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FOR THE VERY FIRST TIME:
A PROCESS OF REHEARSAL AND PERFORMANCE
IN THE BEGINNINGS OF COVID-19

by

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ABSTRACT

Acting is a discipline that changes over time not only for the audience, but for the actors who create it. Not only is their craft shaped through study, practice, and repetition that we as individuals have towards the art form, but it is strongly influenced by our environment and personal histories. As actors, we have to bear in mind what we are presenting, when we are presenting it, and why. These choices are a collaborative effort made through the discussion of various artists including, actor, director, writer, etc. For my thesis, I would like to show you what my journey and shortcomings have been one year after an acting intensive internship, and two years out of academia at the University of Central Florida. Through my rehearsal process and performance of George Banks in Mary Poppins at the Hale Centre Theatre in Sandy, Utah, I will analyze my unique experience being double cast, how my personal experience colored my understanding and choices while creating a character, and the pros and cons of being in a professional theatre in the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic.
To all those
who are able to pursue
what they love because of the support
they have around them,
I commend you.

BUT,
to all those
who are driven to pursue
what they love in lack of the support
they have around them,
I dedicate this.
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Also a thank you to all the others who supported this journey, who knows that this passion of mine will always be in my heart, and through its growth, so too grows my understanding, compassion, and empathy for others.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION ........................................................................................................... 1

CHAPTER TWO: BEFORE THE REHEARSAL PROCESS ........................................................................ 4

CHAPTER THREE: REHEARSALS DURING COVID-19 ....................................................................... 15

CHAPTER FOUR: CONCLUSION ........................................................................................................ 22

APPENDIX A REHEARSAL JOURNAL ............................................................................................... 24

APPENDIX B LINE NOTES ................................................................................................................ 56

LIST OF REFERENCES ....................................................................................................................... 97
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

While waiting for class in the second year of grad school, the members of my cohort jibed at me for being the only grad student in our program left to complete their thesis performance. I was well aware that all of them had chosen their projects and were on their way with writing their theses, an awareness that extended to knowing that I hadn’t chosen a theory, or topic of discussion to write upon.

I casually rebuffed their remarks, and the topic shifted to class that day: an assignment which we prepared as a mock audition. The assignment required us to choose two contrasting monologues, and optionally a song if we chose. A fellow grad pressed to see if I had prepared, to which I gave an indeterminate shrug. “I’m just gonna wing it,” I said with a knowing smile. I had prepared, but having a propensity for procrastination and facetiousness, I couldn’t resist the bait. “That should be your thesis,” another grad quipped. “Winging it.”

We all laughed, but upon further contemplation, something in it rang true to me. There are moments in life that we prepare for something important such as a job interview, meeting someone for the first time, or calling someone with influence in your sphere, etc. In these moments we often rehearse what we are going to say, knowing what we want to talk about, how we are going to say it, and come up with contingency plans when the conversation might not go according to plan. In these moments, how often do you have a fabricated interaction in your head, and rehearsed what you were going to say?

Deciding on a thesis performance, I gave this vague idea of winging it a bit more credence, and tried to form it into a cohesive project. Being in a show that I had written,
acted, and produced myself, the effort was a daunting task, but a good way to ask some questions concerning rehearsal methods. This two-man show was fruitful, though writing about the experience, I discovered that there were too many variables, and I couldn’t nail down exactly what it was that I was searching for, possibly not knowing exactly what I was searching for myself, and what I was trying to dissect. This was in many ways a launching point into what my thesis project truly became.

I stewed over the process for a time, then weeks turned into months, until finally an entire year had passed since the performance. This struggle to pursue what exactly I wanted to get out of the project led me to believe that I should find something with much more structure so that I could study rehearsal in a much more personalized way. My tendency towards procrastination led to an aimless, and rushed thesis, so being able to start from scratch, and going into a project with a more direct goal, I could achieve a better understanding of my own shortcomings and question my own methods. Ultimately I wanted to do research that would help actors who follow in my footsteps. I want them to take away what is beneficial in how a professional actor break down a role, and which lessons have stuck with me through my year-long internship, and two years outside of academia. What resulted is a breakdown of one of my most cherished roles, and how through my own experience, I might be able to aid a student through these unique examples. Focusing on three main topics, I hope to share a unique and fruitful point of view. This narrowing of scope is a direct result of my previous thesis, where the premise was too broad, and undefined.

In this thesis I will explore my personal experience in the rehearsal process and identify some victories and shortcomings I experienced in the Hale Centre Theatre’s production of Mary Poppins. I will explore some of the nuances of double casting, how
my personal history effected the characterization of George Banks, and also how this was affected by Covid-19 in a professional setting in a Regional Theatre at the beginning of the 2020 pandemic. What are some of the challenges that I saw in double casting? How do our personal life affect our craft? How did the Coronavirus impact the process?
CHAPTER TWO:
BEFORE THE REHEARSAL PROCESS

One of the largest regional theatres in the state of Utah is called the Hale Centre Theatre. This theatre, though a “community theatre,” boasts one of the most state of the art stages in the world (Ketcham). This family theatre held auditions for Mary Poppins, the 2004 musical written by Julian Fellowes, and Brightstar by Steve Martin. The building has two separate theatre spaces: the smaller proscenium theatre, for more intimate shows, with generally smaller casts, and also a centre stage focusing on a larger audience, utilizing and relying much more on spectacle. The Hale decided to have the auditions for the two spaces at the same time, so as an actor you had to choose which show you were going to gear your audition towards. This was not typical for this theatre, but the director and musical director for these two shows were the same. The Main Stage production was Mary Poppins, while in the smaller, intimate proscenium would be the regional premiere of Brightstar.

I felt that Brightstar was more my vocal style, and a much more complex story, so I chose to go to auditions singing “A Man of Constant Sorrow”, a traditional American folksong recently popularized by the movie O’Brother, Where art Thou? I went into the audition confident I would get a callback, and I did receive one, but I was not expecting to get called back as George Banks in Mary Poppins. I will admit at first I was a little disappointed in the prospect, doing a show that I perceived as the theatre’s money grab, gearing towards appeasing general audiences in the region. Having done my research for Steve Martin’s play, I was ready to do something with a bit more gravitas, not this outdated “family fun” show.
Not having prepared my audition for *Mary Poppins* in particular, I went into the callback with the best interpretation of the sides that I could muster. I was the youngest of everyone called back for the part, and my interpretation of the role was much more lighthearted and unique compared to their reads. I wasn’t certain I was what they were looking for, but after a few days of waiting, I received an email and got the role. That was September 5th, 2019.

At this theatre, they label our first rehearsal Super Saturday, a day where everyone gets together, receives their scripts, a schedule, instructions, and a contract. It’s not a long meeting, but one where they explain how the next few months are going to unfold. Generally Super Saturday is a few months before actual rehearsals begin, so that would give me plenty of time to familiarize myself with the script, memorize, and do some of my own table work before rehearsing with the rest of the cast. Our regular rehearsals were going to start in mid-February 2020.

A unique quality at this theatre is they double cast their productions for the duration of the run. There is the Monday, Wednesday, Friday cast, who also perform the morning matinees on Saturday, and the Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday cast, who perform the afternoon matinee and night show on Saturdays. This schedule allows the theatre to operate six days a week, while the actors have every other day off, allowing for a more free schedule throughout the week. It’s a non-union theatre, so if you are single cast, you can sometimes be expected to perform six shows in less than 24 hours if matinees have been added by demand. We were told that this production would more than likely add weekday matinees, and that we should be aware to keep our schedules open as much as possible to accommodate.
At this meeting I officially met my double, the other George Banks. He was a redhead, like me, older, and a family man. He only recently got into acting, and had a regular day job, so if matinees during the week were added, I would more than likely be the one to cover for them. I agreed happily.

After reading the script through multiple times in the following months, I felt much more confident in the way I thought the character should be portrayed. The levels of depth I found after familiarizing myself with the script, I couldn’t have been more wrong about this play. This was definitely going to challenge me in ways that I hadn’t yet thought. Most of my own casting was generally for comedic roles, and having to delve into an emotionally abusive and distancing relationship with my fictional wife and kids was going to be a challenge. Thinking back, did I have the tools in my training to reach an honest emotional level?

Before ever entering into the rehearsal room, the groundwork of my personal process had commenced. As I read through a script, I can’t help but read it through how I feel the character would react in certain lines with my own style and biases. I tend to skew towards trying to find the humor in every scene. “Where is the punch-line?” seems to be my default more often than not. This does aide when doing comedies since the writers often arc the humor with tactic changes and objectives. I read in Michael Shurtleff’s book Auditions that you should always find the humor in the scene, and apparently I take that to heart, perhaps to a fault. Am I doing a disservice to the larger picture by doing this? I feel this is a question that I would need to ask the director. This director, with whom I have worked with many times before, is one I felt as though I could approach and have those discussions. Later during rehearsals, he explained to me that for this role he felt that the story of Mary Poppins is ultimately Mr. Banks’ story. It
is his growth and change that allows a shift to happen, so this family can become the loving family they should be. But it should also be warm, and funny, so I should allow for the entire depth of character.

Before reading this script, I didn’t really know much about the stage musical, other than it was fairly different than the movie that came out with Julie Andrews in 1964. Generally I stray away from watching films or other adaptations of a role before performing. I avoid other performances of the same character so that I can go into a role without preconceived opinions on “How the role should be portrayed.” I know that if I did this early in the process, I would unknowingly bleed characteristics into my own interpretation. During this process however, wanting to explore and understand some of my own shortcomings, and feeling that the script is so different from the source material that it was safe for me to dive into other versions to see how the character was colored, and envisioned.

I decided that I was also going to see if I could read the original stories that were written in various books by P. L. Travers, but I learned that Mr. Banks was hardly mentioned in the books, the focus being more on the children rather than the family as a whole, so I decided against reading them. In retrospect, it would have aided in giving me more groundwork to fully understand the text, and the next time I decide to allow for delving into a topic, I should embrace the impulse full-heartedly.

The 1964 movie was a much closer storyline to the stage version, with David Tomlinson portraying Mr. Banks. He was everything a quirky Edwardian father would be, but his role was still quite minimal compared to the stage’s script. The play deals with a lot of issues that the movie doesn’t necessarily address, particularly expanding the reasons why George is the way he is. Due to neglectful parents, and an extremely
overbearing nanny, he had his childhood taken from him. It is with this background he rules his family, with discipline and order, instead of understanding and love. The research that I conducted on my own proved to be fairly sparse. I decided to wait until I could see if we had a dramaturg available to us at the theatre.

It was easy for me to take notes and process what we needed to work on in this rapid rehearsal schedule that began in February. It was nice to work in a professional setting where almost every actor came as prepared as I did. Since the show is double cast, we alternate depending on the day on who is going to sketch out the scene first. At this stage we don’t have to make every decision for a character. We can borrow from our counterpart, taking the best bits and choices that they make and discover new things as we go on. My double had a large family in real life, and it was nice to be able to discuss from his perspective what a father needed to be. As I am younger than he is, and not having a family of my own, I was able to glean important information from him. Those who worked as Mrs. Banks were also professional actors who made smart decisions that allowed us to shape and mold our fledgling family in a loose and trusting way.

This shared tactic work I have found is incredible to refine and streamline character motivations and nuances. Being able to share ownership of a role, being able to process together why a character would do a certain thing, or why they are reacting in a certain way, really helps you have a sounding board to flesh out those ideas. Most of these conversations happen quietly on the sides of rehearsal, when the director is busy working another scene and you don’t have to focus on the scene they are sketching, but often, the director will open it up to the doubles for input when working on the staging. You could compare it to class work, or a theatre study, fostering an air of collaboration and trust among all the actors, particularly the doubles. I can see how this practice
would be hard for some actors, allowing for another person, other than the director, to influence your character, however I think it also forces you to stray away from this tunnel vision people can get as actors, thinking our choices are the only choices. It can even be refreshing when you are having trouble finding the motivations of your character, or are stuck seeing the scene in a certain way, and then your double brings something completely different to the table. It’s important to point out that in this process, even during performances, the doubles aren’t forced to be exactly the same. Our shared objectives of the scene are the same, our blocking has to be the same in order for our lighting, and music cues to be set, but our tactics, and our delivery of our lines can be vastly different. It can be quite humbling when another actor is in your role, getting a better reaction, more laughs, higher praise, etc. This can be an ego blow if you aren’t comfortable with your choices. I think this shared tactic work is also different than studying a book or movie with the same character. Though similar, in that an outside pressure can influence your own choices, being able to discuss the character with someone whose own character isn’t fully actualized can help aid in your own development.

I say all this knowing that as a collaborative effort having a double can have its downsides: differences in methodology, in actor’s egos and personalities, education and talent levels, etc. This also allows for room for error in blocking. If you’re being given a specific piece of direction, and the double isn’t paying attention, it can lead to a lot of confusion later on when they do the scene again. So there can be a lot of disagreements of what the blocking is and isn’t, depending on if you or your double was paying attention. This also can lead to getting notes multiple times, for your double’s benefit, even if you adhere to the director’s notes yourself.
I’ve been fortunate enough to always have a double I’ve wanted to work with. Having worked at the Hale for most of my professional experience, and having performed there for over ten different productions at this point, I had only been single cast in two of the ten shows. All of my doubles have been open, communicative, and funny people. The only struggle I’ve ever experienced with doubles has been scheduling issues. I feel there would be a lot more disagreements in rehearsals if we weren’t allowed the freedom and autonomy that we have in our own individual portrayals. Giving us that room to explore and make the character our own results in having similar yet differing characters we can be uniquely proud.

Usually, it’s a sad day when rehearsals stop, and half of your cast you now rarely see except in brief passing as a double is covering for someone in your own cast, swapping a night, or possibly between Saturday matinees. You get to create a character with someone in tandem but also something that is wholly your own. The collaboration is a bonding experience between two actors working together for the same goal, and so to work so closely with them and then never get to perform with them gives you a great sense of community, but also a loss and sense of desire, continuing to want to work with them in the future.

During our sketching out of the final scene of the first act early in the process, we reached a scene that my double and I had previously discussed and had differing opinions on. It was this discussion that helped me appreciate the nuances that I had to add to this character and make it my own, because of my own personal connection to the material. This is the last scene George has before intermission, Mary Poppins leaves, and as an audience we see some serious family dysfunction. George Banks has thought he has lost his job, which to him, means that he will lose everything in his life that is
meaningful. As he enters into his home brooding, the children are being joyous and carefree, which drives him into a tantrum. This is the first time that we see cruelty and desperation from George towards his family. I asked how the director wanted me to portray this, and he told me to “go there,” meaning that he didn’t want me to hold back. This was a pivotal scene, where a lot of the dynamics in the story shift. It’s this moment that causes Mary Poppins to leave, and allows the family to live in this uncomfortable space for a time.

Personally, I struggle with accessing heavily emotional material. I tend to distance myself from the text, and my brain doesn’t allow me to recreate those emotions. This struggle was particularly of interest to me as I prepared for this tough scene in Mary Poppins. The reason this scene was so difficult for me to portray and that it resonated so strongly was the fact that as a child, I was raised in an emotionally and physically abusive household. My father’s abuse was generational, bleeding into my own families because that’s how it was done in the past. I remember being a child, frozen, immobile, being a witness as a sibling was shouted at, wrestled to the floor and abused. This violence was real and traumatic. Although a finger was never laid on me personally, it made no difference to a child younger than ten to witness it so close in their proximity. Anxiety and terror enters into my heart when there is a heated conflict, and in the fight or flight response, mine goes to the third option of freezing, even still. Over the years I’ve been able to process most of this childhood trauma, though it has left a mark, as apparent to me as visible scars. I’ve discovered that in heightened emotional moments, including those on stage, my emotions tend to detach, and my brain starts to compartmentalize, as a safety mechanism. Throughout my grad program this was an issue, as I was never able to fully express or emote in my acting. All of my professors
stated it was as though I had a cap, or a ceiling, a wall that I would hit, and not allow myself passed. I believe this is where that limitation originated.

In this play I was to portray the abuser, which was something that I could pull from witnessing firsthand. There are hints in the script that he also was from an abusive childhood. One of the lines states that he used to love astronomy, but his nanny beat it out of him. (Fellowes) In my mind, this man, who is desperate, hurt, and afraid, resorts to the only option that he sees left. This mounting pressure of the world that he lives in, he dips a toe across the line by lashing out, flaring up in a moment of weakness to show utter contempt to his household, to Mary Poppins, his wife, and belittling his own children. In that moment his wife stops him, and he retreats to his study. Not out of frustration, but rather, retreating into a sense of shame. We immediately see the family’s reaction to this, and seeing how this negatively affects the kids, who end up sharing their own contempt for their mother and father, trying to wound with their words with as much poison as they can muster. This is the moment in the show where he is at his lowest. This is where George shifts to be open to a new way of living, which clicks into place later on in the play. The new message he gleans is that family is more important than money, and that the value he is losing at home is not worth what he is gaining elsewhere. To a person who has lived through that, knowing that generational and emotional abuse in a family is real, which can and should end, I wanted to give this scene its due diligence. This was the perspective that I saw in the lines, the word choice, and the context. It was the only interpretation that I could see, because in my mind, it clearly was the right choice.

After working on the scene with the director, I started to realize that my perspective was a unique one. My double came from a different perspective, as a man
who is married and has children, and didn’t share the background of abuse that I had. In his mind he would never dream of treating his own kids in such a way or to belittle them with such damaging words or actions. His understanding of the scene wasn’t a redemptive arc, but that of a frustrated man, who doesn’t know what to do who got lost in the moment. It didn’t have heat to it, it didn’t feel as motivated to me, and it definitely didn’t have the same bite to it as did my interpretation.

The differences that we found in the character were those of personal backgrounds and opinions. To me, this was the crux of the show. It was the reason why this story was being told: to see a family whose path had drifted, be able to communicate and heal. At the center of that was my character, George. To not push to this emotional extreme, in my mind was a disservice to the story, and to those who in real life have gone through it. This musical could be a catalyst for someone to gain their own realization and catharsis in our theatre experience. I felt I had to allow myself to get to that dark place, to push through my own comfort levels, and to personify the feelings I wouldn’t allow myself to feel in life: allow myself to lash out in anger, and to feel that extreme emotion. I didn’t want this portrayal to feel fake.

The first time we rehearsed this particular scene was stressful to me. I apologized to the kids ahead of time, knowing that in real life I’ve been in their position, standing frozen on the sidelines while this torrent of untamed emotion happened. There weren’t extra people in the rehearsal, only the doubles sitting on the sidelines, the director and the stage manager, so I felt that I could express without judgment. I tried to put myself in the headspace that the character would be feeling, the feeling of despair slowly turned to frustration, then into contempt. After a few attempts, I knew I could have given it more. The director said nothing about the portrayal, and the kids said that I was pretty
scary, but I personally didn’t feel anything as I did it. I knew that I could do better with it, so I really tried to delve into it before we did the scene again. My double watched what I did, and marked through the same blocking, but I knew that we weren’t on the same page with it. He didn’t think the scene needed the gravitas. I asked the director, and he continued to give me permission to explore. I took it on myself to work on this scene, to give it authenticity and rawness, but it took me quite a while to be able to feel comfortable in it.

After weeks of working, the abusive scene reached a place that was dear to my heart and led to some great catharsis. When we were in previews, a hush fell over the audience during the scene. The tension in the room was palpable, and it lingered in the scene, which I felt aided the narrative. When that happened, I knew that I finally hit true to where I wanted to get emotionally in the scene and felt vindicated in my choices.
CHAPTER THREE:
REHEARSALS DURING COVID-19

Our rehearsal process began in earnest on March 3rd, with a few costume fittings, and music rehearsals before that time. Only two weeks later, as we were going to gather the entire cast to review Act One, we received an email stating that we would be on hold until we could be sure that this new threat, the coronavirus, or COVID 19, would be taken care of, or at least the proper mandated procedures for our safety could be implemented. At this point we had heard of it spreading across the U.S. and the first few weeks we were wary of its progress. Many of us tried to keep up to date with the news, knowing that it was going to hit us eventually. The theatre mandated that every person's temperature would be checked before entering the rehearsal hall, and asked if we had shown any symptoms.

From a theatre’s perspective it was very hard to want to shut down everything and cut the only source of revenue. This was right before the government shutdown and only the essential workers were going to work. Utah had not reported very many cases at that point and so most people didn't necessarily treat it with the utmost care that it could or should have been treated. At the Hale Centre Theatre, from the beginning, they were more concerned about its employees, crew, actors and most importantly, the audiences’ health than making money. It was then that the theatre decided that it was going to put us on hiatus.

During this break, my day job was considered essential, so I continued to work, but the fate of the theatre was up in the air, not knowing if the show was to be completely shut down. In this downtime it was hard to keep the motivation of wanting to memorize and rehearse by myself with this lingering feeling of unease. The shows
currently running in the theatre were also shut down, and the season was stopped indefinitely.

There were a handful of times that the Banks family including the maid and butler signed on a Zoom call in order to rehearse our lines together or practice the scenes that we had not sketched out yet. This was the first time that I had ever tried to rehearse anything over a web cam, and it was hard to connect emotionally to my fellow actors. It was a difficult time full of uncertainty, so when we tried to rehearse, much of the topic of discussion was the struggle to stay motivated. Every week, we would get a vague email about decisions being made, but never really informed as to what those decisions were. As the actors, there was nothing that we could do for the situation other than to wait it out, which was maddening. On top of that, the use of Zoom wasn’t as utilized as much as it was later in the pandemic, so we had connectivity issues, trouble with audio, missed appointments, and poor internet connections. The situation led us to have half-hearted line readings, and just going through the motions of reading through the script with no real drive. The rhythm of the script couldn’t be heard with the choppy connections, not knowing if someone missed their pickup line, or if the audio was dropped.

The original date for our show to start was April 29th, 2020, but that date passed by without any notice other than to standby. Near the end of this hiatus, we received a email saying we would resume rehearsals the following Monday. My Mrs. Banks and I decided to meet to go over our scenes in person. There wasn’t a vaccine for coronavirus at the time, and Utah’s numbers were still being figured out. Both cautiously, but optimistically, we met at her house to go over our scenes. We were both incredibly excited to start back up the process, and talked for hours about the prospect of getting
back into things. We kept our masks on as a precaution, but to be able to read with each other, and to get a sense of play again was the breath of fresh air that both of us were dying to have.

We were shut down for a solid two months, going back to rehearsals on June 1st, and I do not believe I will ever have another rehearsal experience like I did again. Finally, we were able to go back to rehearsal. Having not seen each other for months it was a good reunion, but it had its share of nuances. Having only roughly blocked half of the show for two weeks, months prior, our return seemed a little lopsided. We were no longer in the rehearsal hall, but in the main theatre space since there was no show running due to pushing back our own production.

Everyone in the cast was required to sign new modified contracts that added stipulations regarding the coronavirus, our safety, and the procedures which we had to follow; mainly, that we had to wear masks when feasible when backstage or indoors, we all had to stay isolated, staying in very distanced assigned seating, and we were not allowed to walk freely in the theatre. For the most part people respected those rules even if at the time some of them still did not believe the severity of the virus. These new rules were implemented for the entire rehearsal process starting in June until we opened in July and continued through our run.

There were early days when Coronavirus was talked about in hushed tones, and it was something that affected people far away from Utah, but it steadily crept closer and closer. This time of uncertainty was a great moment of reflection for me. I could drill my lines, I could try to work out more backstory, and objectives, but ultimately it reminded me of my initial thesis project of trying to rehearse by myself with no anchor. There are times when a one person show is being written, or performed, and you are isolated, but
inevitably you are going to have to work shop it with someone else. You are going to have to get someone else’s feedback. This was the first time that it truly struck me that theatre cannot be performed alone, whether that’s a director, a fellow actor, or more importantly, an audience. Someone to bounce things off of in order to figure out what the fuck it’s all about. This forced isolation made me want to share what I had, good or bad.

Having rehearsals in this theatre was surreal. The set pieces, and props were already finished, allowing us to use the space freely. The Hale Centre Theatre is a unique theatre, in that it has a hydraulic lift system in the floor, allowing up to eleven sections of the stage to be raised or lowered independently of each other, two side platforms that can cover the stage to allow set changes to happen after the stage is lowered, and an intricate fly system that would raise and lower enormous set pieces as well, so that transitions between scenes could be swift and seamless. Generally we would be in the rehearsal hall on the flat ground, and the stage manager would yell when there was a transition or a scene change so we were made aware of when the shifting stage would happen. In a regular rehearsal, this would lead to some problems of logistics later when the show was brought into the theatre during tech week, having actors run from the main stage floor to the basement barely making their entrance, or taking the elevator or stairs five floors up to the fly system to get lowered down again. Usually tech rehearsal can be stilted in working out these logistics, but being able to rehearse on stage, we had the time to work out a lot of the problems before they started.

Because of the pandemic, everyone was given an assigned seat in the house, spaced at least three seats apart from each other, and spaced every other row. The doubles sat next to each other, so they were able to communicate, but at a distance. If we
weren’t on stage rehearsing we weren’t allowed to wander, but had to remain in our seats, which created an interesting dynamic. We weren’t bonding in the same way that casts I’ve seen have in the past, going out to dinner, joking in the green room, etc. This connection that people get when performing together was rooted in the pandemic. We were going to perform and try to lift the spirits of those who would attend. It really felt as though a heavy burden was placed on us, to try to bring some light back to the population, and it was important to everyone who was involved. We were made aware of the risks, and all agreed to stay, bringing us together as a cast.

The week before we opened the show we entered into Tech. This is the time when rehearsals usually shift into the theatre proper and incorporate all the set, props, microphones, costumes and makeup. We only needed to add costumes and makeup to what we had been doing for weeks. Up until this point, we were all required to wear masks, even when we were on stage, so that we could be as careful as possible to not get sick. During tech was the first time that we were allowed to take off our masks when we were performing in the scene.

For most of our blocking we were already socially distant, being in an arena theatre, putting distance between characters is a great thing, it allows for most of the audience to see you at any given time, and the back row won’t lose anything like they would if you were too close. This compounded with the show being based in Edwardian London, so physical contact wasn’t the most proper at the time.

When we were told that we could take off our masks, naturally there was some hesitancy by some, and eager readiness in others. An observation that I did not anticipate, was my own reaction to seeing my fellow actor’s faces. Throughout most of the process we wore our masks, but never really witnessed the reactions and facial
expressions of the other actors, so during tech rehearsal we were now seeing the full performance of our scene partners for the first time. Seeing each other’s faces after not revealing them for months gave me an unforeseen problem: I personally could not stop smiling. This mixture of excitement in seeing their performance, the unacknowledged need for human connection in my own personality, and the reality that we were doing this show under very unusual circumstances continued to fill me to the brim with happiness. This resulted in a lot of breaking character, a lot of scene work that I had thought was solid in the weeks prior were now crumbling in ways in I didn’t realize was going to be an issue, giggle fits and smiling. There were moments where I would lock eyes with Mrs. Banks, and the smile would slowly creep in, and the cycle of not trying to smile would make you smile more, leading to avoiding eye contact from that point forward. Certain scenes we avoided eye contact altogether, so we were able to keep to the reality we were trying to create.

To add onto this personal struggle, the producers having now seen the show multiple times informed my director that the Mr. Banks we had collaborated on was too serious. This led to a difficult conversation with the director, my double, and I about the direction our character had grown. I don’t know if it was the producers evaluating that people needed something lighter because of the pandemic, or if they saw in it something that was different from when they originally saw it during our producer previews, but we both were told that from now on, our character needed to be more ‘childlike.’

From that point forward, my double and I took very different directions. His character was petulant, throwing tantrums, made odd noises, and I personally felt as though he did not have a character arc. His intent was to be silly. It was entertaining on the surface, but it didn’t serve the story, and didn’t have motivation at times. I plead my
case of why the character had to be serious and harsh at the beginning in order to go on this journey of self. Something in him has to change for the story to even work. Talking with the director, I tried to incorporate what the producers wanted while also giving credence to what the playwright laid down, as well as my own interpretation. Months of work shaping this character only to have it thrown out the window was something that I really didn’t want to come to terms with, but rather tried to approach it as another layer to add to this already complex character. The director agreed, and allowed me to continue, knowing that I had to and would fold in this new layer.

When my siblings came to the show, they were surprised, saying that I sounded like and looked just like our own father used to be. They all said that they viscerally reacted to that moment, which allowed them to get some catharsis with me in the show as well, which was my ultimate goal. This was important to me, because of the relationship that I have with my father now. Knowing that someone who hits rock bottom can change and become a completely different person was the reason why this role blossomed the way it did for me.

Unfortunately, three weeks into our six week run, I was told to pull it back. The producers felt that it wasn’t in line with the rest of the show. This note was given to me by the stage manager, so there couldn’t be any dialogue with them as to why this moment was important to me, and those who saw the show. I was told, ironically, to cap my emotions, and to not let myself get to the place that I felt did the scene justice. This filtered through the rest of my scene partners as well, and all of them disagreed with the choice as well. But with the producer’s giving the note directly, though late in what we thought was the finished product, we had to modify the show yet again to incorporate their wishes.
CHAPTER FOUR:
CONCLUSION

Within this process, and the role of George Banks in Mary Poppins, I feel that I have had a unique experience that will never be like this again. I’ve worked with doubles before, and I have always enjoyed the process and the safety that comes with another person tackling the same role. In this play, while my double and I disagreed with our approach, and our character’s motivations, I’ve learned that we truly are influenced by the relationship that we have with the source material in how we interpret the text. Having never seen a staged version of this story before, I held no context as to how the character is usually played. Having someone that I could see perform to compare, and process the text together, I felt that I had a better understanding of the differences that I was bringing compared to someone else. Throughout the process I also gleaned that he was new to acting, having only done a handful of community productions and had no formal training. In his mind, there was no issue with creating a character that was silly for the sake of being silly. Looking back, I wonder if some of the choices that I made were motivated by my own training, wanting to make something more meaningful in order to serve the story. As someone who wants to pursue acting as a career, to not push the story and try to share that passion with others is hard to push aside.

I felt the process of tackling the end of Act One for me was telling. It allowed for me to try to find ways in order to dig deeper than I thought I could, and if not for the training that I had previously received, combined with the extra months of preparation that I was allowed during the hiatus in the pandemic, I’m not sure I would have been able to access that level before that point.
Although these diverging opinions led to my being pulled back, I think that it was an important experience to have. I still firmly stand by my choices as an actor in regards to the telling of the story, having sat with George Banks in process for almost a year to date from being cast. The time that we were able to utilize due to the response of COVID-19, though tragic, was beneficial as a structure to allow continued work and rumination of our rehearsal process. Would I have delved so deeply had I not had that same amount of time? I chose *Mary Poppins* as a thesis topic before I knew any of these elements were in play, so being able to focus on these few topics allowed me direction that in my previous projects was found lacking. I doubt I’ll have an experience like this again, performing theatre in the midst of a pandemic, to hopefully raise the spirits of those around me, as well as to myself, giving some relief to the overwhelming malaise that settled over us in 2020.
APPENDIX A
REHEARSAL JOURNAL
March 3rd.

Rehearsal was rough. It was the first rehearsal that we have had for Mary Poppins to block. I’d missed all the music rehearsals and the sweetening that had taken place for the ensemble. We were to be memorized on the day of rehearsal which seems fairly standard to be prepared for the day. We worked on the first nine pages of the script, the introduction to the family, and Cherry Tree Lane. I found that my views of the character that I’m portraying, Mr. George Banks, and that of my Director Dave Tinney didn’t seem to align. Since this is the first rehearsal, and theatre is a collaborative art, I felt that I would do what I can, and what he wanted and go from there.

I would like to read the novel as the source material for this character study. From the script I’ve gathered what I feel is his motivations and personality, which I can discuss in further detail later on. But mainly, I felt that his house is in chaos, he has a wife that he loves, but doesn’t know how to express it, and trying to adhere to Edwardian society as a whole, he tries to establish that he is in charge, his wife is a subordinate and his children should be behaved. He does allude later on in the play that he was once just like Michael, and I feel that we need to see that. At the beginning of the play we see the status quo of the world that we see it. The nanny is leaving, the sixth in four months, and he is running late, but the routine has been set. I do not think him cruel, nor would he be ever except at one moment, during which he hits rock bottom,
thinking that he has lost his job, his home and will be out on the streets. This is the only moment I see that his cruelty shows through. And it immediately turns into being ashamed, and self pity.

During this rehearsal we were told our three objectives.... Super objective is we need to get to work. We are focusing through our wife who is the source of the problem. And our children are making it worse. This rehearsal was rough for me, as I was trying to be as memorized as possible, but not having the music rehearsal beforehand I felt behind. After repeating the scenes a few times the lyrics became jumbled in my brain and confused. With it became my own frustration and in it a mask of insecurity rather than openness to play. As this was the first day, I can’t beat myself up over it too brutally. My double was more prepared than me, but also much more dry. I feel that this character SHOULD be quirky and funny. He is an enjoyable character and man, he just doesn’t see things in a certain point of view until he has everything stripped from him.

After having blocked out the scene, and slept on it, the words are much more readily available now, and I am confident that the next time we do the scene it will be much smoother. Today I will have rehearsal again, and this time I only have a few lines, those of which we already went through during callbacks. Then I requested some time with the Music Director that I might be able to go over all of the music that I have in order to be more fully prepared later on.

The scene that we are preparing for is with the introduction of Mary Poppins. So my questions for myself would be, how does he react to the new help? Does he find her attractive? What is different about her that sets her apart from all the other nannies?
Mar. 4th

This rehearsal went much smoother. We were only to go over a quick two page scene where we meet Mary Poppins, and instead ended up going over the Introduction and the song that we had learned the previous night. During that, we were able to go over smaller details and adjust some things to make things much smoother. Having blocked the scene, I was able to recall the lines and blocking much more easily, rather than simply trying to memorize the lines with no context. I do feel that I need to reach out to the director in the direction to which he would like the character to go, because I feel that as articulated yesterday, I feel that what I can personally bring to the character is a fresh take on him. As an artist I feel that it’s important that we bring our experience, our talents, and our personality to a role, so that we might identify it as our own. That we are cast in a show not to just be a cog in a machine, but rather that we are able to work collaboratively to achieve a higher art. If I can make him relatable, and show his anxieties and ultimately his humanity, I think that I’ll be able to serve the story better, and also the audience who watches it. Tomorrow we are going to work on a scene where George and Winifred actually get to act together, and we are told that it needs to clip along. I hope that we’ll be able to take some time to discover and play in the space.

Mar. 13th

This week we were able to play with our character a little bit more than we have in the past. We finished act one, in which George, having to choose between two men looking for a loan, chooses the one with no collateral, instead of the man who wants to
“Make money out of money.” This scene is great, because it is able to show that George doesn’t belong in the world of banking in a sense. He is there and is as lost in this world as Winifred feels at home. He struggles to do the right thing with the older and more experienced bankers are looming over him in an oppressive manner. The scene is a pivotal one, showing to his daughter that a good man is better than a good idea, which inspires him to give the loan to Northbrook, the poor man in this situation, and refusing to give it to Von Hussler, a pushy German man. This creates tension later on, because he is suspended without salary until the know what to do with him. Von Hussler has gone to his rivals and at first glance, it seems he lost the bank a lot of money. This is important in his character development, since George is ruled by money. Its interesting to note at this point that when people are abused as children, they can start to form certain habits, and a form of PTSD is to constantly worry about the welfare of your own family when it comes to material possessions. So it’s reasonable enough to assume that George was traumatized by Miss Andrew in his youth, which he admits readily, that he was beaten. When she is brought into the home later on, he shouts “The Holy Terror!” And runs out of the room, and never in the script is it mentioned that he ever sees Miss Andrew again. There is a layer in that I would like to explore. I think that the context clues in the script can be used as tools to help with this. It would also explain how he doesn’t rationally handle stress, how he belittles his wife, and how he reverts to a more childlike state when he is dealing with something outside of his control.

The night after the bank scene, we blocked the scene that I knew that I was going to have the hardest time to handle, which was the scene where I am verbally abusive to my children and wife. I apologized to the kids playing the characters beforehand, and let them know that we were in rehearsal, which is a place for me to explore and to emote in
a safe environment. I have always been told that I am capped emotionally when it comes to my characters, not allowing myself to fully commit to the emotion of sadness, anger, happy, etc. That I am tentative, and careful, not allowing myself to let go into it fully. And perhaps at this rehearsal I didn’t either, but after shouting at them, and showing extreme anger, during the break, the children all came up to me saying that I was scary, which in its own way was comforting. The director seemed very pleased with my work. He didn’t ask me to give more or to change much from what I had envisioned. Maybe because of the nervousness I had in approaching the scene, I was more prepared than usual. I’m not sure.

Now that act one is finished, I think that I will continue to work on my lines and explore for Act Two, but I need to go back, and now really solidify the tactics, objectives, and history of each scene, and thoroughly break it down as well as go through an thoroughly dissect the language, to make sure that I am pronouncing things in a proper RP. I usually do pretty well when it comes to that, but going through and making sure wouldn’t hurt.

April 10th.

A lot has happened over the last few weeks. With the social distancing and regulations of COVID 19, we were stopped from taking part in rehearsals. After a week of taking out temperatures every night as a precaution, we were told that until further notice, we would need to comply with the states lock down and social distancing to minimize social contact. The two shows, Brightstar and Strictly ballroom that were running in my theatre were both canceled. The show after our show, Titanic, was also canceled. I think
that since we were already rehearsing, having blocked all of act one (We were going to
be reviewing Act One the night rehearsals were canceled) and knowing that this show is
going to be an extremely popular show, they decided to keep us on, continued to build
the set, work on lighting, and when we start rehearsing again, we will move directly into
the space with full set, lighting, props, etc. It’s nice to feel that the show is good enough
that they are banking on you, but it creates a huge amount of pressure. So what I am
planning on doing, is working specifically every day on my script, and trying to apply
different aspects that I know will need to be worked on.

Namely, I’ve gone over Act one as much as I can on my own. I’m trying to go through to
make the memorization word for word. I will be starting to comb through the script with
the tools that I learned in school. This is a part that I would like to really connect with,
and bring the best out of my performance as much as possible, connect with the
emotion, and love the language of it. By taking the lessons I had in my grad program
about connection of the breath, Linklater and Cicely Berry, Some dabbling in Alexander
Technique and the like. As I chronicle the work that I am doing, I hope that it will be
beneficial for me, that I will be able to better analyze what I am doing, cite any problems
that I might be making, and also help me later on in my acting career. I think that to go
along with that I would like to take care of the instrument of my body better, both in diet
and exercise, but we shall see if that will be the case. I would like to hit this study hard.
April 11

I was able to take some time today and comb through my script, highlighting and
compiling a list of everything on the ‘ask’ list. In RP there are certain words that
American’s say with a broad vowel making it a bright tone. Basically, that last, and ask have the same vowel tonality. RP however, has a different sound for that, in a list of words that for whatever reason, that I’m yet to learn, has a different tonality. They are closer to the vowel tone of father. So with this sound, we are able to very clearly differentiate between an American and a British speaker very quickly. After going through that I tried to memorize more of the scenes that we haven’t blocked yet. Hopefully the retention of the old scenes will remain with me over the next few weeks, but also I need the new dialogue to stick as well, so that we may dive into the word as quickly as we are able. The coronavirus has put a unique strain on this production, but hopefully it will be met with open arms as we are able to function as a full society again. Theatre is meant to be live. It’s a shared experience that is between storytellers and audience.

June 2nd

After two months of quarantine from the Coronavirus, which I will discuss at length at another time, we were finally able to resume rehearsals of Mary Poppins. Our rehearsals were canceled right as a were about to review Act One. While in the quarantine, they completed the sets, the lighting, most of the costumes, so coming back to rehearsal was surprising. We are able to use the actual show props, the actual set, and practice in the theatre itself instead of the rehearsal space. Definitely a unique opportunity that probably won’t present itself again. The first day back was a review of the opening of the show, and the set was build in a way that the study and the sitting room were reversed. Our director had to step away, so we were left to find what and where we needed to
change our blocking. It was pretty rough for all of us, but I was also told that I needed to review the music. I had never learned the music as I had to miss the first music reviews for being in New York auditioning for other shows. My music director quickly whipped together an mp3, and we continued on. I also received a note to watch my to’s in the dialect, so I’m going to comb through my script to highlight and fix those mistakes. All in all it was a great first night back.

June 3rd.

Last nights rehearsal covered the Bank scene. The first scene that George is really allowed to show some redeeming qualities. It’s a pivotal scene, which is what causes all the distress in his life until the finale. I actually love the harmonies in the music, and think it’s a quick and snappy scene. I’m not sure if other productions show George as a fish out of water, but I wanted to show that he is very uncomfortable and doesn’t belong, or thinks that he doesn’t belong in the bank in the first place. He is doing his best, and ultimately makes the correct decision, but only through his children’s promptings. The rehearsal went smoothly. The floor of the stage parts to raise up the lower platform to bring up the bankers, so we had to work on that aspect for a bit, then they had to review their choreography. After my double ran through the scene, and I was about to do it for the first time, the director talked me through some new blocking. After giving me the new blocking, he left, not having seen it. Another of his shows is going up in the smaller theatre in the same venue, and since its opening before us, it gets priority. I was able to do the blocking he asked for, and so now that’s set for now.
June 4th

Tonight was my first Music Review. The cast sweetened the show while I was in New York from mid January to mid February, so I hadn’t had a chance to learn any of the music, just sight singing and listening to the minus tracks that MTI provided. The first time the Music director heard me singing the music he was a bit worried. Said I hadn’t learned the music, and that I needed to learn it. Obviously I wanted to, and had tried to meet with him beforehand, but never got the opportunity. I don’t have a piano at home to plunk it out, so he recorded a short mp3 for me. When it came to the music review, I sang exactly that was on the page. After receiving notes, I like to not have to be told something again. The music director walked up to me afterward and told me that now that I’ve learned it, I can do whatever I’d like. But I had to learn it first. I see his logic. You have to have the foundational roots before you make something with your own flare, and own it yourself. With music, it’s hard for me, and I’m sure for others, to leave what’s on the page and own it. We do this by acting it, and putting emotion into what we’re singing. You could be technically flawless and still not breathe any life into a song. We do this by treating it as you would a monologue, going through and adding the right beats, the tactics, the partners, objectives... things that we should be doing in our scripts. The rest of the rehearsal went so well that we finished what we were going to accomplish that day, and the next day, finishing working on the whole show. It was nice to be a day ahead of schedule.

July 1st
Tonight was opening night. Generally in this theatre there are many chances to perform for smaller audiences before the show opens. There is a producer preview, where the producers get to approve anything or change anything that the see potential problems with, there is the final dress rehearsal that is usually an invited guest preview, where we are able to hear audience reaction, and see where the laughs are, as well as work out the timing. An audience is an important part of a show, it’s the reason why we as performers have a purpose, to tell this particular story. Due to Covid, we weren’t able to have anyone see our show until the night of the first performance. The roughly 1000 seat theatre was about 3/4 full, and it was great to hear the reaction of the audience. The energy is almost in a feedback loop, where the audience is feeding off of us, and then in turn they give us energy, and it continues as this give and take between us. I had a professor once who talked about how an actor is an empty teacup, and that we should be conscious of what is going on in the show, and allow ourselves to be an observer of the action, but also to allow the audience to fill us with the emotion that they are perceiving. We are an empty teacup, we shouldn’t fill it with our own emotion, that will take care of itself. I always thought that was an interesting interpretation, and I’m not certain I fully agree. But it is something that has stuck with me for years. Tonight was a great feeling, I was able to feel emotionally connected to my scene partners, and felt that we were all listening and responding naturally. Before the show I made sure to warm up vocally and physically. I challenged one of the ensemble to a plank contest as I sang. I think it was really beneficial to get my body in a warm place.

July 3rd.
Tonight was a good night, but I struggled with a note that was given to me. I’ll try to include it in the addendum in my thesis, but in a nutshell, the producer of my show, gave a note to me, through the director, and so through the stage manager, that I was being to real in my portrayal, and that I needed to be more Disney. There is a scene close to the end of Act One, where Mr. Banks has been suspended at the bank, and his children, being children, have pushed his buttons without realizing, so he has a sudden burst of anger, he lashes out, yelling at the household. I was told to tone it back. This was a hard note for me to take. I had rehearsed it and performed it fairly consistently without any complaints from the director or the producer that had scene it previously. I think the harshness of the delivery is justified, and propels the story forward. Jane lashes out at her mother after I lash out at them, causing Winifred to step forward to strike the children. Then once they go to their room they take out their frustration out on each other as well as their toys. This pushes Mary Poppins to leave, so the children can learn and grow from the experience. Its the heart and core of the show, because it shows George at rock bottom, so that he is allowed to transform into the man that he should, a man focused on family, and loving his two adorable children. I was told to scale it back, and I will be honest in saying that I wanted to raise a fuss. The stage manager showed me the email that contained the note, and I requested to get the directors number to discuss how exactly I was to portray it. The note said less anger, more exasperation. So I tried that as I went out on Friday. It was rough. It seemed extremely flat. Perhaps the audience had a different experience, but it just felt lifeless to me. That it wasn’t being honest to the moment, the characters... Hopefully as I continue to work on it I will be able to figure out exactly the right balance to do it at.
July 6th

Tonight was a good night, I had a few people in the audience that I hadn’t seen in years, so I wanted to give them a great performance. How do you give a better performance than a regular night, while staying consistent, not forcing anything, and sticking with the emotional truth of what was in the script and laid out by the director? I think we as actors are tempted to change things when we want to show off, but it then alters what it is that we are doing. To combat this, what I like to do, in order to give the best performance, which I should probably do more as the show continues, is to warm up that much more, stretch that much more, practice and warm up my voice, that much more. Specifically go through my lines that much more, and then when on stage, listen that much more. I think these are the tools that we can have in order to have a better performance. By being more fully prepared to accomplish the task of openness and honesty by being open to those experiences. Its no surprise that being more prepared is a direct correlation to a better performance in my mind.

July 10th.

Tonight seemed like I was on fire. From the very first scene the audience was responding very well, and seemed that they were there for a great time. A wise older actor told me once that 90% of our shows are going to just be shows. There won’t be anything exceptional about them, they will just be the job. Then there is 5% that will be terrible shows, through no fault of our own. For some reason connection isn’t there, the audience isn’t responding, and they are no buying what you are selling. Then the
remaining 5% is going to be the best shows of your life, through no fault of our own. The audience will resonate with you, you will have great timing, and energy, and everyone on stage will work together and feel as though they created something magical. I think that tonight was one of those nights. Nothing in my performance changed, but perhaps those who were perceiving it has changed a little bit.

July 11th.

Today during our matinee, the gossip train was pulled into the station. Coronavirus has placed an interesting strain on the theatre community. Our theatre has followed ever mandate and law in order to open, and to keep as safe as possible in regards to the safety of the actors, the audience and employees. This isn’t enough for some people in the community who feel that they should not have opened up yet. Apparently we are the only Regional theatre in the country who is open currently. We are only Non Union, but it is an $85 million theatre, so them being open is a huge presence in the region. An actor in the opposite cast came down with Covid over the Fourth of July Weekend when we didn’t have the show. They called their double to have them cover while they Waited for their results, so they hadn’t been in the building since they contracted it, everyone was covered and the issue is being addressed. But this theatre, being as prolific as it is, is a huge target to those companies who aren’t performing at the moment, so there has been heated arguments online about being irresponsible, casting judgments, and through the rumor mill gossip has spread. Misinformation is running rampant, and it is hard for an actor who works in the show to have to deal with peers that have that mindset. When people have personal issues with a theatre instead of actual fact based
arguments, it’s an issue that should not be made public, or at least not sugar coated in the name of justice, health and community concern. It’s hypocrisy that ruins reputations, and I have seen many actors who now will never work again, at this theatre or in this theatre community from the comments that they have chose to share. It’s troubling, but apparently they don’t see it as a culling. Time will tell. It as far as I’m aware did not change the performance, but the energy in the green rooms and back stage was palpable of fiery indignation.

July 13th

With the sensitivity of COVID happening, I am grateful for the opportunity for our theatre to be so concerned for the actors, as well as the crews well being. The show was canceled tonight, as one of our cast members was not exposed to the virus, but rather potentially came in contact with it, so they canceled the show as a precaution. That is a lot of revenue for the theatre to lose on a supposition, but the fact that they were willing to shut down do to the hint of it being dangerous is a good theatre to me.

July 15th

Waiting for the cast member to be tested and the results of the test to come back negative or positive we had to cancel this evenings performance as well. No one else in the cast has shown any symptoms and this was done as a precautionary measure.
Shut down til the July 28th

July 29th
IT feels as though this was an opening night, again. We haven’t done the show in nearly three weeks, and it was refreshing to finally come back to familiar material, to see fellow actors that we hadn’t seen in weeks, in what felt like months. The energy was indeed palpable. The audience themselves were fully supportive as we came back, seeming almost as one of the cast as well, an old friend we hadn’t seen in forever. As an actor this felt as though it was a very unique experience, taking such a break during a run of a show. But once the makeup was worn and the costumes were dawned, it seemed as though we hadn’t missed a day. Perhaps the biggest difference was that everyone was present, everyone zeroed in on what was going on in the show, every scene, to make sure that it wasn’t them if anything went wrong. Over the weeks shut down, I didn’t look at the script until about a day or two before. And only then a precursory glance, nothing in depth or studious. I sang through my songs on the way to the theatre. But the muscle memory of the show was there. There was a new rule mandated stating that we had to wear masks back stage until we had to go on for our scenes, as well as try to maintain social distancing of six feet when we could. Mrs. Banks didn’t have pockets in her dress, so I held onto her mask when we went into the pit to ride up the stage as it came up for our next scene. I sat at the desk in the dark waiting, and as the stage was rising up, and the lights started to come up as well, I realized I was still wearing my mask, so I hurriedly whipped it off, tearing it for the rest of the night. It was easily replaced, but it
was a moment that you had to get used to. The Muscle memory hadn’t been established yet.

July 31

This show was much more like a regular show. It ran smoothly and everyone seemed to enjoy it. Having a pandemic during a show, depending on how you look at it can definitely be considered a blessing, because you treat every show as if it was your last. It becomes precious in a way that it is a gift to be able to perform. To do what you love for people who are willing to risk their health to be there. Its kind of a beautiful thing.

August 1st

I think Saturday matinees are actually one of the best audiences that you can have, reason being, everyone is awake, the actors have mid day energy, you aren’t fatigued from whatever job you had during the workweek if you work, and you don’t have a late night out. So all in all its a great show energy to walk into. You feel energized and warm, and you feel as though you get to play with your fellow actors, because everyone there is there to have a great time. Every show should feel like this as well.

Aug 3rd.

Today was a fairly loosey goosey day, as they say. Everyone had brought in a restless energy, no one really knowing why. I felt it too. The energy followed us onto the stage,
where we tried to stay consistent with our choices, but some things seemed out of control. There was a particular moment with Mrs. Banks where I am slumped down into my office chair pouting, which is as directed, but generally speaking, my focus is thrown introspectively, my eyes focusing out towards the audience. Today, our eyes met. The realization that my position was ridiculous, and that we had never looked in each others eyes until this today made both of us lose the tension in the scene, and gave us a real human connection, just not the connection that we were hoping for. She started to smile, which made me start to smile, and as we are underscored, we had to say our lines. The smile could be heard in the dialogue if one was listening closely, but I’m not certain that anyone who hadn’t seen the show a million times would notice. The girl who plays Jane was hit in the face accidentally by a chimney sweep, which led to her getting a black eye. One of the ensemble members, who is very very seven months pregnant, during SuperCal, had her skirt fall to her ankles, possibly due to the size of her waist not being the same as it was. There was also an incident with a chair leg snapping off. Luckily everything else has remained secure. It is shows like this that keep you from being complacent. But being able to be consistent and relying on your fellow actors that no matter the choices or the mishaps, you’ll still have a decent show, because you trust in them and they trust in you.

Aug 5th.

Today I took the time to vocally prepare more than I usually have been. Every two weeks or so, I do some vocal exercises as well as stretch quite a bit in order to feel loose. I can tell when I need to do this when I am listening to the tracks that I sing in the show and
it’s a struggle to hit those bottom notes. Stretching down into the pelvic floor and allowing yourself to breathe deep and support your sound, you can easily achieve a more accurate and more full sound. As an actor, I SHOULD be doing these things before every show, but we do get comfortable in our routines. And if the warming up isn’t part of that routine, or if the carpool is running late, or seeing someone we haven’t chatted with in a while, the first things to go are those that we don’t make into a priority. The show was a great one, the energy was normalized again, and it seemed that everyone on the stage was very present and connected. Perhaps it was warming up, or not wanting a repeat of the day before with all the mishaps.

August 8th

Today I performed two shows, the first with my cast the other with the other. I had to switch with my double because he covered for me on Friday. There is a definitive difference with the two casts, and its almost palpable. I was trying to put a finger on it, and the best way that I can describe it is the difference between the two cast is thus: my cast perform a show together, where the other cast performs a show. The other cast doesn’t have quite the same camaraderie as the the cast that I was in. It feels that my cast is more open on stage, allowing for us to play and react to what’s going on on stage. Will we make different choices? No, we will make the same choices, but through the choices that are unfolding on stage at the moment. I think that’s an important distinction to make in regards to what happens in the rehearsal process. Things should be set in their ways, and the exploring should be done, but the discoveries still continue to happen. Every night should be fresh in their discovery, but it’s still the same choices
being made. The other cast, not reacting but going through the motions seemed to do the same thing, but it wasn’t fresh. It was something that was repeated. It wasn’t alive in the moment.

Aug 10th

Being back with my cast was a welcome feeling. Its nice to find some level of comfort and play in those that you are acting with, a level of trust that you can rely on. Having said that, the show had a few hiccups that went in our favor, which is always a wonderful way for hiccups to happen. During a crucial scene where Mr. Banks’ world is falling apart, he decides that he is going to sell the family heirloom, a vase, so that they can finally make ends meet, as he picks up the vase, the maid bumps into him, making the vase shatter to pieces, allowing him to find the gingerbread stars that he had hidden inside when he was a boy. Well, during this particular scene, I bumped into the maid, and pieces of the vase flew in all directions, one piece landing on her. I slumped to the floor next to the couch as I am blocked, as she hot potatoes this piece of vase. It slips out of her hands, and the sharpest corner finds purchase, straight into my skull. It smarted as it happened, but in the moment, and trusting my fellow actors, I allowed the stimulus to affect the performance, so I acted dazed, and slumped over onto the couch for a few seconds. I think it was a valuable lesson in action/reaction. The actress apologized profusely when we reconnected backstage and I reassured her that everything was alright. But as I’ve mentioned before, it’s elements such as this, in live theatre that truly
allows for spontaneity and embodiment of the characters. It keeps it in the present.
Focused.

Aug 12th.

Tonight’s performance was one of the top 5%. I had an old actor friend once explain to me this philosophy and it really resonated with me, and since it has stuck. 5% of your performances are going to be bad, with no fault of your own. Costumes tear, the technical aspects don’t work, the jokes don’t land, the audience doesn’t laugh, and this is all at no fault of your own. But it just doesn’t work. Another 5% of your shows are going to go great, through no fault of your own. The audience is present, everything times out right, things run smoothly, and if they don’t it’s celebrated rather than diminished and it makes you and the audience resonate even more. The other 90% are just part of the job. They are just shows. You going to work. They can be great shows, they can be transformative for those who watch it, but for you, they could just be another show.

Tonight’s performance the audience was with us completely. They laughed at every quip, they applauded enthusiastically for every song, every scene, and were active participants throughout. It was a really good night. I have a theory about this, that I like to call sound theory. If the audience can hear you for the first ten minutes of the show without interruption, and they can feel the rhythm as well as hear ALL the dialogue spoken, that allows the audience to relax, and to sit back and enjoy the show. They will laugh, they will be with you. If there is any sense of hiccup in hearing you at the beginning of the
show, they will be a quieter audience. Not that they don’t enjoy the show, but they will be quieter so that they won’t miss anything. The minor bump in the first ten minutes makes them wonder if they have missed something, so they freeze up and more actively listen. This can throw some actors off, thinking that their performance might be suffering, or not as good that night, but in reality, it could just be the minor glitch at the beginning.

Aug 14th

Tonight was an interesting show. Everything was running smoothly, the cast was in high spirits, and we all seemed to be going through the show with some energy and excitement. Then, when it came to the pivotal moment of George Banks finding the gingerbread stars in the vase, realizing that his children and his family are what matters most in his life, a problem happened. The vase on stage broke, as it is supposed to, but the technician in charge of those specific props didn’t place the gingerbread stars inside. As an actor who had to think relatively quickly, I had to use something... So I grabbed some fragments of the vase and palmed them, obscuring them from the audience as best as I could, and used those instead. My blocking is to place them on the mantelpiece so that Bert can pick them up later, but this part wasn’t integral to the plot. So I put the makeshift ‘gingerbreads stars’ into my pockets, and carried on with the scene. Its another risk of live theatre, to rely on someone else to do something so simple, yet so important.

Aug 15
The show tonight was just another show to be honest. The only real change was that our Mary Poppins was gone, so her double covered her show. I didn’t realize that the other had gone until I was on stage with her double. She is a wonderful Mary, so it was more a surprise of something different, rather than shock of disappointment.

Aug 17th

I feel that my reply synopsis of Monday could be shared word for word for tonight and it would be completely the truth. The show tonight was just another show to be honest. The only real change was that our Mary Poppins was gone, so her double covered her show. I didn’t realize that the other had gone until I was on stage with her double. She is a wonderful Mary, so it was more a surprise of something different, rather than shock of disappointment.

Aug 19th

Tonight was a bit of a shake up. The first song is always something that I feel is truly important. If the audience can get through the first fifteen minutes of the show without hiccup or hinderance, then when the time comes for us to get into more complicated scenes, they will be with us. Tonight during the opening number where we are introduced to the family, before Mary Poppins comes in to the show, George is trying to get to work, and is hung up on trying to find his hat. During this scene the entire household’s motivation is to find this hat. Michael is supposed to have stolen it, and
wears it onstage during his entrance, then it gets taken by our servant, Robertson Ay. Well, the little boy who plays Michael rushed off the stage, and didn’t return wearing the hat, what distracted him I will never know. SO we are looking for the hat, and in the song where there is to be the discovery of it, we basically had to fudge through some improved line in order for it to make any sense. While this was technically fine, the minor hiccups like that leads to a quieter audience. It’s not necessarily that they didn’t enjoy the rest of the show, its just that they tend to have to pay more attention, and in so doing, they tune in more. Just quieter. I never did ask him what happened, because it didn’t really matter. The joys of live theatre.

Aug 21

Tonight was another interesting show, which I hope isn’t the start of a trend. Generally speaking this show would have had more than 70 performances, for one cast, so over the span of six to eight weeks you would have your hands full, but with the issues that we’ve had with covid, our shows have been greatly reduced. I do know that it one of the reasons for the misfortune during our show today. We had a weekday matinee, and schools are starting back up this week. Our show started at 3:30, meaning that we had to be there by 2:45. Everyone was there, checked in and accounted for except for one person. She plays Mrs. Corry, the Talking shop owner who is on about an hour into the show. I’m not certain if she has a later call time or if they weren’t worried about it, but she wasn’t present when the show started. Well, her scene kept creeping closer and closer as the show began, and she was nowhere to be found. Luckily, we have talented people who are in our cast. The woman who was playing Mrs. Lark, said that she could
do the scene in her stead. So, when the time came, they went to the Talking Shop, and she did the scene without a hitch, with Mary and Bert singing and trading off the rest of the song of Super Cal. It was moments like that where you love performing as it’s something that fresh that happened, everyone was positive and supportive in the experience, and it didn’t happen to you! Turns out the actress who did play Mrs. Correy showed about three minutes after the scene concluded. The school that she works for was surrounded by parents picking up there kids, and because of Covid, it was harder for them to get checked out, making it a longer process. Apparently she was caught in the parking lot of her school for over an hour trying to leave. That’s why the call time is as early as it is... but accidents sometimes happen.

Aug 22nd

There are times when one can take a note, gracefully and when one chooses to fight. Today was one where I chose to fight. It wasn’t necessarily something that was a big deal, but I suppose it was my integrity that was in question and I would die on that hill. During tech, we were asked to be more childlike, so I thought about when I was a child and tendencies I had when I was a boy. I tried to incorporate them into the show. Little things mainly... slouching low into the chairs, polishing my shoe on the back of my pantleg, etc. But there was one in particular that I chose to do that I thought was over the top, but I was never corrected. During the scene right at the end of Steppin Time, we ride the elevator lift up to the stage, and I am sitting on the sofa. But what I chose to do instead, was I sat with my head hanging upside-down, with my legs laying over the back of the couch, my head near the ground. I used to watch television like that when I was
bored as a child. Then when the chimney sweeps come in its this big shock, and I have to reorient myself in order to understand what's going on. Well for some reason unbeknownst to me, the evening prior was the first time that stage management had ever seen me sit in that position before. So tonight, before the performance, the stage manager came into the dressing room to give us notes, my note being, to do the original blocking of that scene. And I will tell you that I fought for it. I said that it was my original blocking and that I had done it consistently every night since the show started. Which was true. They asked me if I had any proof... to which I had all the other actors who rode the elevator up with me vouch for me. The stage manager still seemed to not believe me, but I think that was out of her own pride rather than trying to do things correctly. It might not have been the most gracious thing that I’ve ever done, but it was something that meant something to me. On a different note, I was able to perform with Michelle, the other Mrs. Banks, and she was an absolute delight. I feel that her energy mixed with ours on stage was fresh, spontaneous and new, since we hadn’t performed together in weeks. We reacted to each other and were actively listening to one another, which is the goal. Cecily and I do that just fine, but there was real connected listening with someone knew.

Aug 24th

The way that I’ve chosen to warm up for this role is less extensive in regards to the physical. It’s not the most physically demanding show that I’ve ever had to perform, so a lot of the warm ups that I do involve a good amount of vocal warmups, as well as dialect work, trying to articulate and smoothing out my vocal range. I would suggest this for a
nonsinging part as well, as it tends to allow the musicality in the dialogue to come through better. I try to stretch, again, not extraneously, but enough that when breathing I can take a full breath, so generally stretches that will help drop the pelvic floor and loosen my tension in the body. Before going on stage, I was asked once why I shake out my limbs. I was asked if it was for nerves. I told them no, it wasn’t for nerves, but I shake my arms and legs so that I can get the circulation going, so that I can be aware and present of what my body is doing. Wake it up. As actors I feel that a lot of us tend to skip this part. We allow ourselves to become complacent in the part, and just go with the flow, myself included. Hopefully I can be more diligent and make it into a habit of taking care of my body and allowing to get into the right mindset before going onstage.

Aug 26th

As was the case with the missing hat earlier in the run, there needed to be a little improvisation with during the Steppin Time scene once again! The girl who brings in the telegram to tell me that the bank wants to see me at the close of business tonight didn’t come on stage.... So luckily, Bert came over to me and we had a discussion, silently, and then I launched into the scene as usual. Apparently she was in her Vom, waiting to come on, thinking about her children and that she hardly gets to see them now that school started, and then suddenly it was her cue line, and then she was supposed to be off. So wandering minds is the culprit and cause. Not to worry though, I think that was one of the more smooth improvisations that we’ve had to do in this run, so hopefully no-one noticed.
Aug 28th

Today I shared one of the most important things I think a person can share with another human being. Food. And not just any food, I brought with me today, the best chocolate chip cookies in the whole world. I don’t say this with hyperbole. Food, to me, is an important part of the acting process, or as a whole, the human experience. Eating together is something that humans do to establish who is in their tribe, we don’t eat with enemies. This is something that in this day and age is a lot harder to comprehend, especially with those who are diet restricted. So I also asked around and found out those who were specifically gluten intolerant and will be bringing them a treat later. I do this so that I can show camaraderie in the cast and crew. I make it a point to try to learn everyones name that is in the cast and crew so that I can talk to them freely. Its important I feel to be personable and honest. Have some real connection with people changes the dynamic. For the better.

Aug 29th

Having a great dressing room is one of the best positive experiences that you can have during a show. When I said that building camaraderie with the cast and crew was important, I think it stands to reason that having a good dressing room, with interesting conversations, delving into any and all topics, counts as bonding. I think that its great for clear communication, for understanding where people are coming from, and how to gain that connection with you fellow cast mates. You will never spend more time with anyone else than those who are in your dressing room as you prep. And since Covid
happened, we really weren’t allowed to congregate anywhere else. All of us in our room had worked together before, but also with varying backgrounds. We were able to openly discuss politics, religion, diets, relationships, school, and of course theatre. I think that every opportunity is an opportunity to grow and to learn, and when you are gleaning what you can from those around you. In theatre you should always be trying to learn, to better yourself and to continue to grow as a person. I think that a lot of that is studying theatre directly, and I think another way is just purely human interaction. When we can draw closer to what we feel is humanity, we ourselves become better actors. More Empathy. And now a days, we could use a lot more of that.

Aug 31

There was a masterclass that I took years back, I forget the name of the person who taught it, but the class was an interesting subject. It spoke of How we need to leave things at the door. If we are actors and we are coming into a space, we need to acknowledge that things can be hard in life outside of theatre, but we need to take those personal feelings of ours, and leave them outside, like suitcases, waiting to be picked up later as we leave for the night. I think this analogy was a great reminder that we are all human, and that we all have our own baggage that we carry. If we can empathize with each other more as people, then we can show greater connection on stage.

Sept 4th
Tonight had to be one of the most stressful, but also I good lesson in through line shows I’ve ever done. It was the last scene that I do in the first act. The scene where I enter upset about the bank. I storm in and Winifred asks if I’m alright or if anything is wrong. Well tonight, I storm in and slam down my briefcase as usual, the maid and servant there in silence, but no Winifred. After a slight hesitation I go through the motions that I usually do during the scene, I throw my hat at Robertson Ay, I take off my suit coat jacket, throw it onto the couch, and then flop onto the couch myself. The audience laughs. We wait for what seems to be an eternity, though in real time it was about five to ten seconds, hoping that she would enter. She didn’t. The only thing I could think of would be that she was in the wings waiting and didn’t realize she was on... so I called out, “Winifred!” The audience laughs, she doesn’t come on. Another five to ten seconds go by before I yell again, “Winifred!” The Audience laughs. She doesn’t come on. At this point I am racking my brain trying to figure out what I should do or say that would make sense to make the scene move forward. I hoped that even the stage management might call the show for technical difficulties. I sit up from the couch and say to the maid, “Will you please, go find, my wife?” And she rushes off stage as quickly as she can. I lay back on the couch, and wait for a few more seconds, all of my ideas gone... and the butler starts humming the Harry Potter theme. After the fact he said he didn’t recognize what he was humming and just started humming. After completing the first musical phrase of that song, Winifred finally comes on her first line fitting, “George, you’re home early, are you ill?” Comes to the couch, and slaps me. We carry on with the scene. She explained later after her profuse apologies that she had no excuse at all, she was sitting in her dressing room with the monitor turned down, and she got out of her show rhythm by going to the bathroom at a different time than she usually does, so she was just out of
her flow. Seeing as how it was the last week of the run, we didn’t really think about anything going awry. Thankfully, it wasn’t anything serious. When things go wrong, and the audience is aware that something is going wrong, then I feel that is also the magic of theatre. I live for those moments as an audience member. There is a part of me as an actor that when I see an actor on stage have to give up, there is a great amount of humility that has to be offered. IF that was the only problem that this audience witnessed I would have thought that still a rocky show, but a good one. I’m afraid that I was the cause of the next problem, which I admit was my own fault. Another stage manager was calling the show that night, so our usual one was backstage at her desk, I wandered over to talk to her, and she hadn’t heard that Winifred didn’t come on stage. While telling her the story, Mrs. Banks whispered loudly, “are you tattling on me?” And I rushed to her side and took her hand to go on to our final scene. We run out, where I am to give Michael a new kite. We run out and I say, “What do you think of……….” And I run off stage to pick up the kite in the Vom that I had forgot to grab, and run quickly back, “This?” He runs over for a hug, and I pick him up, carrying him over to our original spot. Now this is all underscored with music, so now our timing is off. Winifred and I try to rush things but the kids are taking their lines as learned, so everything is going off early, including Mary Poppins flying in the air around our heads as we are trying to finish our lines. SO for the final night of performing, I messed up the final moments. It was a hot mess, but the audience, crew, and cast all felt the live wire energy of the moment. We were all present, and everyone acknowledged that it was a disaster.

Sept 5th
The final performance was a Saturday matinee. It always felt odd to me to close a show on a matinee, but we redeemed ourselves of the show the previous evening, and everything went smooth sailing. It was a wonderful experience that was unique in its execution, I was hired a year to the day of us closing, Sept. 5th, a year prior. With Coronavirus delaying and hindering our process, it was a show that I will never forget. And we were told, with the 65,000 patrons that graced our audience, not a single person was contact traced back to the theatre. The protection measures that were in place worked. Which was nice to hear. I was glad to be a part of such a unique experience, one of the few running Regional theatres in the United States. I am glad that I didn’t take as big a hit as our community has as a whole, and now onto the next audition and show.
APPENDIX B
LINE NOTES
MRS. BRILL, ROBERTSON AY, JANE, MICHAEL
WE ARE NEVER GOING TO FIND THE PERFECT NANNY!
(The study door flies open and GEORGE strides out.)

GEORGE

Nonsense!

PRECISION AND ORDER,
THAT’S ALL THAT I ASK.
THE RUNNING OF A HOUSEHOLD, A STRAIGHTFORWARD TASK
THE CHILDREN, THE SERVANTS
ARE ALL YOUR DOMAIN
WHilst I REMAIN THE SOVEREIGN OF CHERRY TREE LANE.

Coat!

(GEORGE holds his arms out and WINIFRED helps him into it as he continues to berate her.)

The simple truth is you’ve engaged six nannies in the last four months, and they’ve all been unqualified disasters!

A NANNY SHOULD GOVERN.
A NANNY SHOULD RULE.
A NANNY IS A PARAGON WHO SUFFERS NO FOOL.
A NANNY’S A STALWART.
OUR CHILDREN WOULD GAIN
BY HAVING SUCH A NANNY IN CHERRY TREE LANE.

WINIFRED

Of course, George, but—

GEORGE

SO TAKE CONTROL OF SITUATIONS.
SHOW YOUR AUTHORITY WHEN INTERVIEWING STAFF.
YOU KNOW YOUR ROLE, THEY KNOW THEIR STATIONS.
EFFICIENCY AND FORETHOUGHT CUT THE JOBS IN HALF?

Briefcase!

(ROBERTSON AY dutifully delivers the briefcase.)

WINIFRED

I thought Katie Nanna would be firm with the children. She always looked so cross.
WINIFRED gives an umbrella to GEORGE.

WINIFRED
If only we could find someone like your old nanny.

GEORGE
I'm afraid that's not realistic, my dear. Few women alive could manage Miss Andrew's standards of efficiency. Besides, we could never afford someone of her caliber.

MRS. BRILL, ROBERTSON AY
PRECISION AND ORDER.
HE WANTS NOTHING LESS.

ROBERTSON AY
IT'S LIKE AN ARMY BARRACKS--

MRS. BRILL
YES, AND WE'RE IN THE MESS!

MRS. BRILL, ROBERTSON AY
NO WONDER THE NANNIES ARE DRIVEN INSANE.
WE'RE LIVING IN A MADHOUSE IN CHERRY TREE LANE.

GEORGE
Now, Winifred, if you do want to please me--

WINIFRED
You know I do, George.

GEORGE
Very well. Then place an advertisement in The Times stating that Jane and Michael Banks require the best possible nanny at the lowest possible wage.

(JANE and MICHAEL have been listening from the staircase.)

MICHAEL
We'd better give them ours before they make another mistake!

(MICHAEL and JANE descend the stairs as GEORGE continues.)

GEORGE
I would stress that--

JANE
Father.

WINIFRED
What's that you're holding dear?
JANE
We've written our own advertisement.

GEORGE
What on—

(WINIFRED notices the paper JANE is carrying.)

WINIFRED
Please, George. I think we should hear it.

GEORGE
Now, Winifred. None of your theatrics.

WINIFRED
It won't hurt to listen.

JANE
Wanted. A nanny. For two adorable children.

GEORGE
Adorable? Well, that's debatable, I must say.

#3 - The Perfect Nanny

JANE
IF YOU WANT THIS CHOICE POSITION,
HAVE A CHEERY DISPOSITION.
ROSY CHEEKS, NO WARTS.

MICHAEL
That's the part I put in.

JANE
PLAY GAMES, ALL SORTS.
YOU MUST BE KIND, YOU MUST BE WITTY,
VERY SWEET AND FAIRLY PRETTY.

GEORGE
Well, of all the ridiculous—

WINIFRED
George, please.

JANE
TAKE US ON OUTINGS, GIVE US TREATS.
MICHAEL

SING SONGS, BRING SWEETS.
NEVER BE CROSS OR CRUEL.
NEVER FEED US CASTOR OIL OR GRUEL.

Blech!

JANE

LOVE US AS A SON AND DAUGHTER.

MICHAEL

AND NEVER SMELL OF BARLEY WATER.

I put that bit in, too.

JANE

IF YOU WON'T SCOLD AND DOMINATE US,
WE WILL NEVER GIVE YOU CAUSE TO HATE US.
WE WON'T HIDE YOUR SPECTACLES SO YOU CAN'T SEE,

MICHAEL

PUT TOADS IN YOUR BED OR PEPPER IN YOUR TEA.

JANE

HURRY NANNY, MANY THANKS.

JANE, MICHAEL

SINCERELY,

JANE

JANE-

MICHAEL

AND MICHAEL.

JANE, MICHAEL

BANKS.

#4 – Cherry Tree Lane (Part 2)  Winifred, Jane, Michael, Mrs. Brill, Robertson Ay, George

GEORGE

That's quite enough tommy rot for one day!

(GEORGE takes and tears up the advertisement and throws it in the fireplace, where a
gust of wind carries it up the chimney.)

Will you please go upstairs and let me get to work!
(The children go.)

WINIFRED

They were only trying to help.

GEORGE

It won't help anyone to make me fat!

(The wind picks up outside.)

Where's my hat?

(MRS. BRILL rushes to get an overcoat while WINIFRED searches for the bowler hat.)

WINIFRED

GEORGE, DEAR,

GEORGE

(to MRS. BRILL)

Hat!

MRS. BRILL

(to ROBERTSON AY)

Hat!

WINIFRED

I thought you put it down here.

ROBERTSON AY

(in panic)

Hat!

MRS. BRILL

(shouting at ROBERTSON AY)

Hat!

WINIFRED

I'm sure a bowler hat can't simply disappear.

JANE, MICHAEL, MRS. BRILL, ROBERTSON AY

DO YOU THINK THEY'LL FIND A NANNY WHO DOESN'T RUN AWAY?

WINIFRED

Ah! There it is!

(ROBERTSON AY presents GEORGE with his hat. GEORGE looks at it.)
GEORGE

He's brushed it with boot polish!

(ALL "mimic" GEORGE as he reiterates his mantra)

ALL

PRECISION AND ORDER,

THAT'S ALL THAT I ASK.

THE RUNNING OF A HOUSEHOLD,

A STRAIGHTFORWARD TASK

THE CHILDREN, THE SERVANTS

ARE ALL YOUR DOMAIN

GEORGE

WHilst I REMAIN THE SOVEREIGN,

Mind you use the day well!

WINIFRED

YOU REMAIN THE SOVEREIGN,

GEORGE

I shall be home at six o'clock sharp.

ALL (EXCEPT GEORGE)

HE REMAINS THE SOVEREIGN

ALL

OF CHERRY TREE LANE!

(The sound of wind above the house.)
SCENE 2: MARY’S ARRIVAL – Parlor

(MARY POPPINS appears among them. She is wearing a hat with cherries in the brim and carrying an umbrella with a handle shaped like a parrot’s head.)

MARY POPPINS

Good morning.

GEORGE

(approaching MARY POPPINS)

Yes?

MARY POPPINS

I’ve come in answer to the advertisement.

GEORGE

What advertisement? We haven’t placed any advertisement. Not yet.

MARY POPPINS

George and Winifred Banks live here, do they not?

GEORGE

Mr. and Mrs. Banks live here, yes.

MARY POPPINS

And you are looking for a nanny?

GEORGE

Well, I suppose—

MARY POPPINS

Very well then. Now, let’s see.

(From her pocket, MARY POPPINS takes a torn but now mended piece of paper.)

“Play games, all sorts.” Which I most certainly can. “Take us on outings, give us treats.”

(GEORGE casts an uneasy look towards the CHILDREN. This sounds very like... but it can’t be! He stares at MARY POPPINS blankly. JANE and MICHAEL listen from the staircase.)

JANE

Michael! It’s our advertisement!

MARY POPPINS

“Rosy cheeks and fairly pretty.”

(to GEORGE)

There’s no objection on that score, I hope?
GEORGE

(blushing)

Oh, none at all.

MARY POPPINS

I'm glad to hear it.

(MARY POPPINS stares at him so firmly that, for a moment, it is like a ray of light passing right through him.)

GEORGE

But—oh, take it up with Mrs. Banks. She manages all that side of things. Nothing domestic has anything to do with me! And don't forget the references!

(GEORGE is gone, leaving WINIFRED and the newcomer staring at each other. After a moment, MARY POPPINS speaks.)

MARY POPPINS

I make it a rule never to give references.

WINIFRED

But I thought it was usual.

MARY POPPINS

A very old-fashioned idea to my mind. The best people never require them now.

WINIFRED

I see. You will have every third Thursday evening off from five until nine.

MARY POPPINS

The best people give every second Wednesday from six 'til late, ma'am, and that is what I shall take.

WINIFRED

Oh, I see... well... it's all settled then...

MARY POPPINS

As long as I am satisfied. I'll see the children now, thank you.

WINIFRED

Of course...

(turns back nervously)

You'll find they're very nice children...

(JANE and MICHAEL come screaming down the stairs and stand in front of MARY POPPINS.)

Now this is... oh.
SCENE 5: LET’S HOPE SHE WILL STAY – Parlor

(WINIFRED is at the study door. GEORGE is working at his desk. The CHILDREN and MARY take off their outdoor clothes.)

WINIFRED

Jane and Michael want to say goodnight.

GEORGE

Tell them you’ve given me the message.

WINIFRED

George, please...

(GEORGE reluctantly comes out into the hall.)

JANE

Oh, Daddy! We’ve had a fantastic day! We sang with a busker, danced with a statue, and met Queen Victoria! You wouldn’t have approved but—

GEORGE

If you know that, then why did you do it?

MICHAEL

Daddy, could I have a kite? A proper one?

GEORGE

Could you fly it?

MICHAEL

You could always teach me.

GEORGE

When would I have the time to do that?

(MICHAEL accepts this with a sad nod. He’s used to it.)

JANE

Daddy, who was the father of Neleus?

GEORGE

Would you please let me get on! Goodnight!

(As the children go out, GEORGE returns to the study and takes up his pen with a sigh.)

WINIFRED

Poor Michael. All he cares about is flying kites, and his beloved astronomy of course.
GEORGE
I used to love astronomy at his age. My nanny Miss Andrew, soon beat it out of me.

WINIFRED
I suppose we do need a nanny, George. It is out of the question to do without one?

GEORGE
Don’t be absurd! Of course we need a nanny! All the best people have nannies! So the wives can do charity work and entertain. Which reminds me, how is your tea party coming on?

WINIFRED
I’m not sure. It seems so odd to send out invitations to people I hardly know.

GEORGE
But they’re people you should know. Remember: “By your friends shall ye be judged.”

WINIFRED
But that’s the point. They’re not my friends... Actually, I heard today from Clemmie Bunting. She’s rehearsing a new play at the moment and I thought I might ask her—

GEORGE
How many times must I tell you? I wish you to sever all connection with that part of your life.

WINIFRED
George, I was an actress. Lots of people might find that interesting... though you always talk as if I should be ashamed of it.

GEORGE
Well, it’s not exactly something to be proud of.

(WINIFRED has hurt WINIFRED’s feelings, which was not his intention.)

WINIFRED
Georgie. Dearest. I’m only thinking of you... I want people to admire you, to respect you.

WINIFRED
I know, George. But sometimes it’s hard—

GEORGE
It is not hard. It’s your job, to be Mrs. Banks.

WINIFRED
And what is your job?

GEORGE
To pay for everything.
WINIFRED

I was only going to kiss you.

GEORGE

Oh... Oh! All right.

WINIFRED

(GEORGE lifts his face for a rather unsatisfactory kiss. Sadly, WINIFRED starts for the door.)

Are you going to say something to Mary Poppins about this afternoon?

WINIFRED

I don’t think so.

GEORGE

Very well. But just make sure she’s doing things our way and not hers.

#7 – Let’s Hope She Will Stay

GEORGE

WHAT GOOD ARE RULES IF YOU CAN BEND THEM?
WE NEED A NANNY WHO IS DISCIPLINED AND STERN.
WITH BOYS AND GIRLS, YOU DON’T BEFRIEND THEM.
I FEAR THAT MARY POPPINS HAS A LOT TO LEARN.

(WINIFRED leaves the study and goes to the parlor as she considers GEORGE’s remark.)

WINIFRED

BEING MRS. BANKS
SHOULD BE AN EASY ROLE,
AND YET IT’S ONE WHICH I DON’T SEEM
TOO GOOD AT ON THE WHOLE.
I HAVE A COMFY HOME.
I HAVE A SIMPLE LIFE.
I HAVE A NAME WHICH TELLS THE WORLD
I’M SOMEONE ELSE’S WIFE.

BEING MRS. BANKS,
WHAT DOES THAT ENTAIL?
FACING TESTS OF CHARACTER I ALWAYS SEEM TO FAIL.
(WINIFRED)
AND AS FOR HIS "BEST PEOPLE,"
WELL, I'D LIKE TO SAY "NO THANKS."
THEY'RE NOT EXACTLY MY IDEA OF BEING MRS. BANKS.

(JANE and MICHAEL. appear and look out a window.)

JANE
I STILL FEEL AS IF I'M DREAMING.

MICHAEL
SO MUCH FUN IN JUST ONE DAY.

JANE, MICHAEL
WHEN MARY HOLDS YOUR HAND, YOU FEEL SO GRAND.
YOUR HEART STARTS BEATING LIKE A BIG BRASS BAND.

JANE
I'M SURE NELEUS IS BEAMING.

MICHAEL
LET'S HOPE SHE WILL STAY.

JANE
Goodnight, Neleus.

WINIFRED
LET'S HOPE SHE WILL STAY.

JANE, MICHAEL
LET'S HOPE SHE WILL STAY.

GEORGE
PRECISION AND ORDER...

(MARY POPPINS sends the CHILDREN into the nursery for bed.)
CHAIRMAN

Good morning.

GREAT MEN HAVE DREAMS OF POWER AND POSITION,
AND IT'S OUR JOB TO BACK THEM TO THE HILT.
FOR SHREWDED INVESTMENT AND ADVICE
THEY'LL PAY OUR PRICE,

CHAIRMAN, CLERKS

THE BEDROCK ON WHICH BANKS ARE BUILT.

CHAIRMAN

Banks! A word...

(The BOARD MEMBERS go about their daily business. GEORGE lingers behind to listen to the CHAIRMAN.)

I see Herr Von Hussler is coming in again today. Have you made your decision?

GEORGE

I believe so, sir.

CHAIRMAN

Good, good. Be sure it's the right one.

CLERKS

IN EVERY TRANSACTION,
CREDIT OR DEBT,
SHEETS ARE ALL WELL BALANCED,
TARGETS ARE MET...
MET... MET... MET... MET... MET... MET... MET...

(In his office, GEORGE, with some papers before him, is in conversation with HERR VON HUSSLER.)

VON HUSSLER

Herr Banks, what objections can you have? My security is more than adequate and Latin America is an expanding market. What is the matter? Have you no courage?

GEORGE

But Mr. Von Hussler, what I haven't been able to grasp is: what exactly is your final product?

VON HUSSLER

What do you think? Money, of course!

GEORGE

Yes, money. But I wonder, making money out of money, is that enough?
VON HUSSLER
Are you man enough to be a banker?

A MAN HAS DREAMS
OF BUILDING AN EMPIRE,
TO MAKE HIS NAME IN MANY DISTANT LANDS,
AND IN THE NEW WORLD, I AM TOLD
WE'LL SOON STRIKE GOLD.
LET'S SEIZE THAT CHANCE WITH BOTH OUR HANDS.

CLERKS
ASSESSING THE MARKET,
LIMIT THE RISK.
LITTLE ROOM FOR ERROR,
BUSINESS IS BRISK...
BRISK... BRISK... BRISK... BRISK... BRISK... BRISK...

(GEORGE is now in discussion with a second client, JOHN NORTHBROOK, an honest Northerner who presents his argument for a bank loan.)

NORTHBROOK
Have you come to your decision, Mr. Banks? There's a town of good people whose future depends on you.

GEORGE
I know that...

NORTHBROOK
Give us this chance. You won't regret it. The factory could be running in weeks and expanding before the year's out. Please, Mr. Banks. I'd give it everything I've got, believe me.

GEORGE
I do believe you, Mr. Northbrook, and I've tried to find a way but there just is not the collateral.

NORTHBROOK
What about my workforce? Decent men who want a better life - they're my collateral!

MY MEN HAVE DREAMS
TO EARN AN HONEST LIVING,
A WIFE AND KIDS, A HOME TO CALL THEIR OWN.
IF YOU'D INVEST IN US TODAY,
IT PAVES THE WAY.
GEORGE

I’m sorry, Mr. Northbrook, but I...

(The CHILDREN burst in. MARY POPPINS follows. GEORGE is startled.)

JANE, MICHAEL

Hello, Daddy.

GEORGE

What on earth are you doing here? Can’t you see I’m busy?

NORTH BROOK

No. We’re done, and no man should be too busy for his own children.

(to MICHAEL)

What are you here for young man? Have you come for some money as well?

GEORGE

Hardly. What would they need money for?

NORTH BROOK

Well, it’s never too early to learn its value...

(NORTH BROOK pulls two coins out and hands them to the children.)

MICHAEL

I know the value of this: sixpence.

NORTH BROOK

No, that’s its worth. Its value’s in how you spend it. Do good, and may you have

MARY POPPINS

And what do you say to Mr. Northbrook?

JANE, MICHAEL

Thank you!

NORTH BROOK

I’ll wait outside.

(With a smile for the children, NORTH BROOK exits.)

GEORGE

What is the meaning of this? Really, Mary Poppins, I am not without a sense of

humor—

MICHAEL

Aren’t you, Daddy?
George

No, I am not! But when I was a little boy, I would never have dared interrupt my father.

Michael

Were you ever a little boy?

"Don’t be stupid."

George

Of course I was! But my nanny, Miss Andrew, kept me out of my father’s way, and he’d have been very annoyed if she hadn’t.

Jane

What about your mother?

George

I shouldn’t think I saw either of them more than once a week.

Jane

Didn’t they mind?

George

Mind? They were glad to be rid of me!

Michael

Then who kissed you goodnight? Miss Andrew?

George

Certainly not! There was no time for hugs and kisses and all that soppy nonsense.

(notices that the CHILDREN are aghast)

What’s the matter?

Michael

Poor Daddy.

George

“Poor”? What do you mean “poor”? That’s what made me the man I am! Eh, Mary Poppins?

Mary Poppins

Yes, I’m afraid it did.

#9A – A Man Has Dreams

(George is not sure he can have heard this correctly.)
JANE
When you invest the bank's money, what are you looking for, Daddy? A good man or a good idea?

GEORGE
If suppose I should say it's a good idea, but a good man is much rarer, and much more valuable.

MARY POPPINS
Come along, children.

(MARY POPPINS exits with JANE and MICHAEL.)

GEORGE
Mr. Von Hussler, I've considered your arguments, but I'm afraid my answer is no.

VON HUSSLER
So you don't recognize a good idea?

GEORGE
Perhaps not, but I recognize a good man when I see one.

VON HUSSLER
You will regret this, Herr Banks.

(VON HUSSLER leaves in a huff. GEORGE watches him go, thinking aloud.)

GEORGE
A MAN WITH DREAMS THAT LIFE HASN'T BROKEN,
A MAN WITH HOPES, AMBITIONS TO FULFILL,
A MAN YOU'RE CERTAIN AT FIRST GLANCE
DESERVES A CHANCE...

(GEORGE turns to find NORTHBROOK back in his office.)

Now, Mr. Northbrook, when exactly could the factory open?

NORTHBROOK
Thank you, sir. You won't regret it!
BERT
A GAME IS PLAYED, A CHANGE IS MADE,
BUT STILL THE ROAD IS LONG.
AND THOUGH THEY MIGHT YET FLY A KITE,
SOMETIMES THE WIND’S TOO STRONG.

(George Banks appears and enters the house. He looks extremely worried. He is
greeted by a surprised Winifred. He puts down his briefcase as she helps him off
with his coat.)

WINIFRED
George? What’s happened? Are you ill?

GEORGE
No. Should I be?

WINIFRED
Of course not. Only... why on earth are you home so early? Is everything all right?

GEORGE
My dear, what is it?

WINIFRED
If you must know, I refused some German chap a loan. It seems he went to our chief
rivals. They gave him the money and now it’s turned into a gold mine.

WINIFRED
Well, they can’t expect you to get it right every time.

GEORGE
Can’t they? That’s exactly what they expect.

(Before George can say more, the children run downstairs, followed by Mary
Poppins.)

JANE, MICHAEL
(la cappella)
Oh! Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious!
Even though the sound of it is something quite atrocious,
If you say it loud enough—

GEORGE
That is more than loud enough! Go to your room!
But we were just—

MICHAEL

I don’t care what you were. Just up there. Now where’s my briefcase? I put it there...

(MICHAEL has hidden it behind his back. GEORGE turns towards him.)

GEORGE

Michael?

(MICHAEL has transferred the case to JANE. He holds up both hands.)

JANE?

(JANE slides the briefcase back to her brother and holds up her hands. But this time GEORGE has seen the maneuver and shouts.)

Blow!

Will you give it to me?

(Bowling, he spins MICHAEL around and roughly snatches the case away. All are shocked by the violence and intensity of his anger. He turns on WINIFRED.)

Blow! Must I put up with this behavior? You’re their mother! Why can’t you do something?

WINIFRED

(attempting to take control of the situation)

WINIFRED

Well, I can try not shouting for a start.

GEORGE

Mary Poppins! You are here to teach the children manners, and just look at them! They’re a pair of little savages! If I had my way, you’d be out of this house by—

WINIFRED

George! You’re tired.

(GEORGE retires to the study, dejected, and closes the door.)

Mary Poppins, don’t bring the children down tonight. Mr. Banks is quite exhausted. Perhaps you could keep them occupied.

MARY POPPINS

I hope you haven’t forgotten, ma’am. Tonight’s my evening out.

WINIFRED

What?

JANE

SHAME

Oh dear, I had forgotten. I suppose the best people wouldn’t ask you to change your plans?
MARY Poppins

No ma’am, they wouldn’t.

WINIFRED

I thought not.

JANE

That’s not fair! Daddy loses his temper and we’re shut up in the nursery! Daddy’s mean and rotten and I hate him!

WINIFRED

Jane! Take that back this instant! I will not have you criticize your father.

MICHAEL

Why not? He criticizes you! Last week he said you were neither use nor ornament.

WINIFRED

How dare you—

MICHAEL

I heard him say it and so did you!

(This one is below the belt. WINIFRED answers with some dignity.)

WINIFRED

Sometimes people say things they don’t mean. Take the children upstairs please, Mary Poppins.

(JANE and MICHAEL follow the nanny up. WINIFRED goes to the study door. She hesitates, then opens it and enters.)

George?

GEORGE

What is it now?

WINIFRED

I thought you might like to talk about it.

GEORGE

What would be the point?

WINIFRED

Perhaps I can help.

GEORGE

Don’t be ridiculous.

WINIFRED

I’m serious, George. If you have troubles, I’d like to share them.
GEORGE

Don’t worry. You will.

(lifts his head, stares at WINIFRED)

The fact is I’ve been suspended without salary until they decide what to do with me.

(WINIFRED gasps with shock.)

#118 - Twists and Turns

BERT

TWISTS AND TURNS, UPS AND DOWNS,
ONE MOMENT SMILES, NEXT MOMENT FROWNS,
BUT BAD-TEMPERED FACES HAD BETTER CHANGE QUICK,
’CAUSE IF THE WIND CHANGES, THE FACE MIGHT JUST STICK.
CHIM CHIMINEY, CHIM CHIM CHER-EE CHIM CHER-OO.
MRS. BRILL
Well, I don’t know who else.

MICHAEL
Why is it such a secret?

DO YOU THINK THAT SHE’S RETURNED
TO GET THINGS BACK THE WAY THEY WERE?

JANE
The note says, “Till we meet again.”

JANE, MICHAEL
I JUST KNOW IT MUST BE HER

WINIFRED
Oh my goodness, she’ll be here any moment. Now, where is George?

(knocks on the door of the study)

GEORGE, DEAR
YOU’RE GOING TO BE SURPRISED—

(The door opens and a battle-weary GEORGE appears.)

GEORGE
Winfred, you know very well I hate surprises at the best of times.

WINIFRED
Not this one. Oh George, I do believe you’re going to be proud of me for once!

(studies GEORGE, straightens his tie)

PRECISION AND ORDER,
IT’S PERFECTLY TRUE,
CAN REALLY MAKE A DIFFERENCE.
I’VE FOUND HER FOR YOU.
“CLEAR THINKING, SOUND JUDGEMENT,”
AND NOW WE’LL REGAIN
A HOME YOU CAN BE PROUD OF IN CHERRY TREE LANE.

Hurry up everybody! Into the hall! I want her to find everything

SPIT-SPOT SPIC AND SPAN.

ALL (EXCEPT GEORGE)
SPIC AND SPAN.

(ALL start to assemble in a nervous twitter.)
JANE, MICHAEL, WINIFRED
OUR SENSE OF EXCITEMENT IS HARD TO CONTAIN.

MRS. BRILL, ROBERTSON AY
ORDER IS RETURNING.

WINIFRED, JANE, MICHAEL
WONDER IS RETURNING.

GEORGE, WINIFRED, JANE, MICHAEL,
MRS. BRILL, ROBERTSON AY
SOMEONE IS RETURNING TO CHERRY TREE
(MISS ANDREW enters, a formidable-looking woman of uncertain age.)

GEORGE, WINIFRED, JANE, MICHAEL,
MRS. BRILL, ROBERTSON AY, MISS ANDREW
(LATER)

MISS ANDREW
Good morning.

GEORGE
The Holy Terror!
(GEORGE runs out of the house.)

WINIFRED
Miss Andrew! It’s so lovely to meet you at last! I do hope you had a good journey.
(The terrifying MISS ANDREW drops her bag and advances into the room with a covered birdbage. ROBERSTON AY struggles to move the surprisingly heavy bag to a table.)

MISS ANDREW
It was thoroughly unpleasant. I never enjoy travel. You must be poor George’s wife.
Your flowerbeds are disgracefully untidy! Take my advice: plant evergreens. Or
better still, have nothing there at all, just a plain cement courtyard.

WINIFRED
But dear Miss Andrew, I am so fond of flowers.

MISS ANDREW
Then you are a very silly woman. Where did George go?

WINIFRED
He...
(looks around)
I’m afraid he had... an urgent appointment.
SCENE 3: GOOD FOR NOTHING – Park

(Evening falls, and the scene changes to another part of the park with trees and a bench. Young KITE FLYERS run through the trees on their way home, and BERT enters with a lamplighter’s taper. GEORGE wanders in alone and slumps wearily onto the bench.)

#17 – Good For Nothing / Being Mrs. Banks

GEORGE

ILLUSIONS MAY SHATTER, BUT MEMORIES STAY.

THE THINGS THAT REALLY MATTER I LOST ON THE WAY.

THE SOVEREIGN, THE MASTER, AND LONG MAY HE REIGN,

THE FAMOUS GOOD-FOR-NOTHING OF CHERRY TREE LANE.

(GEORGE shuffles off in despair. BERT observes him as he lights a street lamp.)
MRS. BRILL

Excuse me, ma'am...

WINIFRED

Constable, I'm so sorry I bothered you, but it's quite all right. They're back and—

POLICEMAN

Not all of them, ma'am.

WINIFRED

What?

POLICEMAN

We found this one a-wandering in the park.

(steeps to one side, revealing GEORGE)

G'night, ma'am.

(The POLICEMAN tips his helmet and goes. GEORGE steps into the parlor.)

WINIFRED

George.

GEORGE

Where is she?

WINIFRED

Miss Andrew? She's left.

GEORGE

Left? But how?

(With a look to MARY POPPINS, JANE explains.)

JANE

She might have thought we were rude.

GEORGE

Rude? To Miss Andrew? Well, I can't forgive it, but I'll try to forget. In fact—

(fumbles in his pockets with no result)

I'd have given you sixpence if I had one.

(This deflates GEORGE again. WINIFRED intervenes.)

WINIFRED

George, you haven't noticed. Mary Poppins is back.

GEORGE

Is she? Mary Poppins. Well, well. I wonder if I.
(MARY POPPINS quickly and gracefully descends the stairs and crosses into the study.)

(GEORGE)

... might have a word?

(follows MARY POPPINS into the study, shuts the door, and clears his throat)

There’s no point in beating about the bush. Things have not gone well for us since you left us and —

MARY POPPINS

About my wages, sir. If you don’t mind, I won’t take any just now. I should prefer to let them accrue.

GEORGE

But Mary Poppins, if you only knew how many payments are accruing as it is!

(Before GEORGE says more, MARY POPPINS nods and leaves the study. WINIFRED is waiting outside.)

WINIFRED

Is everything settled?

MARY POPPINS

It is. Now, I must get started. Jane, Michael, spit-spot.

#18A – Practically Perfect (Reprise)  Jane, Michael, Mary Poppins

(MARY POPPINS goes up stairs with JANE and MICHAEL. She halts for a moment, sniffing the air.)

Are the drains playing up, or is Mrs. Brill cooking?

(MARY POPPINS continues her ascent. Below, WINIFRED looks at her GEORGE. She goes to comfort him, stroking his hair. He starts to speak but can’t.)

WINIFRED

Come along, darling. You made a wrong decision, but how bad is that? After so many years of good service? What’s the worst that can happen?

GEORGE

(thinks for a moment)

Winifred... if I am to be dismissed by the bank, we’ll be destitute. The servants will leave, the house will be repossessed, and we’ll be outside with the children sitting on the frosty curbside.

This is a blow to WINIFRED, but after a second, she recovers.)
BERT, SWEEPS
DOWN THE CHIMNEY, STEP IN TIME.
DOWN THE CHIMNEY, STEP IN TIME.
NEVER NEED A REASON, NEVER NEED A RHYME.
DOWN THE CHIMNEY, STEP IN TIME.

BERT
Back to the nursery!

BERT, SWEEPS
BACK TO THE NURS'RY, STEP IN TIME.
BACK TO THE NURS'RY, STEP IN TIME.
NEVER NEED A REASON, NEVER NEED A RHYME.
BACK TO THE NURS'RY, STEP IN TIME.

(The SWEEPS pass through the nursery down into the parlor, gathering up MRS. BRILL and ROBERTSON AY as they do so. Then WINIFRED is caught up in the dance. The bell rings and rings again. At last GEORGE frees himself and opens the door to a MESSENGER.)

GEORGE
What is this? What is all this?

MESSENGER
Special delivery for George Banks, Esquire.

GEORGE
Special delivery?

(The MESSENGER hands over the letter.)

BERT, SWEEPS
SPECIAL DEL'V'RY, STEP IN TIME.
SPECIAL DEL'V'RY, STEP IN TIME.
NEVER NEED A REASON, NEVER NEED A RHYME.
SPECIAL DEL'V'RY, STEP IN TIME.

BERT
Time to go now. Goodnight, Guv'nor.

BERT, SWEEPS
GOODNIGHT, GUV'NOR, STEP IN TIME.
GOODNIGHT, GUV'NOR, STEP IN TIME.
NEVER NEED A REASON, NEVER NEED A RHYME.
GOODNIGHT, GUV'NOR, STEP IN TIME.
(Without another word, the SWEEPS dance out past the dazed GEORGE through the open front door, carrying the MESSENGER with them. They greet GEORGE variously as they pass.)

(SWEEPS)

Good night, Guv'nor. Cheerio, Guv'nor. G'night, Guv'nor.

MICHAEL

(disguised as a SWEEP)

Cheerio, Guv'nor.

(But this penultimate SWEEP looks a little familiar.)

GEORGE

Not so fast. Upstairs... now! Jane, you too. Mary Poppins, would you be good enough to explain?

MARY POPPINS

First of all, I would like to make one thing clear.

GEORGE

Yes?

MARY POPPINS

I never explain anything. Come along, children.

(MARY POPPINS goes upstairs with JANE and MICHAEL.)
SCENE 9: A MAN HAS DREAMS – Parlor

(The sweeps have gone; only BERT lingers, unnoticed by the rest. GEORGE has opened the letter. WINIFRED comes over. He looks up.)

GEORGE
It’s happened. The Chairman wants to see me at the close of business tonight.

WINIFRED
Tonight! Well I’m going to come with you and jolly well give your Chairman a piece of my mind.

GEORGE
Are you insane?

WINIFRED
That would only make matters worse. We might as well face it. In just a few hours I will have joined the ranks of the unemployed.

GEORGE
Oh, George. Are you quite sure?

WINIFRED
Quite sure. So we’d better make some plans. In fact, I’m afraid the time has come

GEORGE
(GEORGE looks up at his mother’s precious vase as MRS. BRILL comes into the parlor to tidy up.)

WINIFRED
Do you mean your mother’s vase? Won’t you miss it terribly?

GEORGE
Needs must, my dear. We always said we were saving it for a rainy day, and tomorrow it looks set to pour.

WINIFRED
(GEORGE climbs onto a chair and, gingerly, he picks up the vase.)

WINIFRED
George – do be careful.

GEORGE
(GEORGE starts to climb down again when MRS. BRILL absentmindedly bangs into the chair amid her cleaning. The vase slips from George’s hands and shatters on the floor. MRS. BRILL is aghast.)

MRS. BRILL
Ah! The heirloom!

WINIFRED
(Pulling out a huge handkerchief, MRS. BRILL starts to blub uncontrollably. This is not helping the stunned GEORGE.)

WINIFRED
Mrs. Brill, let’s go to the kitchen, shall we? You’d better sit down...
(MARY POPPINS appears on the landing and sniffs the air.)

MARY POPPINS

Mrs. Brill, is that the dinner cooking?

MRS. BRILL

(lifts her face from her handkerchief)

Don’t you start. I’ve opened all the windows—

MARY POPPINS

I was only going to say that it smells... delicious!

(MARY POPPINS heads up the stairs.)

MRS. BRILL

The whole world has gone upside-down!

(MRS. BRILL exits with renewed anguish, followed by WINIFRED.)

#20 – A Man Has Dreams (Reprise) / A Spoonful of Sugar (Reprise)

George, Bert

(GEORGE is alone when he sees a smattering of shining stars among the broken pieces. He bends down to pick them up.)

GEORGE

Well, I never. So that’s where I put them.

BERT

What are they?

(To GEORGE’s surprise, BERT has emerged from the shadows.)

GEORGE

Stars. Gingerbread stars I hid once from my nanny. I always knew I’d put them somewhere no one would find them. Trouble was I couldn’t find them either.

BERT

They’re very bright.

GEORGE

Aren’t they? Even after all this time.

BERT

Here, let me give you a hand.

(BERT helps to pick up the pieces of the vase.)
GEORGE
I used to dream that when I grew up I'd learn everything there was to know about the stars.

(thoughful pause)

Funny. I haven't thought about all that in years. I'm not usually sentimental.

BERT
S'good to look back sometimes.

GEORGE
Is it? I'm not so sure.

A MAN HAS DREAMS OF WALKING WITH GIANTS,
TO CARVE HIS NICHE IN THE EDIFICE OF TIME,
BEFORE THE MORTAR OF HIS ZEAL
HAS THE CHANCE TO CONGEAL.

The cup is dashed from his lips.
The flame is snuffed aborning.
He's brought to rack and ruin in his prime!

BERT
Life's a rum go, Guv'nor, and that's the truth.

GEORGE
You know what I think? It's Mary Poppins! From the moment she stepped into the house, things began to happen to me!

MY WORLD WAS CALM, WELL ORDERED, EXEMPLARY.
THEN CAME THIS PERSON WITH CHAOS IN HER WAKE,
AND NOW MY LIFE'S AMBITIONS GO WITH ONE FELL BLOW.
IT'S QUITE A BITTER PILL TO TAKE.

It's that Poppins woman! She's responsible for all this!

BERT
I know the very person. What's that thing she's always saying?

A SPOONFUL OF SUGAR, THAT IS ALL IT TAKES.
IT CHANGES BREAD AND WATER INTO TEA AND CAKES.
A SPOONFUL OF SUGAR GOES A LONG, LONG WAY,
SO 'AVE YOURSELF AN 'EALTHY 'ELPING EVERY DAY.

GEORGE
A healthy helping of trouble if you ask me!

(GEORGE attempts to occupy himself with papers in his study.)
BERT

Like you say, Guv'nor.

(placing the vase pieces carefully in the rubbish bin)
YOU'VE GOT TO GRIND, GRIND, GRIND AT THAT GRINDSTONE
THOUGH CHILDHOOD SLIPS LIKE SAND THROUGH A SIEVE...
AND ALL TOO SOON THEY'VE UP AND GROWN...
AND THEN THEY'VE FLOWN, AND IT'S TOO LATE FOR YOU TO GIVE...

(The CHILDREN come out of the nursery and start downstairs. MARY POPPINS watches remains behind on the stairs. GEORGE re-enters the parlor.)

JUST THAT SPOONFUL OF SUGAR TO 'ELP THE MEDICINE GO DOWN,
THE MEDICINE GO DOWN, MEDICINE GO DOWN...

(holds out his hand to GEORGE)

Well, good luck, Guv'nor.

(For a moment, GEORGE is still and then, deliberately, he takes the sooty paw and shakes it firmly.)

GEORGE

Thank you, Bert. And good luck to you, too.

(BERT pauses in the hall only to turn and look up at MARY POPPINS. She answers his look with a nod and he leaves. The CHILDREN approach their father cautiously. As they speak, MARY POPPINS comes down silently, carrying something.)

JANE

Father...

GEORGE

What is it?

MICHAEL

We've come to say goodnight.

GEORGE

Ah. Yes. Goodnight.

(BUT GEORGE is less severe than usual. JANE approaches.)

JANE

Daddy, do you remember when we came to the bank?

GEORGE

Yes.
JANE
Well, we were each given a sixpence, and were told to spend them carefully.

GEORGE
Excellent advice. That’s exactly what you should do. What did you buy with them?

JANE
Nothing yet. We kept them. And now we’ve decided to give them to you.

GEORGE
I suppose Mary Poppins put you up to this.

JANE
No. She hasn’t said a word about it, but we know it’s been difficult for you lately
and we haven’t really been much help.

MICHAEL
So we thought a bit of extra cash might loosen things up a little.

JANE
It is a whole shilling.

GEORGE
Thank you.

(GEORGE cannot speak for fear of crying. He nods briskly and takes the coins in silence.)

JANE
Goodnight, Daddy. We do love you, you know.

(JANE reaches up and kisses GEORGE.)

GEORGE
Jane. Do you remember you once asked me who Neleus’s father was?

JANE
Yes.

GEORGE
It was Poseidon, King of the Sea. Goodnight.

20A – King of the Sea

(The CHILDREN head up to the nursery, passing MARY POPPINS. GEORGE goes
into his study. MARY POPPINS swiftly places the object – Michael’s broken makeshift
kite – on the floor of the hall, then sits upstairs. GEORGE emerges from his study and
sees the kite. Thoughtfully, he picks it up.)
SCENE 11: ANYTHING CAN HAPPEN, PART 2 –
Cathedral Steps, Bank

(On a street near the steps of St. Paul’s Cathedral, MARY POPPINS and the
CHILDREN become spectators, unseen by the others. Snow starts to fall. The BIRD
WOMAN scatters corn for the pigeons. GEORGE enters and walks until, as a
background to his troubled thoughts, he sees her.)

BIRD WOMAN
FEED THE BIRDS, TUPPENCE A BAG,
TUPPENCE, TUPPENCE, TUPPENCE A BAG.

(GEORGE passes the BIRD WOMAN, then he hesitates and retraces his steps.)

Feed the birds, sir? Only tuppence a bag.

GEORGE
(pulls out two coins and puts them in her hand)
I would take it as a great favor if you would kindly feed them for me.

BIRD WOMAN
TUPPENCE, TUPPENCE, TUPPENCE A BAG.

(Leaving the BIRD WOMAN staring at the amount he has given, GEORGE walks
towards the bank. For all his bravado, he is nervous now that the time has come.
He shines his shoes on the backs of his trouser legs and enters the bank. The entire
BOARD OF DIRECTORS is waiting inside the bank.)

BOARD OF DIRECTORS
PRECISION AND ORDER,
PAYING ONES DEBTS,
RISKING OUR INVESTMENTS,
HEDGING OUR BETS.

DOORMEN

Mr. Banks is here.

CHAIRMAN

Come in, Banks.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

TRADING IN FUTURES,
JOBS ON THE LINE.

(GEORGE enters. He stands there, alone. MARY POPPINS and the CHILDREN
observe the action, unseen.)
CHAIRMAN

Well, Banks, how did it happen? You turned down a scheme that was bound to make millions, and we want to know why.

(The assembled BANKERS wait. Firmly, GEORGE starts to speak.)

GEORGE

Then I'll tell you. I refused Mr. Von Hussler because his scheme was hollow. It had no product, it had no substance, it had no meaning outside the walls of a bank! Oh yes, he told me about assets and profits and growth, but there wasn't a word about people! I know that if a man puts any value on real life, then as far as you're concerned he's a wash-out but I'm afraid I do value it, gentlemen. In short, George Banks, Esquire, has rediscovered the human race! I apologize for ruining the bank. But I do not apologize for understanding that there are more important things in life than making money!

(The silence that greets this is not one of indignation but rather of bewilderment. At last the CHAIRMAN speaks.)

CHAIRMAN

Ruin the bank? Ruining the bank? Ruining the bank? My dear chap, what are you talking about? You've saved our bacon! Haven't you heard? Von Hussler's scheme has ruined our rival! You've kept us out of the nastiest scandal since records began! We don't want your apologies! We're offering ours!

GEORGE

Oh my word.

CHAIRMAN

And another thing. Do you remember giving a loan to a fellow called Northbrook? Well, he's repaying it and opening two new factories. With the percentage you negotiated, we look set to make a fortune!

GEORGE

Oh my word!

CHAIRMAN

Well, that's just it. We very much hope you might tell us how you did it. Just give us the word. It'll be quite safe with us.

GEORGE

(immobile for a second, but only for a second)

Give you the word? Give you the word? I'll give you the word all right: SUPERCALIFRAGILISTICEXPIALIDOCIOUS!

(GEORGE suddenly starts to laugh and spin and crash and shout.)
(GEORGE)
EVEN THOUGH THE SOUND OF IT IS SOMETHING QUITE ATROCIOUS,
IF YOU SAY IT LOUD ENOUGH YOU'LL ALWAYS SOUND PRECOCIOUS,
SUPERCALIFRAGILISTICEXPIALIDOCIOUS!

(kneels at the CHAIRMAN's feet)
Oh, sir! Thank you!

CHAIRMAN
Now Banks--
(The door bursts open. WINIFRED hurtles in, running to GEORGE and guarding him with her body like a lioness.)

WINIFRED
Forgive him. It's not his fault. It's all because of his nanny, Miss Andrew!

CHAIRMAN
(starts up, a look of sheer horror on his face)
The Holy Terror! She taught me everything I know!

GEORGE
Then now's your chance to forget it.

WINIFRED
That's right! And if you want a fight about it, then you've come to the right woman!
(Placing herself in front of GEORGE, WINIFRED squares up and raises her dukes.)

GEORGE
It's all right, darling! It's all right! I haven't lost money at all! I've made the bank a fortune!

WINIFRED
Really?
(GEORGE takes WINIFRED in his arms but can't say more before they are mobbed by the cheering BANKERS. The CHAIRMAN claps his hands.)

CHAIRMAN
Gentlemen.
(to WINIFRED, gesturing toward the door)
Madam, if you please, we still have some business to conduct.
(WINIFRED stands firmly in place. The CHAIRMAN concedes, not that he has a choice in the matter.)

CHAIRMAN

Ah, well, Banks—George—by way of recompense, we’d like to offer you the job of senior manager with a salary at double—

WINIFRED

Exactly how much has he made for you?

CHAIRMAN

(knows he has been admonished)

Triple—

(WINIFRED coughs pointedly.)

Quadruple your present rate.

(GEORGE stands agape.)

WINIFRED

Close your mouth, George—we are not a codfish.

Well?

CHAIRMAN

GEORGE

(looks to WINIFRED for approval)

I accept, but you must understand one thing: from now on, my family comes first.

CHAIRMAN

(looks right and left for approval)

Agreed?

BANKERS

(nodding)

Agreed!

(Surrounded by a gaggle of ecstatic BANKERS, GEORGE and WINIFRED walk off together into their new life. MARY POPPINS and the CHILDREN follow as magical observers.)
SCENE 12: ANYTHING CAN HAPPEN, PART 3 – Park, Heavens

GEORGE
Winifred, I’m afraid I’ve underestimated you. How can you forgive me?

WINIFRED
How can you ask?

GEORGE
It was selfish of me to keep you off the stage. You’ll want to go back, and I won’t mind if you do.

WINIFRED
No, I loved it, but I’ve found a role I rather prefer, and it’s going to keep me extremely busy for a very long time...

(MARY POPPINS and the CHILDREN watch WINIFRED and GEORGE walk off together. BERT appears.)

#22 – Anything Can Happen (Part 2)

MARY POPPINS

ANYTHING CAN HAPPEN,
RAISE THE CURTAIN.
THINGS YOU THOUGHT IMPOSSIBLE

MARY POPPINS, BERT

WILL SOON SEEM CERTAIN.
THOUGH AT FIRST IT MAY SOUND CLOWNISH
SEE THE WORLD MORE UPSIDE-DOWNISH.
TURN IT ON ITS HEAD THEN PIROUETTE IT.

BERT

ANYTHING CAN HAPPEN IF YOU LET IT.

MARY POPPINS

IF YOU REACH FOR THE STARS,
ALL YOU’LL GET ARE THE STARS,
BUT WE’VE FOUND A WHOLE NEW SPIN.
IF YOU REACH FOR THE HEAVENS,
YOU GET THE STARS THROWN IN...

ENSEMBLE

YOU GET THE STARS THROWN IN.
YOU GET THE STARS THROWN IN.)
She's gone.

WINIFRED

Gone? How peculiar.

GEORGE

She'll be back. Now, what do you think of this?

(From behind his back, GEORGE produces a magnificent kite.)

MICHAEL

It's the best I've ever seen.

GEORGE

Could we fly it together?

MICHAEL

Oh, Daddy!

(MICHAEL hugs GEORGE.)

JANE

(to GEORGE)

Mary Poppins won't be coming back. She's gone forever.

WINIFRED

My dear, how could you possibly know such a thing?

JANE

Because we don't need her... not anymore. And other families will. Won't they, Daddy?

GEORGE

(smiles and gives JANE a kiss)

They will.

WINIFRED

I wonder if she's right, George, and we really could do without a nanny from now on. What do you think?

GEORGE

I think you'd better come and dance with me!

WINIFRED

George, this is serious.

(GEORGE takes WINIFRED by the hand, and they dance. GEORGE spots something out the window.)
Look! Wasn’t that a shooting star?

GEORGE

You can borrow my telescope.

MICHAEL

(The BANKSES move out of the nursery and stand on the parapet, the whole family united for the first time.)

GEORGE

I was right. Wish on it, children!

(WINIFRED closes her eyes and wishes as GEORGE kisses her gently and purposefully.)

My dearest love.

(JANE and MICHAEL keep their eyes fixed on a shooting star.)

JANE

We won’t forget you, Mary Poppins.

MICHAEL

We’ll never forget...

(MARY POPPINS flies away. GEORGE BANKS and his FAMILY laugh together for the first time in ages.)

(END OF PLAY.)

#24 - Bows

ALL

IF YOU REACH FOR THE STARS,
ALL YOU GET ARE THE STARS,
BUT WE’VE FOUND A WHOLE NEW SPIN.
IF YOU REACH FOR THE HEAVENS,
YOU GET THE STARS THROWN IN.

(ANYTHING CAN HAPPEN) ANYTHING CAN HAPPEN, IT’S A MARVEL.
(ANYTHING CAN HAPPEN) YOU CAN BE A BUTTERFLY
OR JUST STAY LARVAL.
STRETCH YOUR MIND BEYOND FANTASTIC.
DREAMS ARE MADE OF STRONG ELASTIC.
GO AND CHASE YOUR DREAMS, YOU WON’T REGRET IT.
LIST OF REFERENCES


