

*Create & Produce, Spring 2006: A Project of the Baltimore Opera Company
presents:*

THE STORY OF HOLLYWOOD

An opera in two acts

Russell Nadel, composer-teacher
3rd/4th Grade Students of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor Elementary School (PS 122), Baltimore, MD
Yozmin Draper, cooperating teacher

Cast of Characters

Frank Masters, a fashion designer
Mademoiselle, an actress
Jerome, a baseball player
Nireasha, an opera singer
Michael, a football player
Shatira, a songwriter
Police Chief
Police (as many as needed/desired)
Suspects (as many as needed/desired) – best if teachers or other respected adults (non-singing roles)
Reporters and TV news crews (as many as needed/desired)
Narrator(s) (as many as needed/desired)

Setting

Place: Hollywood
Date: Today

Synopsis

Nireasha, Shatira, Jerome and Michael were traveling together to Hollywood for a vacation. As they rounded the curve into Hollywood and looked around for the Hollywood sign, they all spot it, but instead of staying “HOLLYWOOD” it says “OLLYWOOD” – someone had stolen the H! After a period of panic, the characters called their friends, the famous brother and sister Frank Masters and Mademoiselle, the police, and the news crews, who already knew about the crime. The characters picked up Mademoiselle and Frank at Mademoiselle’s apartment and headed for the base of the sign to see if they could help – but not before stopping at Frank’s fashion store for a brief change of clothes.

There was already a huge crowd at the base of the sign when they arrived. The police were asking everyone questions, and the news crews were all talking at once. When the leads asked the Police Chief if they could help, the police said that they had already rounded up “the usual suspects,” and that they were dusting for fingerprints. After asking the characters some questions, the Police Chief told them to come back to the station later to find out who was the robber.

Later, the characters went to the police station to speak to the very sad Police Chief, who told them that none of the fingerprints the police had found matched any of their suspects. As the police released the prisoners, Frank and Mademoiselle slipped out the door without being noticed. When the Police Chief told the remaining characters that all hope was lost, they volunteered to take the case themselves. The Police Chief was delighted, and asked where they had gotten their detective hats; when they answered “Frank Masters,” everyone looked for him and his sister Mademoiselle, but they were nowhere to be found. The Police Chief immediately suspected the worst – kidnapping! – and started to cry. The remaining four characters decided that enough was enough, and that they had to go back up to the “OLLYWOOD” sign to make their own search for evidence.

As they approached on foot, Michael noticed a trail of footprints heading north, towards the sign – size 5, pointy-toed high-heeled shoes. They followed the trail with greater and greater speed until they were coming quite close to the sign. When they finally looked up from the ground, they saw a robber all in black just starting to run away with the O from the sign! Jerome and Michael captured the robber, and when they pulled the robber’s mask off, they were astonished to find – Mademoiselle! Mademoiselle explained that she and Frank had stolen the H, and that they had pretended to be kidnapped so everybody would forget about the missing H. That would give them enough time to make a plan for stealing the O and the first L, which they needed to remove so they could change the Hollywood sign to read “Lilywood,” which they thought was much prettier. The characters captured Frank, and the police took both Frank and Mademoiselle away to jail. The other four characters helped the news crews replace the H with a brand-new one, and everyone (except Frank and Mademoiselle) lived happily ever after.

THE STORY OF HOLLYWOOD

Libretto

(FINAL DRAFT, rev. 5/18/06)

ACT 1 SCENE 1

Large white letters spell “HOL” at stage left rear. FRANK MASTERS and MADEMOISELLE (in disguise) are offstage stage left; NARRATOR (#1) is offstage right; SHATIRA, NIREASHA, JEROME and MICHAEL are sitting in front four of six chairs, set up in three rows of at center stage front, facing stage right. NIREASHA holds a steering wheel and pretends to drive throughout the first scene. Behind the car (left/right/center stage middle and rear) all the members of the CHORUS mill around, acting as tourists and taking pictures with real or imaginary cameras.

Curtain opens.

NARRATOR (#1) *(comes from backstage to stage right front and sings to the audience)*

One bright, sunny California day four friends were taking a vacation...

ALL

Oh, what a day! I love vacation!

SHATIRA

I'm so glad to finally get outside my studio –

NIREASHA

And I'm so glad to give my voice a rest.

JEROME and MICHAEL

This would be a great day for a game!

JEROME

A baseball game –

MICHAEL

A football game –

JEROME: Baseball!
MICHAEL: Football!
(repeat)

NIREASHA and SHATIRA

Boys! Enough! Let's enjoy the weather.

(JEROME and MICHAEL sulk in the back seat. Meanwhile, MADEMOISELLE, in disguise, sneaks behind the H and creeps away with it)

JEROME

Are we there yet?

NIREASHA

Almost, Jerome – we should see the Hollywood sign any minute now...

ALL (look up at the sign)

“OLLYWOOD”????!!
It can't be! It can't be!
I can't believe my eyes!
The H is gone! The H is gone!

(NIREASHA moves the steering wheel in large, wild motions)

SHATIRA, JEROME and MICHAEL

Nireasha, can't you drive???

(all CHORUS members [tourists] run offstage – POLICE to stage right and NEWS CREWS to stage left – and add their appropriate POLICE or NEWS CREWS accessories)

NIREASHA

Who took the H? And why would they want it?

MICHAEL and JEROME

We'd better call Frank Masters and Mademoiselle.

(they pick up a toy phone or mime a cell phone)

MICHAEL

Frank, Frank – have you seen the...

(FRANK MASTERS and MADEMOISELLE [no longer in disguise] part the curtains at far stage left and sing)

FRANK MASTERS and MADEMOISELLE, *offstage* (possibly helped by ALL)

Sorry, we can't talk now – someone stole the H from the Hollywood sign!

(they let the curtains flap closed)

JEROME *(hangs up)*

I guess they saw it.

LEADS

The H is gone!

The H is gone!

What are we going to do?

What are we going to do???

SHATIRA

All right, enough – don't panic, don't panic!

NIREASHA

Here, Shatira, you hold the phone,

You call the police!

Do you think they know?

SHATIRA *(miming phone call as before)*

Hello, police? Have you seen the...

(POLICE and POLICE CHIEF part the curtains at far stage right and sing)

POLICE and POLICE CHIEF, *offstage* (possibly helped by ALL)

Sorry, we can't talk now – someone stole the H from the Hollywood sign!

(they let the curtains flap closed)

SHATIRA (*hangs up*)

Yes, I think they know.

JEROME and MICHAEL

We'd better call the news crew too!

SHATIRA and NIREASHA

Yes, hurry!

(JEROME and MICHAEL mime phone call as before. NEWS CREWS part the curtains at far stage left and sing)

NEWS CREW, *offstage* (possibly helped by ALL)

Sorry, we can't talk now – someone stole the H from the Hollywood sign!

(they let the curtains flap closed)

JEROME

Look, we're close to Frank and Mademoiselle's apartment! Let's stop and pick them up.

(they "pull over," and MADEMOISELLE [no longer in disguise] and FRANK MASTERS climb in)

NIREASHA and SHATIRA

Oh, Mademoiselle, I love your shoes!

NIREASHA

I've never seen such high heels and pointy toes before!

MADemoISELLE

Who can think about shoes at a time like this?

FRANK and MADEMOISELLE

Oh how awful, how terrible! What can we do?

OTHER LEADS (*repeating FRANK and MADEMOISELLE*)

What can we do????

MADEMOISELLE

We'd better drive up to the sign and see if we can help.

OTHER LEADS

Good idea, good idea!

FRANK

Wait! We have to stop at my fashion store.

(gets out of the car, runs off stage left, comes back onstage with a stack of hats)

I have just the perfect thing –
I designed them last week!

(passes out Sherlock Holmes detective caps or felt “film noir” hats)

LEADS

OK, now we're ready – let's go!

(LEADS pick up their chairs and the steering wheel and exit stage right together)

SCENE 2

NARRATOR (#2) *(comes from backstage to stage front and sings to the audience)*

When they got to the base of the sign, there was already a crowd of police and news crews on the scene...

(“a crowd of police and news crews on the scene” cues the entrance of the full cast, who mill about onstage; police dust all around for fingerprints, news crews stand in corners and talk on microphones)

ALL TOGETHER

Oh, no, the “OLLYWOOD” sign!
It's tall and it's white, but it's missing an H!
Oh, whatever will we do?

POLICE CHIEF and POLICE

Don't worry folks, we're on the case!

LEADS

Chief, oh Chief, how can we help?

POLICE CHIEF

Well, first we have some questions for you...

(the police walk around and [silently] "question the characters" while the music continues. The NEWS CREWS representatives [reporters] come to stage right front, center stage front, and stage left front respectively and sing to the audience)

NEWS CREW(S) 1 (possibly helped by ALL)

This is Channel 2, reporting from Hollywood...

NEWS CREW(S) 2 (possibly helped by ALL)

This is Channel 3, reporting from Hollywood...

NEWS CREW(S) 3 (possibly helped by ALL)

This is Channel 4, reporting from Hollywood...

(music and questioning continue – we come back in the middle of a conversation)

POLICE and POLICE CHIEF

We've rounded up the usual suspects,
We've dusted all over for fingerprints...

ALL OTHERS

We've dusted all over for fingerprints...

POLICE and POLICE CHIEF

We'll interview all of the suspects tonight,
So come to the station and we'll set things right!

ALL
OK, let's go!

NEWS CREWS (*speaking together from same places as before*)

We'll be back after this message from our sponsors...

(*all exit except a few police officers dusting for fingerprints*)

Curtain closes.

ACT 2
SCENE 1

A lectern or chair is placed stage right front with a large sign reading either "Police Station" or "Jail". The SUSPECTS are offstage stage right, and the POLICE and POLICE CHIEF are standing or sitting far stage right next to and behind the lectern/chair. The NEWS CREWS and LEADS are standing far stage left and talking to each other as the curtain comes up.

Curtain opens.

JEROME

I wonder if the police have solved the case?

SHATIRA

We'll find out soon!

(*they all move closer to stage right, where all the police officers, including the Chief, are crying loudly*)

POLICE and POLICE CHIEF

Waa! Boo-hoo!

LEADS

What's the matter?

POLICE and POLICE CHIEF

We've interviewed the suspects,
We've talked to every one,
And while they're all suspicious,
The fingerprints matched none!

LEADS

Matched none?

POLICE and POLICE CHIEF

Matched none!

So now we have to let them go...

POLICE CHIEF

_____ [name of officer], can you set them free?

(Designated POLICE OFFICER leads adult suspects out from offstage right, in handcuffs if possible, then undo the handcuffs. The suspects exchange high-fives and run or skip offstage, making faces as they go. During all this activity FRANK and MADEMOISELLE sneak offstage left unnoticed)

MICHAEL

So now what are you going to do?

POLICE CHIEF

I just don't know – all hope is lost...

SHATIRA and NIREASHA

What if we take the case?

POLICE CHIEF *(suddenly much happier)*

That would be great! You even have the right hats!

Where did you get those hats, anyway?

JEROME *(proudly)*

Oh, they were made for us by Frank Masters himself, the famous fashion designer. He's our friend.

A POLICE OFFICER

Frank Masters? The Frank Masters?

ANOTHER POLICE OFFICER

Brother of the famous actress Mademoiselle?

SHATIRA

Yes, they're both our friends – you can talk to them yourself...

NIREASHA

(characters look around and then at each other)

Where are they? They were right here!

ALL *(calling)*

Frank! Mademoiselle!

POLICE CHIEF

Oh no, this is terrible!
They must have been kidnapped!

ALL

Kidnapped??!!

POLICE CHIEF

Right inside my police station too... *(starts to cry again)* Boo-hoo!

POLICE and POLICE CHIEF *(all crying)*

Boo-hoo!

NIREASHA

This is terrible!

SHATIRA

We've got to do something!

JEROME and MICHAEL

Come on, girls, let's take the case!

MICHAEL

We've got to find Frank!

NIREASHA and SHATIRA

And Mademoiselle!

JEROME

Let's go back to the sign and search for more evidence!

(LEADS run off stage left while the POLICE run off stage right, still crying)

NEWS CREWS *(all come to stage front, speaking together)*

This is Channel ____, with breaking news – Frank Masters and Mademoiselle have been kidnapped!

(all run offstage left)

SCENE 2

(MADEMOISELLE [in disguise again] and FRANK MASTERS wait offstage stage left. ALL walk slowly back onstage, holding real or imaginary magnifying glasses in their hands. They're staring at the ground while walking slowly in circles around the stage. MICHAEL is holding a baseball.)

NIREASHA

Did you find anything?

MICHAEL

No.

SHATIRA

Did you find anything?

JEROME

No. Did you find anything?

SHATIRA

No.

MICHAEL

Did you find anything?

NIREASHA (*suddenly points to the ground*)

Yes!

(all the characters gather around)

ALL

Footprints!

(a LEAD picks up the footprints and shows them to the audience)

NIREASHA

Size 5!

MICHAEL and JEROME

With pointy toes...

SHATIRA

And high heels!

ALL (*scratch chins and think*)

Hmmm...

(while they think, MADEMOISELLE sneaks behind the O of the sign and starts to wiggle it back and forth)

MICHAEL and JEROME

Come on, let's follow them!

NIREASHA and SHATIRA

They're heading towards the sign!

(music and walking pace get slowly faster and faster until they're running in place; all characters suddenly stop and look up at the sign)

ALL

LOOK!

The O of the sign is wobbling –
It looks like it's going to fall!

MICHAEL

Quick, get out of the way!

(LEADS duck and close their eyes, and CHORUS members all run offstage right. Long pause – they open their eyes slowly and look around)

JEROME

Did it fall?

(MADEMOISELLE lifts the O as if it is very heavy, and starts to very slowly sneak away with it)

SHATIRA

No – look! Someone's carrying it away!

MICHAEL

I'll run and tackle him!

JEROME

I'll hit him with the ball!

(MADEMOISELLE hurries offstage. MICHAEL throws the baseball offstage, where MADEMOISELLE yells "Ow!"; JEROME runs backstage, stomps his foot to make a loud noise, and brings MADEMOISELLE out)

JEROME

Gotcha!

(all the characters gather around between the robber and the audience, pull off the robber's mask and gasp)

NIREASHA and SHATIRA

It can't be!

(the characters move aside to let the audience see – the robber is Mademoiselle, sitting on the floor between them!)

ALL

MADEMOISELLE???

MADEMOISELLE

Yes, it's me –
I'm guilty, I'm guilty!
Frank and I were planning this for years!

We pretended to be kidnapped so everyone would forget about the Hollywood sign – then we could take the other letters.

MICHAEL

But why would you want to steal the whole Hollywood sign?

MADEMOISELLE

We didn't want the whole sign – we just wanted the H and the O and the first L...

SHATIRA

But why?

FRANK MASTERS *(suddenly appears from offstage stage left)*

'Cause "Hollywood" is such an ugly name – we have a much better one:
(holds up big sign) "Lilywood"!
(disappears offstage again)

JEROME and MICHAEL

We'll go get him – you stay here and call the police. *(run to offstage stage left)*

SHATIRA and NIREASHA *(mime phone call as in Scene 1)*

Hello, Chief?
We've got your robbers!

(JEROME and MICHAEL drag FRANK out on stage; POLICE take MADEMOISELLE and FRANK away and return onstage; NEWS CREWS return the O to its proper place and stay onstage)

ALL *(shaking each others' hands enthusiastically)*

Congratulations!
Congratulations!
You did it! You did it!
You really came through!

NARRATOR (#1) *(comes to stage front and interrupts)*

Hold everything!
The sign still says "OLLYWOOD"!
And nobody knows where they hid the H!

(all characters think for a moment with hands on chins)

ALL

Hmmm...

NIREASHA

We can't leave it like this!

SHATIRA

What is Hollywood without the H?

JEROME and MICHAEL *(nod to each other)*

We know!
(They run offstage stage left and make lots of loud noises – carry new H made out of palm trees tied together onstage. Everyone cheers, and dance party starts)

NARRATOR (#2, or both together) *(to audience)*

And they all lived happily ever after – except Frank and Mademoiselle!

ALL
The End!

(Exeunt; leave libretti backstage; wait for bow music; all enter, holding hands, and bow twice; exit; CURTAIN.)