

## **THE MOTHER OF GOD**

**Story and libretto by David Simpatico**

**Written for the ENO Mini Opera Script competition**

Inspired by the Sweeper of Dreams story

*A CIGARETTE glows in the darkness.*

*An old black and white television crackles to life, slowly illuminating the figure of the SWEEPER; a massive, grey, blood-clot of a man sitting in a gingham arm chair two sizes too small for him.*

*In one hand, he holds a cigarette made almost entirely out of unflicked ash. In the other hand, he holds a large, battered pushbroom, bristle-side up, like a monarch holding his scepter.*

*The television pulses and radiates with the light and sound of a professional WRESTLING MATCH from 1969. He places the broom against the arm of the chair; one large grey hand snakes into his pants, to fondle himself.*

*We hear the REF, the CROWD and the refined, yet passionate RING ANNOUNCER through the television's snowy, white noise.*

### **RING ANNOUNCER**

(SNOWY STATIC)

...And a nice drop kick by Jeff Kaye sends Pancho Zappata to the canvas again, as the crowd gives a welcome applause to the heaving sweat drenched ...

(SNOWY STATIC)

...oh no the wily Zappata surprises the erstwhile Kaye with a devastating bearhug, squeezing the air and very life-force out of Kaye's well framed ...

(SNOWY STATIC)

...how long can Kaye last, wrapped and trapped as he is in the eternal soul-numbing grip of...

(SNOWY STATIC)?

*Across the stage, lights flicker with the same spastic current of the black and white television, suddenly illuminating JASON, an adult male of moderate height and weight and indiscriminate age.*

*He kneels, naked, before his bed. He hastily says his nightly prayers.*

**SONG: NOW I LAY ME DOWN TO SLEEP**

**JASON**

Now I lay me down to sleep,  
I pray the Lord my soul to keep,  
If I shall die before I wake  
I pray my soul the Lord to take  
to Shake 'N Bake  
a chocolate cake!

*He slips into bed; turns off the light; hugs his teddy bear close to him.*

Kiss Good bye  
and Nighty night  
One last breath--  
Turn off the light

*His breathing slows and fills the room as he falls into a sullied sleep.*

*Behind him, a demonic CHORUS presses against the dark membrane separating nightmare and waking life. Barely discernable figures spread taut the ineluctable barrier; masked pro wrestlers locked in a bearhug; a circus clown; Marcel Marceau; the Wicked Witch of the West; a hanging corpse; a stern nun whipping a manacled prisoner; a mammoth rat.*

*The Chorus breathes with Jason, slowly, deeply, fully; ushering him to the land of fevered dreams.*

**CHORUS: FA NA NA LULLABYE**

**CHORUS**

Fa na naaa  
Fa na naaa  
Fa na naaa

Fa na naaa  
Fa na naaa  
Fa na naaa

*A light rises on MARY, an impossibly corpulent woman sitting on a tiny tripod positioned at the head of the bed. She strokes her son's head and chest gently as she sings.*

*Puffs of divine smoke rise up from beneath the tripod.*

*As she sings and soothes her sleeping boy, the sheets around his loins rise up slowly as if prodded by a massive nocturnal erection.*

**MARY: FEAR NO EVIL**

## MARY

Fa na naa  
Fan a naa

Yea, though I walk  
I will fear no evil  
for thou art in me  
thy rod and thy staff  
Thy touch and thy laugh  
Fear no evil  
My son, my lover  
comfort me

Fa na naa  
Fan a naa

*As she sings her prayer; a light rises on JESUS CHRIST hanging on the cross at the foot of the bed. His lithe, loin-clothed body is drenched in sweat and blood.*

*He vainly pulls against the constraining nails. A plaque above his head reads: INRI.*

## **JESUS CHRIST: I'M NAILED RIGHT IN**

### CHRIST

Blood and sweat  
The hungry whip  
My swimmer's build  
Forlorn and scorned  
And torn by thorns  
The final toast  
The bitter sip  
Of choice devoid  
The riven skin  
Condemned by Freud  
My hands and feet  
Will never slip  
I'll tell you why:  
I'm nailed right in.

Mother hold me  
Parent, Mate  
Captivated, captive  
Holy, Unadaptive  
hand puppet of fate  
Slaughtered  
And Altered  
With both love and hate

And so I ask  
Before we begin  
What else can I do?  
I'm nailed right in.

*MARY rises at the head of the bed; slowly undoing the line of buttons down the front of her house dress.*

Son, Lover  
Child, Mother  
Consort, Son  
both one and the other  
Riddle me Batman:  
You call this fun?  
Ribs puncture  
Joints dislocate  
Final juncture  
Soul inchoate  
For want of choice  
or original sin  
What else can I do  
But turn to you  
but turn to you  
but turn to you...

*Mary steps out of her dress, naked, shimmering in a divine glare of light; THREE MAMMOTH BREASTS hang suspended, brimming and full.*

#### **MOTHER/CHORUS**

Fa na naaa  
Fa na naaa  
Fa na naaa

Fa na naaa  
Fa na naaa  
Fa na naaa

#### **MOTHER**

Hail Mary full to suck  
blessed is the fruit  
of my womb my fuck

*With great effort, Jesus pulls himself off the cross; a LOUD CRACK reverberates through the universe.*

*He falls off the cross, drops to his knees.*

*The Chorus sucks in a breath.*

*Mary goes to him; to kneel with him and comfort him.*

**DUET: MOTHER OF GOD**

**MARY**

Hail Mary  
Mother of God

**JESUS**

Hail Mary  
full of smother  
lover

**MARY**

Sweet baby Jesus  
Who sees us  
who frees us

**JESUS**

Three year old boy  
who just wants his

**JESUS/MARY**

Mama...Mama....

**CHORUS**

Fa na naaa  
Fa na naaa  
Fa na naaa

**MOTHER**

Sip the tip  
The Mother of God

**JESUS**

A staff a rod  
The son of God

**MOTHER**

Sip your sup  
As I smother  
My lover,  
my innocent pup

**JESUS**

Smother my mother my lover

Your baby boy  
Misbegotten other  
your broken toy  
when push comes to shove  
Mother me  
Other me  
Smother with love

**MOTHER**

Smother with love

**JESUS/MOTHER**

WITH LOVE

**CHORUS**

Fa na naaa  
Fa na naaa  
Fa na naaa

*Jesus suckles at Mary's central breast; a pieta of twisted, new dimension.*

*Jason bolts upright in bed.*

*The lights go out on the chorus, on Jesus, on Mary.*

*Jason sits motionless, wide-eyed, a monstrous erection hidden by the tented bed sheet; he looks to his right, sees the Sweeper bathed in the glow of the television. His hand moves imperceptibly in his pants.*

*The Sweeper looks at Jason.*

*Black Out.*

The end