing to the bone necklace.]* You still wear that disgusting old thing round your neck?

NELL It's the source of my power. Without it I wouldn't be able to help you with your nefarious deeds.

SHERIFF Hush. *[HE looks around to make sure no one is listening.]* I've just heard of the unfortunate death of my brother. But what is even more unfortunate is that I've been lumbered with his two children. The only good thing to come out of this is that they have an inheritance.

NELL And you want to get your hands on it.

SHERIFF How did you guess?

NELL I know you too well. They didn't call you slippery Silas for nothing at school. *[SHE laughs again in his face.]*

SHERIFF Ooooh! *[HE turns away, wafting the air with his hand.]* I need a plan to get rid of them – but it must look like an accident.

NELL *[Fingering HER necklace.]* I'm sure I could conjure up something – for the usual fee, of course.

SHERIFF Of course. But just remember that I granted you your freedom after the death of old Locksley.

NELL Yes. That old goody-goody banished me for witchcraft. But I soon showed him. I put a curse on him and his family. Now he's dead fighting alongside that other goody-goody King Richard, I'm waiting to get revenge on his son. *[SHE gets excited at the prospect of revenge on ROBIN.]*

SHERIFF Robin Hood! Another thorn in my side. But first things first. Think of a way to get rid of the Babes. Once that is done and I have their inheritance then we can turn out attention to that audacious outlaw.

NELL Very well, Silas.

SHERIFF It's 'My Lord Sheriff' when we're in public.

NELL Anything you say my dear.

SHERIFF Meet me in the castle's long corridor in two hours. And make sure no one sees you. *[HE looks one way and SHE looks another. THEY then turn to look at each other. NELL cackles in his face. HE reels.]* Have you never heard of Listerine?

NELL Are they a new pop group? *[SHE laughs again and HE exits quickly.]* So another dastardly deed the Sheriff wants doing. Right up my street! Since he became Sheriff I've made sure Silas finds my assistance invaluable. And in time we'll both put an end to Robin Hood and become the most powerful people in these parts. *[SHE cackles with laughter and exits left.]*

GREENWILLOW'S MUSIC

[Mysterious music is heard and GREENWILLOW, the SPRITE of Sherwood Forest enters R. SHE is fun loving creature who enjoys playing tricks on the SHERIFF and his men. SHE should be played as a character with a twinkle in her eye and a bit of a chatterbox.]

G/WILLOW Hello there. I thought it was about time I popped along and introduced myself. I'm Greenwillow and I live nearby in Sherwood Forest. I suppose you could call me a sort of woodland sprite. I keep a watchful eye over all the inhabitants of these parts and make sure life doesn't get too hard for them. Mind you, since the Sheriff came to power it's been an uphill struggle. He's so mean taking so much in taxes, the poor people of Nottingham have hardly enough to feed and clothe themselves. That's where Robin Hood comes in. He's such a good fellow with a kind heart. I make sure he knows when the rich landowners are travelling through the forest so he and his merry men can relieve them of some of their excess wealth. Well, if charity doesn't begin at home I make sure it begins in the forest! Oh, and it does make the Sheriff mad! *[SHE giggles.]* The landowners blame him for not doing enough to catch Robin. And now those two Babes have arrived. Did you just hear him plotting with that old Nell Nightshade, the witch of Sherwood Forest? I'm really going to have my work cut out keeping an eye on things. *[SHE thinks.]* Wait a minute. You're going to be here for a while, aren't you? Would you like to help me? *[Reaction.]* OK then. Now watch this. *[SHE makes a magic pass at the*

pot down right. A tree with leaves in the shape of ears grows up the pros.] There, what do you think of that? This is my very special magic listening tree. I'll tell you how it works. Whenever the Sheriff or Nell or even those two bumbling henchmen start planning anything evil, the tree hears them and starts to shake. When you see that happening, call out my name. Will you do that? *[Reaction.]* Just call out "Greenwillow" and I'll come running. Shall we have a practice? *[To the tree.]* Now tree, when I go off pretend you've heard something terrible. *[SHE exits. The tree shakes and the audience reacts. SHE re-enters.]* Did anything happen? *[Audience reacts again.]* You'll have to shout much louder. I could be the other side of Sherwood Forest. Let's try again. *[The business is repeated.]* Oh that's great. Now I must be off so I'll leave you to keep watch. Bye. *[SHE exits with a wave. FLOGGEM and WHIPPEM enter with a trick tax collecting box.]*

- WHIPPEM Now we've got to collect the taxes for the Sheriff. Go and knock on that door over there.
- FLOGGEM Right. *[HE knocks on a door and crosses back to WHIPPEM.]*
- WHIPPEM What are you doing?
- FLOGGEM I knocked on the door like you said.
- WHIPPEM But you're supposed to collect the tax. Now do it properly. *[FLOGGEM crosses to the door, knocks and a WOMAN opens it.]*
- WOMAN Yes?
- FLOGGEM I've come for the tax.
- WOMAN Here you are. *[SHE hands him a box of tacks.]*
- FLOGGEM Thank you very much. *[WOMAN shuts the door. FLOGGEM crosses back to WHIPPEM.]* That was easy.
- WHIPPEM What have you got there?
- FLOGGEM The tax!
- WHIPPEM Oooh! You're the next thing to an idiot!
- FLOGGEM In that case I'll move! *[HE takes a step away. WHIPPEM hits him and he falls.]*
- WHIPPEM How did I end up with you as a partner?
- FLOGGEM *[Getting up.]* I answered the ad in the newspaper!
- WHIPPEM I'll show you how it's done. *[HE goes around the stage banging on doors and calling.]* Come on you lot, it's tax collecting time. Anyone who does not pay up will spend a delightful few weeks as a guest of the Sheriff in the master dungeon with rack and en suite thumbscrew facilities! *[Groans all round as TOWNSPEOPLE enter.]* Come on, come on. Line up there and hand over your dosh! *[During the following, ROBIN enters wearing a cloak followed by MARION and the*

BABES. ROBIN crawls under the tax box and makes a hole in the bottom with his knife.]

- MAN This is an outrage.
- WOMAN We're going to starve to death. *[General moans.]*
- WHIPPEM *[To first MAN.]* Come on, pay up.
- MAN This is my life savings. *[HE gives a bag of money to WHIPPEM who throws it to FLOGGEM. FLOGGEM puts it in the box and it falls out of the bottom. ROBIN passes it to MARION and it gets passed back to the MAN. This is repeated with each bag.]*
- WHIPPEM Next.
- WOMAN It's all I'd put by for a rainy day.
- WHIPPEM Well look at it this way – with global warming you won't be needing it! *[Grabs money.]* Next. *[More groans as the taxes are collected.]* Come on, come on. Cough up! *[After the final bag has been collected and returned.]* And that's the lot. *[HE crosses back to FLOGGEM who slams the lid down.]* Now that wasn't too painful, was it? *[The SHERIFF enters.]*
- SHERIFF Has all the money been collected?
- FLOGGEM Yes, your *warship*.
- WHIPPEM All present and accounted for, your battleship!
- SHERIFF Good. Now I'll be able to get the new *[Latest pop group album title.]* er, I mean Prince John will be eternally grateful for your contribution to the treasury.
- FLOGGEM Not to mention *[Chancellors name.]*
- SHERIFF Now let me see how much there is. *[HE opens the box and peers in smiling.]* Just look at that. It's empty. *[HE does a double take.]* EMPTY!! Ahgg! Where's all the money? *[FLOGGEM and WHIPPEM look inside the box.]*
- WHIPPEM But it was there.
- FLOGGEM We collected it ourselves.
- CROWD Yes they did. We saw them. Etc.
- SHERIFF Collected it *for yourselves* you mean. Did you put it in the box or in your own pockets? *[HE searches them.]*
- FLOGGEM Oh don't. You're tickling me! *[HE giggles.]*
- WHIPPEM But your honour, we did collect it. From everyone.

- SHERIFF Then there is only one explanation. I've been robbed! And there is only one person audacious enough to do such a thing in broad daylight. The outlaw Robin Hood. He must be around here somewhere. *[HE draws his sword.]* Search everywhere until he is found.
- ROBIN *[Still with his disguise on.]* I think I saw someone running down that street.
- SHERIFF Quick men, after him. He must not escape this time. *[ALL THREE run for the exit and get trapped. The SHERIFF pulls FLOGGEM and WHIPPEM back and runs off. FLOGGEM and WHIPPEM fall over each other then run off. ALL laugh.]*
- ROBIN *[Taking off his disguise.]* Well, the Sheriff seems to have a few more problems to keep him busy.
- MAN All thanks to you, Robin. *[ALL agree.]*
- MARION Oh Robin, how I hate being in the castle with him.
- ROBIN Don't worry Marion. One day all this will change, you'll see. *[HE sees the BABES.]* But who have you got with you?
- MARION Two new friends. We just met at the castle. This is Jack and Jill. They've come all the way from Lincoln. *[To BABES.]* Jack, Jill. This is Robin Hood.
- JACK Wow! I've heard all about you. Can I be in your gang? *[ALL laugh. NURSE is heard calling off.]*
- NURSE Jack. Jill. Where are you? *[SHE enters and crosses down.]* Oh there you are. *[Looking at ROBIN.]* What are you doing with this strange man?
- MARION There's nothing strange about Robin.
- NURSE You're not standing where I'm standing.
- JILL This is Robin Hood.
- NURSE Oh really? Pleased to meet.....Robin Hood? The outlaw? Oh we'll all be murdered in our beds! Help! Police! *[SHE runs around the stage shouting.]* Call out the army! Send for the Marines!
- JACK It's all right Nurse. He's a good man and I'm going to be in his gang.
- NURSE What?? *[SHE faints into the arms of a MAN.]*
- MARION Nurse, there's nothing to worry about. Robin wouldn't harm anyone. He's a friend to us all. *[ALL agree.]*
- NURSE *[Coming round.]* Oh well, if you're sure. *[SHE curtseys.]* Pleased to meet you.

ROBIN *[With a bow and kisses her hand.]* Likewise I'm sure. *[NURSE looks up and swoons.]*
 NURSE Oh, I've come over all unnecessary. I think I need another tonic! *[SHE takes out a bottle from her apron pocket and downs it.]*

ROBIN And now good people, let's give our new friends a real Nottingham welcome.

[ALL cheer.]

COMPANY NUMBER – PART REPRISE OF OPENING CHORUS

[At the end of the number the lights fade and the scene changes to.....]

SCENE 2 THE LONG CORRIDOR IN NOTTINGHAM CASTLE

[Front cloth. NELL enters left.]

NELL I've consulted my spirits. Checked the alignment of the stars and called on all the mystic powers and black arts – *[SHE rubs her fingers over the necklace.]* – of my ancestors to help me. And I've got it! I know how to help Silas achieve his aims. Oh I'm good. I should be writing the horoscopes for – *[SHE names the local paper then throws HER head back and cackles just as the SHERIFF enters. HE gets another blast of HER bad breath.]*

SHERIFF Oooh! It's like living next to the sewage works! *[HE moves away.]*
 Well? What have you come up with?

NELL A plan. A wonderful plan.

SHERIFF What is it?

NELL You'll never guess. Never in a million years.

SHERIFF I don't want to guess. I want you to tell me.

NELL *[Giggling.]* It's brilliant.

SHERIFF *[Shouting.]* Tell me!!!

NELL *[Finger to mouth.]* Shhhh! You don't want everyone to hear.

SHERIFF *[Whispering.]* What's the plan?

NELL Put them in the West Wing.

SHERIFF Is that it? *[SHE Nods.]* What good will putting them in the West Wing do?

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