

The Rails to Ruin
or
When Butter Turns to Gold

Book by Peter Welkin

Music by Ron Barnett

Lyrics by Randi Wolfe

(Draft Version 7.0, September 30, 2014)

Characters

(4 Men, 2 Women)

Constance Goodwin: mid-20's, pretty, blond, appears charming and buoyant even on top of her constant litany of woes. She's a hard worker and dedicated to preserving her farm, whatever the cost. She is unintentionally funny at times.

Helena Goodwin: Constance's cousin, mid-20's, early 30's a big-boned farm girl who wears loose fitting slacks and is built for the task of hauling large crates of vegetables, apples, melons, corn, etc. She's snappy and sarcastic and always a bit confused by Constance's interpretation of her.

Friederich von Fouler*: late 40's/early 50's distinguished looking with salt-n-pepper hair and a large moustache, walking stick in hand. His manner is typically oily, but can be overly classy and exaggerated to impress his prey as needed. He dresses in silky blacks.

Simon Deludabel*: Fouler's protégé, mid-30's and a hapless, often tipsy, bumbling, but romantic buffoon. Simon is easily distracted, and dreams of the circus. Simon dresses similarly to Fouler.

(*When conversing with each other they speak with a New York or east coast accents, but when speaking with other characters they put on foreign accents as needed.)

Jack Strongfellow: mid-30's, handsome, boyish but the picture of virility, charming good manners and appropriateness. He is dressed simply but with some sense of style. He is always ready to treat a stranger like family. He speaks with an Eastern Appalachian or Virginia accent.

Narrator/Man: This role serves many different purposes. Narrator is the audience's liaison throughout the story. Man covers the multiple smaller roles throughout, each as distinctly different characters.

Setting

Lake Mills, (Illinois Territory, soon to be Wisconsin); the action moves between the Goodwin's "store/produce stand" located just at the edge of the growing town of Lake Mills, the bank, the telegraph office, the brewery, the tavern, and other local Lake Mills landmarks.

Time

Late Summer of 1847

VOCAL RANGES (TO BE REPLACED BY
RON'S VERSION OF THIS PAGE)

Constance Goodwin:

Helena Goodwin:

Friederich von Fouler:

Simon Deludabel:

Jack Strongfellow:

Man:

PROLOGUE

1. Melodrama, Melodrama

NARRATOR

MELODRAMA, MELODRAMA
FILLED WITH TRAGEDY AND TRAUMA
CHARACTERS THAT JUMP RIGHT OFF THE PAGE
IMMINENT DISASTER AS THE PLOT MOVES EVER FASTER
STORY LINES THAT INSTANTLY ENGAGE
MAKES YOU WISH THAT YOU COULD BE ON STAGE

NARRATOR

Good evening, ladies and gentleman, and welcome to the show! We're so happy that you could join us tonight. Alright, show of hands, how many of you have ever seen a real live Melodrama before? *(Small numbers...Oh, then, we've got our work cut out for us! But, we'll make sure that every one of you understands how to play your role in the show. Alternately, for large numbers...that's fantastic, but we'll still need to make sure you all understand how it works and the role you get to play. Ad lib as needed.)*

Now, there are some Melodrama characters that you need to know about, and more importantly, how you need to respond to them. First, there is the mean, nasty, *(Villain music cue begins as Villain enters.)* ornery ol' villain, and I bet that you already know what you'd like to do to him. *(Audience responds.)* That's right, BOOOO, and HISSSSSSS.

VILLAIN

I'M THE VILLAIN, I'M ALL BAD
I'M A GREEDY, NASTY CAD
I'LL STOP AT NOTHING TO GET MY WAY
TRY TO CROSS ME, YOU'LL RUE THE DAY.

(Villain laughs meanly and exits. Audience responds.)

NARRATOR

That was great! I think we just uncovered some anger management issues in this section. So, any time you see or hear the villain do something mean or nasty you have every right to let him have it. Let's give that another try. *(Villain reappears and Narrator encourages audience further. Ad lib as needed.)* *(Audience responds.)*

(Villain exits.)

NARRATOR

Next is our hero. When the hero saves the day, or when he's just done a particularly good deed, or even if he just strikes an heroic pose like this (Hero enters on cue to demonstrate.) (Hero music cue begins as Hero enters.) then let him know how much you approve by giving him a great big cheer...hip hip Horaaaay!

(Audience responds.)

HERO

EVERY STORY HAS A HERO
HANDSOME, BRAVE AND STRONG
UNAFRAID OF DANGER
UNAFRAID OF RIGHTING WRONG
I'M THE STUFF OF DREAMS COME TRUE
I'LL SAVE THE DAY AS IF ON CUE
THAT'S WHAT HEROES DO.

(Hero poses.)

NARRATOR

One more time for our Hero! Hip...Hip...Hooray! He'll definitely appreciate all the help he can get!

(Hero exits.)

And last, but certainly not least, our heroine. (Heroine music cue begins as Heroine enters.) She's as innocent as the freshly fallen snow and her tragic plight makes us go...Aaaaaaaw!

(Audience responds.)

HEROINE

THE HEROINE - CHASTE AND PURE
BEAUTIFUL AND A BIT DEMURE
ALWAYS ON THE LOOKOUT FOR MY MR. RIGHT
BET YOUR BOTTOM DOLLAR THAT IT'S LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT.

(Heroine strikes a classic DelSartean pose.)

NARRATOR

(encouraging audience as needed) Awww... Well done, well done! Isn't she just the picture of innocent perfection? (Audience may respond with another Awww.)

(Villain re-enters and heads toward Heroine, but speaks to the audience directly.)

VILLAIN

(Nastily) She'll be anything but perfect when I'm through with her! (Audience boos and hisses.)

(Hero re-enters and blocks Villain's from reaching Heroine and strikes Heroic pose.)

HERO

(Heroically) Stay away from her you vile villain! (Audience cheers.)

HEROINE

(Sweetly) Oh, thank you for protecting me, kind sir. (They embrace. Audience sighs.)

NARRATOR

By golly, I think they've got it!

(Simon and Helena enter with showbiz enthusiasm ala classic vaudeville.)

SIDEKICKS (SIMON AND HELENA)

WE ARE THE SIDEKICKS
WE OFFER COMIC RELIEF
AND IN THIS MELODRAMA MENU
WE'RE THE COMIC GROUND BEEF, HEY!

NARRATOR

No, no, no, No! Sidekicks don't get their own songs. I mean, maybe some stylish musical comebacks or the odd line of harmony, but absolutely no solos! And, no singing about your innermost thoughts either! You're only here to support the main characters...got it?

SIDEKICKS (SIMON AND HELENA)

But...

NARRATOR

Nope!

SIDEKICKS (SIMON AND HELENA)

But...

NARRATOR

Sorry, that's showbiz kids!

(Hero, Heroine, and Villain all step out of character and behave as actors.)

VILLAIN (AS ACTOR)

(to Simon) Yeah, and don't let me catch you trying on my costumes again either!

HEROINE (AS ACTOR)

(to Helena) That goes double for you, missy!

HERO (AS ACTOR)

(to Narrator) And that goes triple for...wait...I don't have a sidekick...so...(Hero strikes an heroic pose. It's what he does whenever he doesn't know what else to do.)

(Narrator encourages audience to cheer for the Hero, just because. The sidekicks, Simon and Helena, slink grumpily offstage, for now.)

HERO

(to Narrator) And, what about you, Mr. MC/Narrator?

NARRATOR

You'll see me popping up throughout the show in mostly minor roles, coaching our audience, and sometimes the actors, if things aren't going well.

HERO, HEROINE, VILLAIN (AD LIBS)

Now, wait a minute. What? Not going well?!? What's that supposed to mean?

NARRATOR

Now, now, don't get your corsets in a twist.

VILLAIN (AS ACTOR)

I told you before, this is NOT a corset, it's Manx...you know, Spanx for men!

NARRATOR

I'm just here to help our audience and make sure everything goes smoothly. Now, places please!

(Hero, Heroine, and Villain exit, or return to their places for the final part of the opening song, without hearing the Narrator's aside.)

NARRATOR

(aside) Actors! They're sooooo sensitive. Back to business, our story is set in 1847 in Lake Mills of the Illinois Territory soon to become Wisconsin ('On Wisconsin' music cue) Oh yeah...that kind of thing is gonna happen a lot too. Now, be sure to participate so you can have a great time! Alrighty then, I think we're ready to wrap this intro up. Hit it maestro!

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THAT IT'S LOVE AT FIRST
SIGHT.

NARRATOR

MELODRAMA, MELODRAMA
FILLED WITH TRAGEDY AND TRAUMA

HERO & HEROINE

FILLED WITH LOVE THAT SETS YOUR HEART AGLOW

VILLAIN

OTHERS MAY BE DREAMING
BUT I'M PLOTTING AND I'M SCHEMING

NARRATOR

AUDIENCE THAT'S ALWAYS IN THE KNOW

HERO AND HEROINE

NOW IT'S TIME...

VILLAIN

YES, IT'S TIME...
(Simon and Helena poke their heads in from
the sides of the stage.)

SIDEKICKS (SIMON AND HELENA)

FIN'LLY TIME...

ALL

TO GET ON WITH THE SHOW