

THE KING'S SCHOOL
475 REHEARSAL DRAFT

A play for The King's School, Chester
To commemorate and celebrate an anniversary.

Book and Lyrics by Helen Newall
Music by Matt Baker

CHARACTERS

Various voices (who are narrators, as befits the place in the play)

King (Henry VIII)

Chorus (a blend of various voices as befits the place in the play)

Bishop

(School) Master

Usher

24 male Scholars

Infants

Choristers

Priest

Scholars: Wrench;
 Mann;
 Parvis;

Past (and one present) Masters: Vaughan
 Greenhalgh
 Preston
 Feltoe
 Harpur
 Nicholls
 Sir John Vanburgh
 Davies
 Ralph
 Ramsey
 Pitman
 Mr Walsh

Past pupil and WW1 soldier, R. W. Hill

Female scholars

Mistress

Queen Mother

Past pupils of great renown: Thomas Brassey
 Sir Thomas Francis
 Edward Brereton
 John Ward
 Thomas Wilson
 Randolphe Caldicott
 William Lee Hankey
 Ronald Pickup (non-speaking)
 William Parry

SONGS

1. Processional	1 voice
2. Psalm	Voices
3. The King's Song	King, Chorus
4. Little Children	Infants
5. Latin Grammar	Masters, Scholars, Choristers, Priest
6. Mica Mica Parva Stella	Choristers
7. Tradition	All
8. Worth its Salt	King, Masters
9. Song for the 57	All
10. Girls at Kings	Girls, Mistress
11. Who Will You Be?	Mistress, M + F scholars
12. History	All
13. Processional	1 voice

475

1 SCENE: PROCESSION

Darkness. A candle is lit. Next to it: a face. One voice.

VOICE (Simple) "The King gave it, may God bless it"

There is a suspense note. As the psalm is sung the cast file in with lit candles, severally, till there is a flickering mass.

SONG 1: PSALM

VOICES

1 The king shall rejoice in thy strength, O Lord;
exceedingly glad shall he be of thy salvation.

2 Thou hast given him his heart's desire, and hast not
denied him the request of his lips. Selah.

3 For thou shalt present him with the blessings of
goodness: and shalt set a crown of pure gold upon his
head.

4 He asked life of thee, and thou gavest him a long life,
even forever and ever.

5 His honour is great in thy salvation: glory and great
worship shalt thou lay upon him.

6 For thou shalt give me everlasting felicity and make him
glad with the joy of thy countenance.

7 And why? Because the king putteth his trust in the Lord,
and in the mercy of the most highest he shall not miscarry.

8 All thine enemies that shall feel thy hand; thy right hand
shall find out them that hate thee.

9 Thou shalt make them like a firey oven in time of thy
wrath. Thy Lord shall destroy them in his displeasure, and
the fire shall consume them.

10 Their fruit shalt thou root out of the earth, and their
seed from among the children of men.

11 For they intended mischief against thee: and imagined
such a device, as they are not able to perform.

12 Therefore shalt thou put them to flight, and the strings
of thy bow shalt thou make ready against the faces of them

13 Be thou exalted Lord, in thine own strength: so will we
sing and praise thy power. Amen.

KING *(Interrupts the Amen)* Enough of that! Let's talk about me!

CHORUS *(sings)* Enough of that. Let's talk about him.

2 SCENE: THE KING'S ANNOUNCEMENT

*A jaunty G&S intro. In flounces Henry VIII. He bobs in
time to the music.*

SONG 2: THE KING'S SONG

KING Back in the depths of history
There was a king, that king was me
And We sent out a fine decree
That there must be schools through the whole country

CHORUS That there must be schools through the whole country!

KING There must be schools!
And all these schools must pray for me.

CHORUS Back in the depths of history
There was a king, that king was him
And he sent out a fine decrim
That there must be schools through the whole countrim!

KING I will have most excellent grammar schools to pray for me!

CHORUS And all these schools must pray for him!

KING For I am king with a fine endeavour

CHORUS He is a king with a fine endeavour

KING I'll have prayers for my forever.

CHORUS He'll have prayers for his forever.

KING I'll have prayers. And you'll have a school.

CHORUS This is a pledge we find most cool.

3 SCENE: SETTING UP THE SCHOOL

The accompaniment vamps beneath. Henry stands approving the next.

BISHOP	(<i>Spoken</i>) Good Burghers of Chester! In this year of our Lord, 1541, we shall have a new school.
ALL	Hurrah!
BISHOP	The school, King Henry's School, at the Cathedral Church of Chester shall henceforth take in worthy boys of the shire to be scholars, whereby God's word might the better be set forth, children brought up in learning, and clerks nourished in the Universities.
CHORUS	Hurrah for God's word, for learning, and the clerks nourished in the universities!
BISHOP	Indeed! And we shall have foundation scholars, and they shall be poor and friendless boys!
CHORUS	Hurrah for the poor and friendless boys!
VOICE	What about girls?
CHORUS	They haven't been invented yet.
MASTER	There will be a Master, and that shall be me.
USHER	And an usher, and that shall be me.
VOICE	What does an usher do?
USHER	Ush!
24 SCHOLARS	And there shall be 24 scholars, and that shall be us.
CHORISTERS	(<i>Sing</i>) And there shall be choristers, fine of voice, Who shall sing to the Lord, that your hearts will rejoice.
CHORUS	(<i>sing</i>) And there shall be choristers, fine of voice, Who shall sing to the Lord, that our hearts will rejoice.
KING	And you shall all have grammatical instruction, as I did.
SCHOLARS	And we shall have inculcated into us good manners.

CHORISTER (*Sing*) And the skills of singing, that your hearts will rejoice.

MASTER And you will all learn Latin.

SCHOLARS O non! Conturbatio!

MASTER And Greek!

SCHOLARS Καταστροφή ! (Katastrophe)

MASTER We'll add some French and Drawing when you've got the hang of the Latin and Greek!

KING (*Recitative*) But if any boy shall appear remarkably dull and stupid and naturally averse to learning, (*the scholars perk up and look intelligent*) we will that that boy after full trial be expelled by the Dean and sent elsewhere, lest like a drone he should devour the bees' honey.

ALL (*Sing*) Lest like a drone he should devour the bees' honey.

A bell is rung to introduce the next song

SONG 3: LITTLE CHILDREN COME TO SCHOOL

INFANTS Little children come to school
In the early morning
When the matins bell doth ring
Just as day is dawning

And the sparrows sweetly sing,
Little children want to play
But the bell doth ring and ring
Just as day is dawning

Learn your Latin, learn your Greek,
Little children growing,
Sing your songs, be mild and meek,
Little children knowing

And the sparrows sweetly sing
Little children want to play
But the bell doth ring and ring
Just as day is dawning

4 SCENE: THE DAY BEGINS

KING	And in the city of the Chester, in the echoing Old Refectory of the Cathedral, my school begins its day.
MASTER	Rafe Becket?
VOICE	Sir!
MASTER	James Boothe?
VOICE	Here sir!
MASTER	Alexander Elcock?
VOICE	He's got the plague, sir.
MASTER	Pity. Thomas Manering?
VOICE	Sir!
MASTER	Ronald Pickup?
VOICE	I'm not in till the 1950s sir.
MASTER	I'll make a note of that. Choristers?
CHORISTERS	<i>(Sing)</i> Here, Sir!
MASTER	Thomas of Prestbury?
VOICE	Here sir!
MASTER	Thomas Thornley?
VOICE	Sir.
MASTER	John Traver?
VOICE	Sir!
MASTER	Everyone else?
EVERYONE ELSE	Here, sir!
MASTER	Excellent. Now we are all gathered, let the learning begin!

SONG 4: LATIN GRAMMAR

MASTER	<i>(Sings in recitative)</i> Be not ashamed to learn things that thou knowest not.
SCHOLAR	<i>(Recitative)</i> Que ignores ne pudeat querere.
MASTER	Very good, Prestbury, very good.
SCHOLARS	<i>(sung in canon)</i> We will learn our Latin grammar, We will conjugate the verbs Without complaint, without clamour, Learn by heart uncommon words.
CHORISTERS	<i>(Ground)</i> Tempus fugit, ad infinitum, Cras es nosta, ad absurdum, Bone fide, carpe diem, Felix culpa, ad referendum.
SCHOLARS	We'll recite the catechism We will do what we are told And we'll bear with stoicism Summer heat and bitter cold
SCHOLARS	We will calculate the numbers We'll subtract and multiply We will ponder till we slumber Counting stars up in the sky
PRIEST	And to the glory of God will we lift our hearts and our thoughts. And though you be but youngsters, you shall be the architecture of harmonies and build a cathedral out of song.

SONG 5: LATIN TWINKLE TWINKLE LITTLE STAR

CHORISTERS Mica, Mica, parva stella;
 Miror quaenam sis tam bella.
 Splendens eminus in illo,
 Alba velut gemma caelo.
 Mica, Mica, parva stella;
 Miror quaenam sis tam bella.

5 SCENE: MOVING

Everyone clusters together. There is no room to move.

MASTER Usher! What is happening?

USHER Sir?

MASTER Pray tell me why are we all so crushed together?

USHER No room to move sir. Latin takes up a lot of space: it's all the cases...

MASTER Then we'd better move! Come on, Sire.

KING We are not moving.

SCHOLARS But sire: the roof keeps dripping, and stones fall daily on our heads.

MASTER Why only the other day, the roof fell in.

KING Oh very well...

Some of the scholars lift up the King.

KING Unhand me! Put me down!

USHER We can't leave you here!

KING Where are you taking me?

SCHOLARS To the Big School.

They lift the king and move but then they are crowded again.

SCHOLAR To Arnold House!

They lift the king and move but then they are crowded again.

SCHOLAR To Wrexham Road!

They lift the king and move but then they are crowded again. They lift him up again.

KING Stop it now! I command you to release me, for there is plenty of room here in these green fields.

Reluctantly they drop him.

KING (*Brushes himself down*) And so over the years, though I am moved from place to place, mark well that my school maintains its connection with its history; its spirit; its integrity; its tradition.

SONG 6: TRADITION

ALL Though bricks and stones are changed
And attics rearranged
And corridors and halls
Are made of different walls
Our history does not fall

Though windows show new scenes
Of pastoral blues and greens
And buildings rise anew
Our spirit remains true
To who we used to be.

For though we know we can't return
We know that we have come to love
Our old school's new position,
As part of our tradition:
A new and fresh condition.

The architecture changes
But King's stays strongly grounded
With confidence surrounded

6 SCENE: MASTERS AND MEMORIES

The King steps forward but is swamped by a crowd of playful Masters who assemble as a rabble of loveable rogue school boys.

KING Settle down. Settle down. We best take a roll call of the Masters at our school through the ages to make sure we haven't lost anyone in all that moving around. Line up!

ALL MASTERS Sire! (*Throw paper aeroplanes*)

KING Quiet!!! (*They sit or stand still*) Wrench?

WRENCH Here, sire.

KING Mann?

MANN Here, sire!

KING Parvis?

PARVIS Sire!

KING Parvis: you've been lax of late in your duties. Buck up, man.

PARVIS Sire.

KING Vaughan?

VAUGHAN Here, sire.

KING Greenhalgh?

PARVIS He's been dismissed, sire, for many miscarriages and misdemeanours, sire.

KING Dismissed? For misdemeanours?

MASTER Probably Royalist tendencies, sire.

KING I have Royalist tendencies. Would they dismiss me?

MASTER Probably sire... (*Hisses to the others*) Nobody mention Charles the First.

School boy hysteria....

KING QUIET!!!!!! Preston?

PRESTON Sire.

KING Feltoe?

No answer.

KING Where the devil is Charles Feltoe?

VOICE He's in court, sire.

KING Hampton Court?

VOICE Not quite, sire.

KING Has he got a note from his mother?

VOICE Don't know sire.

KING Why is he in court?

Someone whispers in the King's ear.

KING ...A swimming test?

More whispering.

KING ...Flogging, you say? He should just cut their heads off.
Always works for me. Harpur?

HARPUR Here, sire.

KING Good man, Harpur. Your reputation has vastly increased
the numbers of scholars at our school.

HARPUR Sire.

The others now think Harpur is a teacher's pet.

KING Nicholls?

NICHOLLS Sire.

KING There have been complaints, Nicholls!

NICHOLLS Sire! I do protest.

KING Nicholls: you've been overcharging the scholars for fire
money and cock money.

NICHOLLS Sire: It's not what you think...

KING Nicholls?

NICHOLLS Oh very well. I resign.

The others are overjoyed!

KING Vanburgh?

VANBURGH Sire.

KING Have an unsolicited pay rise of ten guineas!

ALL *(So unfair)* Sire?

They pull tongues behind Vanburgh's back as he speaks.

VANBURGH Thanks for this mark of the publick favour! If I fail of success it shall only be attributed to want of qualifications which others more eminently possess and not to any failure in the exertion.

KING Stop showing off, Vanburgh. Davies?

DAVIES Here sire.

KING Ralph?

RALPH Sire? Could I start a Tuck Shop, sire?

KING Good idea!

ALL Hurrah!

KING Ramsey?

RAMSEY Sire.

KING You're my favourite, Ramsey.

RAMSEY Sire!

SONG 7: LIST & LEARN

A vamp. A vamping knees bend dance.

KING *(Could be spoken)* Any school that's worth its salt
Must have a decent Master,
To guide the scholars clear of fault
And help them all learn faster.

MASTERS	Any school that's worth its salt Must have a decent Master, To guide the scholars clear of fault And held them all learn faster.
KING	For we do lay it on the conscience of the teachers that, to the utmost of their ability, they apply themselves diligently to their work, whereby all the boys may make progress and become proficient in their studies.
MASTERS	We must do our daily duty And instil a sense of beauty, Teach the boys to calculate, And scratch their letters on a slate
	<i>The G&S List and Learn music begins</i>
MASTERS	List and learn, list and learn. List and learn, ye dainty scholars Scholar girls and scholar boys Why you're clad in ties and collars Making joyful scholarly noise
	In a school of Henry's making Masters offer truths for the taking, Appetites for knowledge slaking And all lessons must be revised.
	Thus they learn with love exceeding While of chats and texts unheeding Mathsing, sporting, painting, reading Learning which things should forever be prized.
	List and learn, ye dainty scholars Scholar girls and scholar boys Why you're clad in ties and collars Making joyful scholarly noise.
	<i>Music continues beneath the next</i>
KING	Pitman? Where's Isaac Pitman?
VOICE	He'll be here shortly, sire. He's busy inventing short-hand.
KING	For heaven's sake, he's only here for a short time in any case.

A flourish of List and Learn and an exuberant whirl of dancing masters. They whirl aside to reveal one old master standing with a sheaf of papers.

7 SCENE: MR WALSH

SCHOLAR But down the corridors walks the shadow of a memory...

An old an man walks through

KING And pray sir, who are you?

SCHOLAR That's Mr Walsh

SCHOLAR Arthur St George Walsh,

SCHOLAR We called him A St G.

SCHOLARS We called him Abu.

SCHOLAR There he goes

SCHOLAR A funny shuffling old man,

SCHOLAR Drifting down the corridors,

SCHOLAR Sifting through the archives,

SCHOLAR Piling the papers, filing the histories in his head.

SCHOLAR Sitting in his room, clouding the air with pipe smoke.

SCHOLAR He liked to watch the football

SCHOLAR And he would hike to Wrexham with a rucksack.

SCHOLAR In 1939, he went back to the Great War battlefields, and visited the war grave of his brother and his comrades.

SCHOLAR And he wrote in his journal:

WALSH Strange that governments take such care of the dead.

VOICE Mr Walsh

VOICE Piling and filing and compiling our histories.

WALSH *(Lifts a paper)* Here are the plans for the old school...
(Lifts another paper) A bundle of school magazines...

8 SCENE: THE WAR TO END ALL WARS

MR WALSH And here is a fragment of paper found in the pocket of a dead soldier.

VOICE What does it say?

R.W. HILL (*Reads*) Do not let your faith in God be shaken.
I do not fear death; Rather, am I proud to be able to lay down my life for my country.

SONG 8: FOR THE 57

ALL So all day long the noise of battle roll'd,
And snow fell, drifting slow and pale and cold,
Shrouding the silent mouths, the stilled limbs
Shutting forever the unseeing eyes.
Such a sleep they sleep the men I love,
Such a sleep they sleep.

The music continues

MR WALSH In memory of the fifty-seven old boys of this school who fell in the Great War.

Hands let fall flutters of white torn paper, which falls like snow...

9 SCENE: HERE COME THE GIRLS

MASTER And so it came to pass that the boys were joined at last by...

GIRLS Girls!

KING Good Heavens!

MASTER I know, sire.

KING Any I should meet?

MASTER Oh no: they've all got very good heads on their shoulders.

MISTRESS In any case, sire, my gels are the crème de la crème.
Line up girls!

KING Wait! Wait! Wait!
Girls actually learning and everything?

MISTRESS Yes.

KING As scholars?

MISTRESS Yes.

KING At my school?

MISTRESS Do the stars fall, sire? Has the world ended?

KING I thought you meant a dance or a pageant or a flower arranging display...

MISTRESS Oh my girls are dance and pageant and flower arranging ninjas, sire.

KING But... there'll be knitting and plaiting and itty bitty skitty little kitties...

The King is overwhelmed by a St Trinian's crowd of joyous girls

GIRLS (*Shout*) And what's wrong with knitting and plaiting and itty bitty skitty little kitties?

KING Nothing!

MISTRESS In any case sire! My gels are capable of so much more...

SONG 9: GIRLS AT KING'S

A la G&S Three Little Maids

GIRLS (*Sing*) We're the little maids at King's, oh yes!
We may look sweet, but we confess
We're loud and proud, but nonetheless
We are the girls at King's!

GIRLS Lots of little maids, who all unscary
Come to the good King's Seminary
Freed to take up its tutelary
We are the girls at King's!
We are the girls at King's!

MISTRESS (*sings*) Don't think they're here to stand on the side
They've got destinies with which to collide,
And not trying hard, I can't abide!
These are my gels at the school!

GIRLS	Lots of little maids, who all unscary Come to the good King's Seminary Freed to take up its tutelary We are the girls at King's We are the girls at King's
MISTRESS	(<i>Shouts</i>) So, let's roll up our sleeves, girls and get going! <i>A rumbustious song!</i>
GIRLS	And there was swimming and rowing And hockey and sewing And sailing and running And skipping and jumping And thinking and singing And corridors ringing With laughter and chatter And all things that matter Artwork and acting And scholarly facting And tennis court action And Physics and fractions And gymnastic leaping And all things in keeping With aims for succeeding And caring and leading.
GIRLS & BOYS (<i>descant?</i>)	Equal dreams for every pupil Equal goals, and equal gains Without quibble, without scruple In our studies, in our games.

10 SCENE: THE ROYAL VISIT

MASTER	Boys!
M SCHOLARS	Sir!
MISTRESS	And girls!
F SCHOLARS	Miss!
MASTER	To mark the completion of our new school buildings, we have a Royal Visitor!
KING	Indeed!

MASTER	Not you, sire. You're always here on your stone lintel.
SCHOLAR	Is it King James I again, sir? Will I have to do my Latin Oration again? (<i>Takes a deep breath to begin...</i>)
MISTRESS	No no no! Today we are visited by Her Majesty The Queen Mother.
	<i>All bow and curtsey.</i>
QUEEN MOTHER	How absolutely wonderful. I declare it all open. May God bless all who sail in her!
PRIEST	It's a school, ma'am.
QUEEN MOTHER	May God bless all who study in her!
SCHOLARS	Hurrah!
QUEEN MOTHER	(<i>Waves. Lifts handbag</i>) You are all so very lovely, you may all have an extra week orf!
SCHOLARS	Hurrah for the Queen Mother!
KING	An extra week orf, Head Master?
MASTER	Smile and grit your teeth, sire. We'll sort it out after she's gorn.

11 SCENE: CAREERS

MISTRESS	In this lesson, we shall consider what you scholars might do when you leave us, for leave us you must. So let us discuss the advancements made by our former pupils, which will be made plain to you that you too might have ambition and aspiration. Take out your jotters and make diligent notes.
SCHOLARS	Thank you, miss.
SCHOLAR	Sire?
KING	Yes?
SCHOLAR	When you were growing up what did you want to be?
KING	Married.

SONG 10: WHO WILL YOU BE?

MISTRESS Tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor
Fiddly dee.
Who will you be?
Tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor.
Who will you be when you leave us?

Leavers who have gone before
Have walked out the door
And found their places
Tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor.
Who will you be when you leave us?

SCHOLARS Tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor
Fiddly dee.
Who will we be?
Tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor.
Who will we be when we leave here?

Leavers who have gone before
Have walked out the door
And found their places
Tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor.
Who will we be when we leave here?

MISTRESS So now let me introduce today's inspirational speakers.

BRASSEY Thomas Brassey!

SCHOLAR Engineer!

MISTRESS A fine career for girls and boys.

FRANCISSE Sir Thomas Francis, if you please.

SCHOLAR Physician to Good Queen Bess.

KING Ah. My daughter. She got to the top of her profession.

BRERETON Edward Brereton at your service,

WARD and Professor John Ward:

SCHOLAR Mathematicians.

MISTRESS Take note that the professor wrote *The young Mathematician* and will be signing copies after the lesson.

WILSON	Thomas Wilson
MISTRESS	A bishop no less, and a saintly man.
CALDECOTT	Randolphe Caldecott
HANKEY	and William Lee Hankey
SCHOLAR	Artists
MISTRESS	Would that we still had the desks they doodled on.
VANBURGH	Sir John Vanburgh
SCHOLAR	Architect and dramatist
MISTRESS	Yes, he could never quite make up his mind about what he wanted to do so he did both!

Phone rings

KING	<p>Hello? Ronald who?.... Ronald Pickup? Never heard of you, old boy. <i>(Puts receiver down)</i> Wrong number.</p>
MISTRESS	And you are?
PARRY	William Parry, madam.
SCHOLAR	Oooh miss! A spy!
MISTRESS	And he got himself executed, so it's very much not a job with prospects. And anyway, we don't say spying, we say the Foreign Office.
ALL	<p>Tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor Fiddly dee. Who will we be? Tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor. Who will we be when we leave here?</p> <p>Leavers who have gone before Have walked out the door And found their places Tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor. Who will we be when we leave here?</p>

12 SCENE: END OF DAY

MASTER	Time to finish what you're doing.
MISTRESS	Time to put away your books.
SCHOLAR	The shadows lengthen
SCHOLAR	It's the close of day
SCHOLAR	The afternoon wanes
SCHOLAR	It's the end of our play
SCHOLAR	Time to tidy the pens and papers
SCHOLAR	Snuff out the candles and blow out the tapers
SCHOLAR	Time to sweep floors and clean the slates
SCHOLAR	Then make our way home through the King's school gates
SCHOLAR	And we walk out into the world
SCHOLAR	The old stone king watches From his lintel stand
SCHOLAR	Watches us go, and wishes us well.
SCHOLAR	We won't look back
SCHOLAR	But in our dreams we'll still hear
SCHOLAR	The singing, and ringing Of the old school bell.

FINALE: SONG 11: History

ALL	Those who have gone before Have made us what we are today So we remember in awe The histories of yesterday Bringing us to this place in time Where we can be who we want to be But we're ready to grow and shine And make new tales of bravery. History is a song of courage History is a bell to be rung
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And for those who would strive for their dreams and their
honour
History is a song that should always be sung.

Those who have names of gold
Inspire us now to do our best
As we hear their stories told
And learn the ways we can meet each test
Leading us on to a new location
Where we can share our hopes and fears
And build for ourselves a strong vocation
Taking us on through the coming years

History is a song of courage
History is a bell that has rung
And for those who will fight for their dreams and their
honour
History is a song that will always be sung

Through the ages we have sailed,
On from the King who launched our barque,
Though siege and strife beset our city,
Into the future making our mark

And our sons have fought for justice
And our daughters scaled the heights
We are Kings, the school of champions,
All of us are shining lights

ONE VOICE

The King gave it, may God bless it