1963

Shoemaker's dilemma| Operetta in one act. Based on a story by Maurus Jokai. Music, lyrics, and dialogue by Richards H. Merley

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THE SHOEMAKER'S DILEMMA

OPERETTA in ONE ACT

Based on a story by MAURUS JOKAI

Music, Lyrics, and Dialogue by RICHARDS H. MERLEY;

B.A. Montana State University, 1950

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Music

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY

1963

Approved by:

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Chairman, Board of Examiners

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Dean, Graduate School

AUG 29 1963
Date
THE SHOEMAKER'S DILEMMA

OPERA in

ONE ACT

Based on a story by MAURUS JOKAI

Music, Lyrics, and Dialogue by RICHARDS H. MERLEY
The Characters

SHOEMAKER JOHN (The patient father, a widower.)

ALEX (Big brother. He likes Gretchen.)

SUZY (A six-year old, bubbly, effervescent. She skips.)

JOHN (The second biggest brother. The student.)

MARY (Little sister—about four. A tattle-tale.)

TEENY (Little brother—about three. A little rascal, wee-high-pitched voice, says "wittle" for "little").

FERENCO (A little older—about five. Paul's shadow.)

PAUL (A seven-year old, cut-up.)

JOSEPH (An eight-year old, puggy, happy, agreeable. He stutters.)

TOUGHY (A doll to represent a baby. Someone with a funny baby voice speaks for him from backstage.)

GRETCHEN (A 15-17 year-old young lady from next door, out of school, marriageable. She likes Alex.)

FIRST CAROLER

SECOND CAROLER

CAROLER STRIO OR OTHER GROUP OR SOLOIST

HIS EXCELLENCY (A rich bachelor about the same age as Shoemaker John. He wears a waxed mustache which he continually twirls. He is not really bad, just lonesome and unhappy.)

CAROLERS (The chorus.)
Costumes

All except HIS EXCELLENCY should be in Hungarian peasant dress of the late 1800's or early 1900's. Colorful bandanas, laced vestcotts, black, long stockings, white blouses with puffed short sleeves, and long black skirts will costume the girls and women. Vests, caps, long coats, black stockings, high shoes or boots, pants tucked into the long stockings to give a knicker effect for the younger boys, brightly colored, long-sleeved shirts, suit vests and bow or no ties lend a Hungarian effect to the men and boys.
Personal Properties

Toughy, a large doll
Hair ribbon
Broken shoe string
Unbroken shoe string
Large Arithmetic for Suzy
Arithmetic book for Alex
Pillows and bed clothes or bed rolls up to eight
3 cereal bowls and spoons
Paper and scissors for "cut-outs"
Old fashioned rocking crib
Shoes and hammer for cobbler's bench, shiney boots for His Excellency.
Shoes for Mary with laces tied together
Wash pan, bucket of water for washing face and dishes
Sack of washers for 1,000 florins
Ragged scarf
THE SHOEMAKER'S DILEMMA

Based on a Story by Maurus Jokai
Words and Music
Dialogue by Richards H. Merley
Richards H. Merley

NO. 1, OVERTURE

ACT I

The curtain opens to show a shoemaker's house in Hungary. It is the
day before Christmas. The room is furnished in a rough-hewn manner,
cleanly but showing need of the care of a woman. Shoemaker John's
wife passed-away about a year ago. As the curtain rises the shoemaker
and his nine children are getting ready to start the day. The smallest
is a large doll that usually perches on Shoemaker John's hip. About
one-fourth of stage at right is behind a scrim. It is lighted to
show His Excellency's actions and reactions as having nothing else to
do. He spends a good deal of his time "eavesdropping".

NO. 2, FOR IT'S A FINE DAY
(Family)

ALL:
For it's a fine day, the day before Christmas.
A really great day, so full of good cheer.
With candles bright and gay, the day before Christmas.
It's Santa's big day. Happy children we hear.
Busy people running all around, up and down the town,
Getting gifts for all.
People doing things, the nicest little things,
The Devil's riding for a fall!
For it's a fine day, the day before Christmas.
The day when ev-'ryone's aglow like me and you.

While the song is being sung, members of the family are dressing, washing-
up, and doing other early morning chores. SUZY is hunting her hair ribbon.
JOHN, JR., breaks and tries to tie his shoestring. ALEX is turning
everything upside-down looking for his arithmetic book. JOSEPH AND TEENY
are carefully rolling-up beds from the floor, one remaining with Alex's
arithmetic under it's pillow. PAUL, FERENC, and MARY are eating cereal
for breakfast. At the end of the first time through the song, there is a
tremendous "banging" on the wall.
HIS EXCELLENCY: Lights up in skrim area.

Please, stop that infernal singing!

Light down. ALL giggle smugly and sing the second time though louder just to spite HIS EXCELLENCY. After the song and applause, ALL wait and wonder if they will hear from HIS EXCELLENCY again. Certain he will not react, the action starts as if someone had turned on the movie projector.

SUZY: Skips to SHOEMAKER JOHN. Papa, where's my hair ribbon?

JOHN: Moving toward PAPA and holding up the broken shoelace.

Look at my shoestring, Papa.

ALEX: Loudly and angrily. Oh, where is my arithmetic book?

SHOEMAKER JOHN: With TOUGHY perched on one hip and preparing breakfast.

Suzy, the hair ribbon is over the foot of my bed.

SUZY skips to bed and finds it.

John, there's a spare shoelace in the top drawer of my bench and Alex, your arithmetic book is under your pillow. If you'll remember, you said you were going to put it there so you could soak up some knowledge by sleeping on it.

ALEX: Jokingly covers his face as if embarrassed. By golly, you're right. Gets and holds up book. I'll just leave it there another night. ALL laugh.

SHOEMAKER JOHN: To ALEX. Now put it in your book cabinet so it'll be there when school starts again after Christmas. Paul and Ferenc, hurry with your cereal and help Mary with her's! He puts TOUGHY in crib USC in front of
workbench. Let's all get our breakfasts inside us.
John, I want you and Alex to get the Christmas tree.
We have so little money that you will have to cut
one this year.

SUZY: Kissing PAPA enthusiastically on the cheek.
Thanks for helping me find my hair ribbon.
MARY reaches down from her place at the table to get
her shoes. She tries to put them on. She has
trouble because the strings are tied together. SUZY
giggles at MARY'S trouble. Oh, that rascal, Teeny
has tied the strings together again. SUZY undoes them
glaring at TEENY who runs behind ALEX. TEENY now
goes to wash pan.

MARY: Oh, thank you, Suzy, you're the prettiest, sweetest
sister, a little girl could have.

SUZY: You stop all that flattery. She giggles and bubbles.
I already said I'd help you. Puts shoes on MARY.

TEENY: Blubs and gurggles from the wash pan. Help, dis wittle
fewo is dwoonding! Save him!

ALEX: Jumping to the rescue. Coming, little one. Try to
keep your head above water until I get there. Lifts
him out of pen. We have no barrel, so—looks about
playfully -- I'll throw him over this chair. TEENY is
thrown over a chair face down and giggles as ALEX
pretend to revive him.
TEENY: Hewp, hewp, now somebody better save me from dis
great, big bone cwusher!

ALEX: Ah, Teeny, I was just spoofing. Besides you're
making too much noise. You'll bother "Old Money
Bags", next door.

TEENY: Laughing. I know you were onwy spoofing, Awex.
Besides who cares 'bout bothwing "Old Money Bags".
He's just a hesitates gwouch! Wiggles loose and
runs behind SHOEMAKER JOHN and sticks his tongue
out at ALEX. SHOEMAKER JOHN does not see this.

MARY
His Excellency used to be kind. He even sang!

Coming over and grabbing her father's arm. Papa,
now Teeny's sticking his tongue out at Alex.

Sing-song Teeny's sticking his tongue out. Teeny's
sticking his tongue out. Ya, ya, ya-ya,ya.

SHOEMAKER JOHN: Catching MARY and TEENY. Today is the day before
Christmas. Let's get along together. Starting
JOHN and ALEX toward the coat rack. Go along John
and Alex, you must get that Christmas tree.

Christmas will soon be upon us.

JOSEPH: Putting his hand on his father's shoulder.

Before they go, could we get Alex to sing us that
new song he said he learned in school.

SHOEMAKER JOHN: Looks at clock. I think there's time.

ALEX: He wants to sing but wants to be coaxed. I think
we'd better get the tree. He makes a motion toward the coat rack.

MARY: Stops him and turns him toward front center. I want to hear it, too. She shakes her finger in his face. If you don't sing it and right now, I'll tell your girl friend, Gretchen, on you.

ALEX: Jokingly. Oh Heaven forbid, not that. He pushes her finger away and "gives-in".

MUSIC CUE: NO. 3, THE DAY BEFORE CHRISTMAS

Well, the song is called, "The Day Before Christmas" and it goes like this.

NO. 3, THE DAY BEFORE CHRISTMAS (ALEX's solo)

While the song is being sung, the family groups around ALEX down stage center. As they all end the song, a wall rap is heard.

It's the day before Christmas. We're busy as bees And we're happy just thinking what Christmas will bring.

It's time for rejoicing when ev-'ryone's king. What a jolly warm feeling it brings.

For the neighbors from next door come to our house o'er.

It's Christmas time. We're all feeling gen'rous, you see.

We love to hear the jingle bells, as the laughter swells, Sleighing along. My singing's not good but it's loud.
ALL: Spoken We agree!

ALEX: Spoken All right, then help me!

ALL: It's the day before Christmas. Happiness is the thing
And we're happy just thinking what Christmas will bring!

HIS EXCELLENCY: Skrim flood up. Quiet!! Flood down. All look
guilty, cringe. TEENY jumps into ALEX'S arms. ALL
wait for more. It doesn't come. They relax.

ALL: Together. That's a fine song, Alex!
It must be fun at school.
Good for you, Alex.
You'll have to teach us all that one, all the way
through.
All the above and other appropriate thoughts that
come to mind are given simultaneously by Alex's
audience.

SHOEMAKER JOHN: Christmas is almost upon us. I certainly hope that
you will not expect your papa to have something new
and different for all of you. I doubt that even San
Niklos* can find our house this year. He pauses and
sees the children's faces about to sag; then, changes
the subject. Well, it's off to get the tree. Line-up
everyone! They ALL form a line from PAPA, who picks
up TOUGHY, nearest the door, to TEENY, the smallest.

*San Niklos (Neek-losh) - Saint Nicholas, also called Father
Christmas in Hungary.
JOHN and ALEX kiss or hug each other as they leave. They tickle TOUGHY as they leave. TOUGHY'S OFF-STAGE VOICE giggles and coos humorously. SUZY tries to go, too, but PAPA grabs her as she is about to go out the door. Suzy, you do the breakfast dishes, to be ready when Gretchen comes to stay with you.

SUZY: Sure, Papa. Then she'll have time to teach me more arithmetic.

SHOEMAKER JOHN: Mary, get Teeny and start with the dusting.

MARY: Aw, gee whiz, Paul doesn't have to do any work.

SHOEMAKER JOHN: HE shushes MARY. I'll tend to him in a minute!

FERENC: What can Paul and me do, Papa? Arm in arm they report for duty.

SHOEMAKER JOHN: That's Paul and I, Ferenc!

FERENC: Not understanding that his language is being corrected. No, no, Papa, you're too busy. It's Paul and Me!!

SHOEMAKER JOHN: Shaking his head and shrugging his shoulders, I give-up! Why not make some "cut-outs"? They get scissors and paper enthusiastically. I'll put the "Toughy" down and get to work on the boots for His Excellency that lives next door. He's such a rich man with his nine rooms. Such a life he must have! He has nine rooms and I have nine children. He feels his trouser leg on the side that TOUGHY is perched.

*"Cut-outs" - very popular children's pastime in this part of Europe. Paper folded and cut into snowflakes will do nicely.*
Oh, oh, it's time for a "change", eh Toughy. If it isn't one thing, it's two.

**MUSIC CUE:**

*NO. 4. OH, MY GOOD LORD HOW THOU BLESSED ME WITH CHILDREN ALL OVER THE PLACE*

**SHOEMAKER JOHN** changes TOUGHY as he sings.

Oh, my good Lord how thou blessed me with Children all over the place.

I hammer and sweat 'till real late at night to keep a smile on each face.

They're not difficult children to handle.

They're as healthy and tough as can be.

If their mother still lived, it'd be as easy as pie,

But it's really a job for me.

It's quite a problem just to keep them all

In shoes and clothes.

When they have snifflies, it gets real tiring

Running from nose to nose.

(Skrim flood up) HIS EXCELLENCY bangs the wall and throws a tantrum. ALL look at the wall.

(Spoken) God in Heaven, I wish "Old Money Bags" would let us alone. He seems to get more irritable each passing day. Worriedly finishes song.

Oh, my good Lord how thou blessed me with Children all over the place.

We wish Mama were here, but since she's not,

Then we'll lick the problems we face.
PAUL: Putting his arm around PAPA after the song. Don't worry Papa, we'll have a fine Christmas as long as we're all well and together.

SUZY: That's right, Paul. We all know that Papa has to do as much as two parents. SUZY crosses to take TOUGHY from PAPA. She laughs. Here, let me hold "Cuttums" awhile.

SHOEMAKER JOHN: You children certainly are thoughtful. I wonder what makes His Excellency such a grouch? When he was younger he used to sing and dance. He could enjoy himself just like anyone else. But now he has no wife, no children. HE pats PAUL and SUZY. All he does is count his money and get angry at those that seem to be happy. Oh well, now it's time to do my errands. I have shoes to deliver and, I hope, a little money to collect. If I can collect some money, I can get some badly needed supplies.

Music for OH, MY GOOD LORD HOW THOU BLESSED ME begins softly. You older children take care of the younger tots. I wonder what has happened to Gretchen? She's always so prompt. A knock at the door. Oh, good, this must be Gretchen, now. Crosses and opens door. It is, it's Gretchen. Come in! You're just in the nick of time.

GRETCHE:N: Entering and moving DSC, TEENY hangs up her coat. She gives TOUGHY a big hug as she takes him from SUZY.
I'm sorry to be late. I was helping Mama make Cholupci.* She looks about her for ALEX. I made the levis* myself today.

SHOEMAKER JOHN: With a gleam in his eye. Alex went with John to get a Christmas tree. GRETCHEN turns away embarrassed. They all laugh. Well, bye, bye, everyone. Line-up!

They line-up in the same order as they used for the older boy's leaving.

GRETCHEN and TOUGHY in the place that PAPA had.

PAPA kisses each with general ad libbing of 
"good-byes", MUSIC OUT.

TOUGHY: Cries as PAPA leaves.

GRETCHEN: Jiggles and pats TOUGHY. There, there little one.

Gretchen will sing to you. The other children bring a rocker downstage center for GRETCHEN then sit about expecting the song. As she starts to sing TOUGHY'S cry turns to a whimper and then to a coo as the lights all go down and a blue spot illum inates the scene.

NO. 5. BLESSED BE THE BIRTH (Traditional Hungarian) (GRETCHEN'S solo)

GRETCHEN sings TOUGHY to sleep as the others relax and cuddle about her.

Bless'd be the birth of God our Lord and Master.

Let us intone the greeting of the angels

*Cholupci - (Holoopchee*) - ground meat cooked in cabbage leaves.

*Levis - (Levish) - soup.
Which long ago at Bethlehem was spoken,
There in the pasture.
He whom of yore the holy fathers promised.
He who the wise men longed to see and welcome.
He of whose birth the prophets sang their praises.
Is now among us.
O, God, Eternal, Trinity in Glory.
Heavenly joy come down to us, Thy creatures.
Let every sorrow cease among the living.
All be rejoicing.

As song ends, all are asleep except SUZY who may sing the harmony part of the song. Piano continues music softly as GRETCHEN and SUZY tiptoe to table to begin arithmetic lesson. Just as they open a large book labeled plainly ARITHMETIC, a loud knock at the door. ALL start. MUSIC OUT. STAGE LIGHTS UP.

GRETCHEN: Paul and Ferenc, see who is at the door. They seem afraid, so she shrugs and goes herself. She slowly and cautiously opens the door. ALL draw back when they see HIS EXCELLENCY, who explodes.

HIS EXCELLENCY: Storms in. I've come to ask for the thousandth time that you stop your blasted singing!

GRETCHEN: Trying to protect her wards. But, sir, we were very quiet with that last song.

HIS EXCELLENCY: Aside. That's true, it was very soft—and pretty, too. But why should they be so happy and content over here when I'm so lonely and miserable next door?
To GRETCHEL Quiet or not, it bothered me. Your singing must stop.

JOSEPH: He has mustered his courage and steps toward HIS EXCELLENCY. W--wh—we'll t-t-t-try t-t-to s-s-st-stop our s-s-s-sing-g-g-ging, s-s-s-sir.

HIS EXCELLENCY: His sternness is melting and he is somewhat amused with the stuttering. Well, young man, it had better be more than a try. It better stop or I'll take action. He slams the door as he leaves.

TOUGHY cries. GRETCHEL picks him up to console him.

ALL look relieved. Loud knock. ALL cringe again.

GRETCHEL: Paul and Ferenc, see who is at the door!

PAUL and FERENC: Very hesitantly tiptoes to door, open it a crack; then swing it open. Their voices rise at each new discovery. It's Papa---and John---and Alex---and the----Christmas Tree! Everbody line-up! ALL line-up in the usual position as PAPA enters followed by JOHN, ALEX, and the tree. There is lots of hugging and kissing. GRETCHEL is last in line DSL and ALEX almost kisses her. They are both embarrassed and ALL laugh jokingly.

SHOEMAKER JOHN: Diverting the attention from ALEX and GRETCHEL, well, Children! Slowly One, two, three, four----are you all here?

ALEX: Five, six, seven, eight. He looks up and down the line. He has forgotten to count himself. He discovers himself.
Points to himself triumphantly. Nine!! Yes, we're all here and Gretchen, too, bless her soul. All laugh and snicker.

GRETCHEN: Embarrassed. And I must get home to my family for our Christmas eve.

ALEX: Getting her coat and helping her on with it. May I walk you home? CAROLERS begin to sing SILENT NIGHT softly offstage.

GRETCHEN: No, I'll be all right, it's just next door. Motions with her arm and goes to the door. Leaving Merry Christmas, everyone.

ALL: Merry Christmas, Gretchen!

GRETCHEN: CAROLERS suddenly louder as she opens the door to leave. MERRY CHRISTMAS is right, you've carolers outside your door! This must be very loud to be heard.

SHOEMAKER JOHN: ALL hurry excitedly to the door, almost knocking GRETCHEN down. You're right. To CAROLERS. Come on, come in! Isn't this a wonderful surprise.

CAROLERS enter and continue song until the end.

PAUL: Gee whiz, that was good. Do you know anymore?

THE FAMILY: Yes, that was just wonderful.

What will the next one be?

Please, sing us another.

SHOEMAKER JOHN: Shushing ALL. John, run outside to see whether His Excellency's light is on?

JOHN: Sure Papa. He goes.
SHOE MAKER JOHN: To CAROLERS. Our Landlord doesn't like singing and has threatened to throw us out if he catches us again.

CAROLERS: Generally disappointed ad lib.

JOHN: Returns happily: All's well! His apartment is dark.

SHOE MAKER JOHN: Then, could we have another song from the group?

FIRST CAROLER: Sure, we know some more, but you ought to hear ___________________________ Here insert the name or names of a soloist or ensemble to sing a special number sing ___________________________. Even a dance could be inserted here.

CAROLERS: General comments of agreement.

SPECIAL NUMBER: Oh well, all right, we'll I'll do it.

ALL: General comments of agreement as the introduction for the special number is given.

ALL: Following the special number, much approval by the entire cast.

SECOND CAROLER: Now we are warm and must be going on our way.

THE FAMILY: All at once as above. It was nice of you to include us on your rounds.

Merry Christmas!

Your singing is just what we needed to make our evening complete.

Etc.

CAROLERS: Leaving amid general ad libbing. We must be going.

May the New Year treat you well.
We've got to hurry so we can get home to our families for Christmas Eve.

Etc.

The CAROLERS may sing JINGLE BELLS or some other song as they depart. This should fade out almost as soon as the door closes behind the last CAROLER.

LAST CAROLER: Returning Your Landlord's back. His light's on.

SHOEMAKER JOHN: Thank you for the warning. LAST CAROLER exits.

He closes the door after the LAST CAROLER leaves.

Whistles Whew, so this is Christmas Eve! A holiday, A very glad holiday. Tonight we do not work. We rejoice.

General rejoicing to the point of almost tearing the house down.

SHOEMAKER JOHN: Wait now! Whoa! All quiet down quickly as they know something of interest is about to happen.

Let's see if I can teach you that beautiful song I know. It's a very pretty song. I have saved it to give to you as a Christmas present. I'll sing softly so it doesn't bother His Excellency.

ALL: General ad libs of the "Oh" and "Ah" variety. JOSEPH brings the crib with TOUGHY in it to the center of the group which now gathers DSC.

SHOEMAKER JOHN: That's a good fellow, Joseph. Just put the crib here so I can rock it once in a while. Mary and Teeny, bring the little chairs and sit on each side of me. Now the rest of you arrange yourselves from the biggest over here to the smallest over there. Motions behind him and to his right to the smallest over there. Motions behind him and to his left.
Now, that's just fine! No, wait! John and Alex put the tree in its base and begin trimming it.

They do so. Now for that new song. I'll sing it through first, then you join in.

MUSIC CUE: NO. 6. IT HAPPENED IN BETHLEHEM

It happened in Bethlehem so long ago.
Midst the lowing of cattle and falling of snow.
'Twas the birth of our Savior, the Son of our God.
He'd been born to show us the path to be trod.
Oh I love you Lord Jesus. You're gentle and kind.
You give all who believe peace of mind.
It happened in Bethlehem so long ago.
With his banner held high, on we go!

As the second chorus of this tune is sung more and more join in until it becomes loud and not always too good. The curtain closes slowly and HIS EXCELLENCY steps through scrim and enters with it to a center position in front of the traveler. He is beginning to boil because he is rich and miserable and they are poor and happy. He paces and fumes. A piano backstage takes over for the singers.

HIS EXCELLENCY: Loudily with increasing anger Oh, my Lord, in Heaven, what is going on next door? Why should they be so joyous? I have much money; they have none. I spend sleepless night after sleepless night on a soft spring bed and they lie on the floor and snore like pachyderms. I have neither wife nor children to bother me, yet this shoemaker is both father and mother to nine children he can barely afford and he seems quite
thankful for his lot in life. Musing to himself.

It must be nice to have the love of all those children. He softens for a moment, then anger returns. I must do something to stop it. Ah, ha, I'm beginning to get an idea.

HIS EXCELLENCY returns to his area as the curtain opens. The singing has continued during all the above discourse. He knocks at the door interrupting the song and ALL draw back except SHOEMAKER JOHN, who goes to the door, opens it and gives a dismayed bow to HIS EXCELLENCY as he enters.

HIS EXCELLENCY: In a sugary sweet style Merry Christmas, my dear Shoemaker!

SHOEMAKER JOHN: Recovering his composure At your service, Your Excellency. Do you wish to get you patent leather boots?

HIS EXCELLENCY: Craftily That isn't why I came. How very many children you have!

SHOEMAKER JOHN: Thumbs in lapels and strutting about Indeed I have, Your Excellency—little ones and big ones. Quite a few mouths to feed!

HIS EXCELLENCY: Sarcastically aside to the audience And many more when they sing! Clears throat, realizing what he has said Look here, Master John—I'd like to do you a favor. Thoughtfully and slyly Give me one of your children. I'll adopt him, educate him as my own son, take him traveling abroad with me, and make him into a gentleman. One day he'll be able to help the rest of you.
SHEMAKER JOHN: Completely taken in. Why, of course, you may have one! What great, good fortune! Why, how could I refuse such a generous offer? Now, let me see. Which one shall it be?

MUSIC CUE: NO. 7. THE CHOOSING SONG
(SHEMAKER JOHN'S solo)

During the song, the children, fearful of being chosen, get behind their father.

SHEMAKER JOHN: This one here is Alex. No, I couldn't let him go. He's a very splendid student. He'll be a priest, you know.
The next one is a lovely girl. To me she's like a pearl. She'll make a stately lady, but you wouldn't want a girl.
Next comes little Ferenc. He's such a little twirp, but I couldn't do without him. He helps me with my work.
Now, then, the next in line is our little brother, John. He's the one that bears my name, so I couldn't pass him on.
Now Joseph looks like his mother and Mary's a little girl, too.
And Toughy and Teeny are all I have left.
Oh, what is this poor man to do?

PAUL: Spoken. How about me, Papa?

SHEMAKER JOHN: Sings. My goodness, in my dither, I've forgotten little Paul, but he was Mother's fav'rite. He's most precious of them all.
HIS EXCELLENCY: Spoken. Hurry, my dear shoemaker, I can't wait all day for you to make-up your mind.

SHOEMAKER JOHN: Sings. Your Excellency, I've tried them all.
There's Joe and John and Paul. There's little Mary and Suzy, little ladies one and all.
But you don't want little ladies. This is a terrible fix.
I can't give you my other boys, Teeny, Ferenc, or Alex.
I'll tell you what I'll do, I'll let the children choose.

Who wants to be a gentleman of style, to study, vacation, and cruise?
Come now! Speak up! Who wants to go! It's a very fine gesture he's making you know!

SHOEMAKER JOHN is overcome with the situation. He kneels down and gathers as many as possible to him and lets his tears fall on their heads. HIS EXCELLENCY, impatient, is giving-in a bit as he tries to think of some other way to keep them from singing.

SHOEMAKER JOHN: Bewildered, shaking his head It can't be done, Your Excellency, it can't be done. Ask of me anything in the world, but I can't give you a single one of my children so long as the Lord God has given them to me.

HIS EXCELLENCY: Still scheming I understand, but would you be so kind as to do one thing for me?

SHOEMAKER JOHN: Oh yes, Your Excellency, just name it.

HIS EXCELLENCY: Would you and your children, please, not sing anymore? For this sacrifice, I will give you one thousand florins.
SHOEMAKER JOHN: He has never heard of so much money What! Why!
I've never heard of so much money.

HIS EXCELLENCY: Slyly Here, my good shoemaker, hold it in your hand.
He presses the money into SHOEMAKER JOHN'S hand and
leaves with a wink at the audience.

SHOEMAKER JOHN: Stares in amazement at the money bag; then he care­
fully and fearfully puts it in the chest on his bench
and ALL are silent. The older children slump moodily
in their chairs. TEENY starts to sing and ALEX
immediately quiets him.

ALEX: Now, no more singing. It will disturb the fine gentle­
man next door. There is a note of disgust in his voice.

PAUL: Coming over to SHOEMAKER JOHN Papa, will you please
teach me that beautiful song. I think I've forgotten
how it goes already.

SHOEMAKER JOHN: Pushing PAUL aside, perhaps a little roughly We aren't
allowed to sing anymore! With this, he goes angrily
to his bench and begins to work. He roughly hammers
and sews as the children draw away from him in terror.
They are afraid he may bite them. Then he starts to
sing IT HAPPENED IN BETHLEHEM----he claps his hand over
his mouth John and Alex, finish decorating the tree.
I'm going for a bit of fresh air. He takes his coat
and hat and inspects his ragged scarf. What a ragged
scarf! ALEX and JOHN resume decoration of the tree.

Exit SHOEMAKER JOHN.

TEENY: Goes to money drawer. Opens it. Takes out money.
Brings it DC. Opens bag. Dumps contents on floor.
ALL are watching him, afraid of what he is doing, but too interested to stop him. What good is money if we don't spend it for something?

JOSEPH: Ho, ho, ha, ha. Th-th-that's r-r-right. L-l-l-let's g-g-g-go around th-th-the-c-c-corner and g-g-g-get P-P-Papa a new sc-sc-sc-sc-muffler. ALL smile and relax, but JOHN and MARY. He takes a florin.

JOHN: Are you sure we should spend it? Papa might not like it.

PAUL: To JOSEPH and TEENY I'll go with you.

FERENC: Yah! Me too.

MARY: Running to JOHN You're gonna' get in trouble. You're gonna' get in trouble. Ya, ya, ya-ya, ya.

SUZY: Oh, trouble-smouble. Let's go get Papa a new scarf. She jumps up and down Goody, goody, goody.

ALEX: All right, kids, let's go. Money's no good until you spend it. ALL get wraps. We'll just take one florin for the scarf. We should be able to get it just around the corner at Previsich's Clothing store. They exit noisily.

JOHN: JOHN to MARY who stays with him as the others leave Somehow I feel trouble coming.

MARY: I do too, but what kind of trouble could we possibly get into? "Old Money Bags" gave us the money, didn't he?
JOHN: But suppose Papa can't stand not to sing.
Suppose he wants to give the money back so we can
sing. Returns money to drawer.

MARY: Well, 'spose he does! It's all there but one measly
little florin.

JOHN: But you know "Old Money Bags". He'd count the money,
find it missing, and then what would we do?

MARY: Thinking seriously We're really in a spot, John.
Say, do you think we might be able to teach our
Christmas song to His Excellency? If we could get
him to sing, maybe he'd like it. He wasn't such a
groucho when we first moved here. If we could get him
to sing, then we'd have time to take Papa's scarf
back and get the money for it. Then all the money'd
be there.

SHOEMAKER JOHN: Bursts in. Well, I've made up my mind! He heads for
the money drawer. If we can't sing here, we'll
return the money and move. He gets the money.

JOHN: To MARY in a stage whisper We'll have to have the
other children return the scarf for sure. I'll go
tell them.

SHOEMAKER JOHN: Seeing the private conversation And what is going on
behind my back?

JOHN and MARY: Oh, nothing, Papa. They look at each other scared.

JOHN: Nothing at all, Papa. He starts for the floor.

MARY: Nothing much, that is. She's scared to death.
HIS EXCELLENCY: Knocks loudly.

SHOEMAKER JOHN: Come in! Who is it?

HIS EXCELLENCY: Entering with a big, satisfied smile on his face, bringing JOHN who is trying to leave back in with him.

SHOEMAKER JOHN: My, but it's quiet in this house!

HIS EXCELLENCY: So it is! Just realizing only two children are home.

SHOEMAKER JOHN: John and Mary! Where are the others?

MARY: Not thinking Oh, they went around the corner to the Previsich's Clothing store to get you a scarf------------

Realizes what she has said ---for---- Christmas!

RUNS to JOHN who comforts her.

SHOEMAKER JOHN: But where would they get the money?

MARY: Points to drawer containing HIS EXCELLENCY'S money There!

SHOEMAKER JOHN: Oh, no!! HIS EXCELLENCY moves DL, twists his mustache, realizing he is winning. SHOEMAKER JOHN moves DR to converse with MARY and JOHN. John, go catch the others. Have them take back the scarf and bring home the money.

JOHN: It's done! He starts for the door and the others burst in.

TEENY: Going right to SHOEMAKER JOHN and holding package.

Look what we got for you, Papa.

SHOEMAKER JOHN: Claps hand over his mouth, points to HIS EXCELLENCY. TEENY sees HIS EXCELLENCY and cowers like a whipped puppy. MARY motions ALL to DSR. They huddle and converse. HIS EXCELLENCY wrings hands and twists his mustache and smiles.
Aside to audience  It seems like it's going to be awfully quiet around here from now on!

As huddle ends.  Let's try it!!!  TOUGHY cries awakening.

Mary, get Toughy from the crib.

Yes, Papa.  To SUZY Go ahead, Suzy.

Going to HIS EXCELLENCY and taking his hand to her cheek.  Your Excellency is so handsome and strong.

Caught off-guard Why--I--You're just saying that because it's true.  ALL gather about HIS EXCELLENCY as SUZY draws him center.

I'll bet you have a real, nice singing voice, Your Excellency.  HIS EXCELLENCY sits on a chair that FERENC has provided at SHOEMAKER JOHN'S suggestion.  SUZY jumps in HIS EXCELLENCY'S lap and starts to finger his mustache.

Boastfully Well, when I was at the University, I used to sing----HE realizes he is being taken-in.

Trying to hold his attention Sure you did Your Excellency.  Holding TOUGHY and coming to the knee opposite where SUZY sits, PAUL comes and whispers to MARY.

Tell him how wise he is!  PAUL dances prankishly-off around the group.

You're sooooooo wise, Your Excellency and strong, too.  She feels his muscles.
JOSEPH: Coming front. We have a Christmas gift for you!

Stutters.

HIS EXCELLENCY: Oooh! You do! What is it? All the attention catches him off-guard.

JOSEPH: Prodded on by all others It's a brand new song Papa gave to us and we want to give it to you!

ALL agree audibly, each within his character.

JOSEPH always stutters.

HIS EXCELLENCY: Slowly Well, I did sing at the University--

I--He gives-in --All right, let's hear it!

MUSIC CUE: NO. 8. IT HAPPENED IN BETHLEHEM, REPRISE

(Family)

HIS EXCELLENCY registers coldness, coolness, warmth; then feigned disapproval changing to approval and himself starting to hum. After once through, they stop.

HIS EXCELLENCY: Oooh! That's such a nice gift. Assuming a mock type of firmness. But if you are going to sing, you'll have to return my one-thousand florins!!

SHOEMAKER JOHN: But I---- Hesitant, looking for a way out of the dilemma---- I can't remember just which drawer I put it in. Do any of you children remember?

ALL CHILDREN: Oh, no, Papa!!!! They all shake their heads.

HIS EXCELLENCY: Now--- He's playing with them now. ---perhaps you won't have to find it!

ALL: Bending forward, hopefully. YES!

HIS EXCELLENCY: I've decided that I will give you a Christmas gift.
ALL: Moving closer. YES!

HIS EXCELLENCY: You may keep [hesitates]

FAMILY: YES!!! Practically on top of him.

HIS EXCELLENCY: You know, I haven't felt so generous for years.

The situation is about to explode.

SHOEMAKER JOHN: You said you were thinking of a gift. Any little thing from you, we will surely treasure.

FAMILY: Yes, yes. What could it be?

HIS EXCELLENCY: Really enjoying the tension he is creating. Well---you---may----

FAMILY: Bursting YES!!!

HIS EXCELLENCY: KEEP THE MONEY!!!!

GENERAL REJOICING

HIS EXCELLENCY: Enveloping as many in his arms as possible. Now, let's try that song again!

MUSIC CUE: SECOND CHORUS OF NO. 8, IT HAPPENED IN BETHLEHEM.

REPRISE (Entire Cast)

CURTAIN

CURTAIN CALL: Same position, still singing after curtain is opened. CAROLERS come in. SHOEMAKER JOHN whispers into the ear of TEENY who stops the singing and asks the audience to join-in using the words printed on the program.

CURTAIN
Musical Score

The Shoemaker's Dilemma

Based on a story of

Maurus Jokai

Words, Music and Dialogue

by Richards H. Merley
After applause for overture, as curtain opens:

**NO. 2. FOR ITS A FINE DAY**

(m.m. \( d = 100 \))

For it's a fine day the day before Christmas

---

A really great day

---

So full of good cheer

---

with candles bright and gay

---

The day before Christmas

---

It's Santa's big day

---

Happy children we hear
busy people running all around, up and down the town, getting gifts for all.

People doing things, the nicest little things. The devil's riding for a fall! For it's a fine day the day before Christmas.

the day when Ev'ry one's a-glow like me and you.
and it goes like this.

NO. 3. THE DAY BEFORE CHRISTMAS

(m.m. J = 120)

It's the day before Christmas we're busy as bees and we're happy just thinking what Christmas will bring. It's a time for rejoicing when everyone's
King. What a jolly warm feeling it brings

For the neighbors from next door come to our house o'er,

It's Christmas time. We're all feeling generous you see.

We love to hear the jing-ling bells as the laughter swells.
sleigh ing a long. My singing's not good but it's

All: (we agree!) Alex: (speaking) Alright then help me.

loud. It's the
day be fore Christmas happiness is the thing, and we're

happy just thinking what Christmas will bring!
Song Cue: If it isn't one thing it's two. (Play just once through for solo)

**NO. 4. OH, MY GOOD LORD HOW THOU BLESSED ME**

(m.m. \( \frac{\text{d} = 90}{\text{d}} \))

Oh, my good Lord, how Thou Blessed me with

chil-dren all ov-er the place. I ham-mer and sweat 'til real late at nite to

keep a smile on each face. They're not dif-fi-cult chil-dren to han-dle, They're as

heal-thy and tough as can be. If their mother still lived, it'd be
easy as pie, but it's really a job for me. It's quite a problem

just to keep them all in shoes and clothes. When they have sniffles

it gets real tiring running from nose to nose Oh, My good Lord how Thou

blessed me with children all over the place. We wish Momma were here
but since she's not; then we'll lick the problems we face.

Cue: If I can collect some money I can get some badly needed supplies.

NO. 4 A. OH MY GOOD LORD HOW THOU BLESSED ME- INCIDENTAL
Cue: ... Gretchen will sing to you. (Play once through for Introduction)

NO. 5. BLESS'D BE THE BIRTH

Bless'd be the birth of God our Lord and Master. Let us intone the greeting of the angels which long ago at Bethlehem was spoken, there in the pasture.

He whom of yore the holy fathers promised.  
He whom the wise men longed to see and welcome.  
He of whose birth the prophets sang their praises.  
Is now among us.

O, God, Eternal, Trinity in Glory.  
Heavenly joy come down to us thy creatures.  
Let every sorrow cease among the living.  
All be rejoicing.

(As song ends, all are asleep, except SUZY who may sing the harmony part of the song. Piano continues music softly as GRETHEL and SUZY tiptoes to table to begin arithmetic lesson. Just as they open a large book labeled plainly ARITHMETIC, a loud knock at the door. ALL start.) (MUSIC OUT) (STAGE LIGHTS UP)
INSERT SONGS OF DIRECTOR'S CHOICE HERE
DURING VISIT OF CAROLERS.

Cue: S. M. JOHN: I'll sing it through first, then you join in.

NO. 6. IT HAPPENED IN BETHLEHEM

It happened in Beth-le-hem so long a - go midst the
low-ing of cat-tle and fal-ling of snow. 'Twas the birth of our
Savior, the Son of our God, He'd been born to show us the path to be trod. Oh I love you Lord Jesus, you're gentle and kind, you give all who believe peace of mind. It happened in Bethlehem so long ago with his banner held high on we go.

Repeat until fade out on Curtain at which time backstage piano takes over.
Oue: ...which one shall it be?

**NO. 7. CHOOSING SONG**

Recitative

This one here is Alex. No, I couldn't let him go. He's a very splendid student.

He'll be a priest, you know. The next one is a lovely girl. To me she's like a pearl.

She'll make a stately lady, but you wouldn't want a girl. Next comes little Ferenc. He's such a little twerp, but I couldn't do without him. He helps me with my work.
then, the next in line is our little brother John. He's the one that bears my name. So I
couldn't pass him on. Now Joseph looks like his mother and Mary's a little girl, too. And

PAUL: How about me Papa?

Tougly and Teeny are all I have left. Oh, what is this poor man to do?

My goodness, in my dither, I've forgotten little Paul, but he was mother's favorite,
— 19 —

HIS EXCELLENCY: Hurry, my dear shoemaker, I can't wait
he's most precious of them all.

all day for you to make up your mind. SHOEMAKER JOHN
Your Ex-lerency, I've tried them all.

There's Joe and John and Paul. There's little Mary and Su-sy little ladies, one and all.

But you don't want little ladies. This is a terrible fix. I can't give you my other boys
RECITATIVE (Spoken)

"Tee-ny, Fer-ner, or Al-ex.—I'll tell you what I'll do, I'll let you children choose. Who wants to be a gentleman of style, to study, vacation and cruise? Come now! Speak up! Who wants to go! It's a very fine gesture he's making you know!"
Cue: (1st time) Alright, let's hear it!
Cue: (2nd time) Now let's try that song again!

NO. 8. IT HAPPENED IN BETHLEHEM REPISE