

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