

THE FAME THING by JO HARDY

As well as two small roles each, there is ensemble work for up to 26 students. The piece is designed for Year 10s, to get them used to the kind of work expected of them as they work towards GCSE. It offers challenges such as role swapping, physical theatre work, ensemble acting and the necessity for research. Built in to the script is also room for brief devised scenes based on their own research.

There is no cast list as such. Everyone would be in the ensemble scenes, as indicated in the script. The following is a list of the further characters grouped together by scene and showing who appears with whom. This is to make the allocation of roles easier.

1. 3 Teachers [Teacher 1,2 & 3]
2. Mum & Daughter
3. 2 Boys [Boy 1 & Boy 2]
4. 2 Girls [Girl 1 & 2]
5. 2 Dancers [Dancer 1 & 2] & Dance Teacher
6. 2 Musicians [Musician 1 & 2]
7. 3 Drama Students [Drama Student 1, 2 & 3]
8. Secretary & Principal
9. 2 Girls [Girl 1 & 2]
10. Announcer and 5 Contestants [Contestant 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5]
11. Boy Actor & Girlfriend
12. Father & Mother
13. 2 Singers [Singer 1 & Singer 2] & Music Teacher
14. 4 Friends [Friend 1, 2, 3 & 4] and Ballet Dancer & Dancer's Mother
15. 3 Reporters [Reporter 1,2 & 3] and Press Spokesperson
16. Newsreader
17. Daughter, Caring Mum & Caring Dad
18. Son, Sad Mum
19. Lonely Mum, Presenter and Amelie

The whole piece is as long as you want to make it, depending on the amount of researched/audition material is included. It could be as short as half an hour, or as long as an hour.

Extract One: SCENE 1. Opening Ensemble.

Everyone on stage. The distribution of the lines depends on the number of people taking part.

1. I was still in bed when the letter came...
2. I called upstairs straight away...
3. I could see the postman coming down the path ...
4. I was upstairs, listening for the post...
5. My Mum called me...
6. I heard my Dad sorting through the mail...
7. I ran downstairs...
8. ... fell out of bed...
9. ... made my Mum read it...
10. ... asked my Dad to tell me...
11. I'd been waiting for ages, I thought...
12. ... they weren't going to bother answering...
13. ... don't call us...
14. ... and we won't call you...
15. It was all I wanted...
16. ... everything I wanted...
17. So when she said...
18. ... he said...
19. ... I read...
20. I couldn't take it in!

21. I had to read it for myself...

22. Over and over again...

23. ... before I could believe...

24. ... before I dare believe...

ALL I'd got in!

1. But it wasn't easy.

EXTRACT TWO:

FATHER Why is he in his room again? He should be out helping me with the deliveries.

MOTHER He's got exams tomorrow.

FATHER He hasn't got exams. He's got acting classes. He'll be down at that studio with all the girls...

MOTHER He isn't the only boy.

FATHER So how many boys are there?

MOTHER *hesitating slightly* Three.

FATHER Exactly. Three boys and about a hundred girls. What does that tell you about our David?

MOTHER *defensively* It tells me he has an interest in theatre. [*Warming to it.*] And that's what he's doing now. Preparing for his exam. His acting exam. He takes his silver medal tomorrow. [*A pause while the parents look at each other.*] And he's good.

FATHER Yeah, well. I'll get on with earning the money to pay for it. You can tell him, when he's finished, that I could do with some help. [*He goes out.*]

The scene changes to a music room. Two girls are practising. Singer 1 is just finishing the chorus of any well known song.

SINGER 2 That was fantastic!

SINGER 1 Are you sure I didn't miss the top note?

SINGER 2 No, it was great. I wish I was as good as you.

SINGER 1 You are. Mr Clarke said yesterday that you ...

SINGER 2 ... had to practise more ...

SINGER 1 He said that to all of us. He told you you had done well yesterday. I heard him.

SINGER 2 You didn't hear what he said after the lesson...

Flashback to this conversation.

MUSIC TEACHER You did well with that song, Bridget. Good pace and feeling.

SINGER 2 Thank you, Sir. Do you think I should audition for Sandy in *Grease*?

MUSIC TEACHER *after a little hesitation, but kindly* I think you'd do better to stick with the Chorus this time, Bridget. I think ...

SINGER 2 The chorus? But I wanted to try for a solo part. Just a small part would do. I could ...

MUSIC TEACHER You have a good voice, Bridget, but it isn't a powerful voice. And your range is quite limited, especially the higher notes. [*Singer 2 looks very down-cast.*] You are a very competent choir singer. You read music really well ...

SINGER 2 But I'm not good enough for the lead role.

MUSIC TEACHER Let's say you would have a lot of competition. [*After a pause and on a different note.*] I hear you just won the English prize for your Journalism project. Now that is a real achievement. You know, journalism can be a lucrative career...

SINGER 2 *quietly* I don't want to be a journalist. I want to be a singer.....

EXTRACT FROM:

PRODUCTION NOTES + TECHNICAL CUES, ETC.

INTRODUCTION: THEMES, THE PLAY'S INTENTIONS.

The play is mainly intended as a group training exercise. It requires a variety of different types of discipline; ensemble work, freezing, passing focus from one group to another, and so on. Role-changing, word-learning and quick picking up of cues are of course a part of it too. It is simple to stage but does also require the input of basic research and sharing of ideas, which is another good training.

There is no real story-line as such, but there is a rough structure. We follow a group of students auditioning to go to drama school, some being accepted and some not, then undergoing the stresses and disappointments of the first term. The end of the show projects into the possible future for performance students, if the slide show option is used. Interspersed with this loose structure of the students studying at the school for Performing Arts, are some of the upsides and downsides of being famous.

Though intended as a training exercise for year 10s, I see no reason why a smaller number could not do this as a GCSE examining piece. They would be very busy and would need considerable skill in role-swapping and disciplined choreography of movement from one place to another.

SETTING

No actual setting is required, except for as open a stage as possible. At the back, if the slide show options are used, there would need to be a screen. Furnishings are brought on - and not many are needed. I have included them amongst the props.

Consider raising the back part of the stage, so as to give the potential for variety and better visibility if you are working with large numbers.

COSTUMES

Since there are so many role swaps, there needs to be a neutral costuming that links everyone but would be suitable for every character. Black and white is an option. Or black and a bright colour top perhaps. Bright colours in general might be the way to go. If this option is chosen, I feel that Lonely Mother and Sad Mother would need to be aware of those roles coming throughout. Perhaps then don darker colours, or have these people in darker colours throughout.

LIGHTS

It is perfectly possible to do this play without any lighting changes at all, just by careful grouping and disciplined freezing of members of the cast when the focus goes off them and onto another. This might be a better training for a cast new to working together.

I started doing a more complex lighting plot but I feel it would be too distracting and unhelpful to the nature of the piece - so have scrapped it. I think it's only necessary to have lighting changes as below, if you want them:

LIGHTING CUES

PAGE 2 Opening of play. Lights up to bright over whole stage area

PAGE 5 If you are using the idea of facts or pictures put up on a screen, then the lights will need to dim to accommodate this.

PAGE 6 Fade lights on main area of stage, retaining smallish area of light over principal's desk and surroundings.

Cross-fade to light on opposite side of stage, where girls are sitting at computers.....