

# THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN

**Adapted and Dramatized from the  
Story Poem by Robert Browning**

**By Vera Morris**

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 **Pioneer**  
**DRAMA SERVICE**

# **PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN**

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Poem of Robert Browning

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## **CAST OF CHARACTERS** (In Order of Speaking)

	<u># of lines</u>
TOWN CRIER .....of Hamelin Town	7
RATTYTATTY .....pest control officer	20
DILLY .....young girl, Rattytatty's assistant	30
INNKEEPER .....no guests at the inn	29
FLOWER STALL LADY .....distraught because of unwanted visitors with tails	25
DUCHESS DINGALING .....forceful noblewoman who speaks her mind	6
BONGO .....dim-witted policeman	52
RAT KING .....aggressive rodent	22
RAT QUEEN .....his wife	19
OLD WIDOW WHISKERS .....wise old rat	19
PATTYCAKE .....pretty young apple vendor	21
KITTYKAT .....her kitten	10
LOUD RAT .....makes itself heard	2
MAYOR .....pompous, greedy man	96
MAYOR'S WIFE .....bossy and selfish	56
MAYOR'S DAUGHTER .....silly, empty-headed	19
SCHOOLTEACHER .....no ink, no books, no students	21
DANCE TUTOR .....creates new dance to catch the rats	25
PIED PIPER .....mysterious visitor to Hamelin Town	40
EXTRA CITIZENS .....optional	

Any number of CHILDREN of Hamelin Town who appear in ACT TWO also play the RATS of ACT ONE.

# THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN

## SYNOPSIS

The action takes place during the Middle Ages in the town of Hamelin in the country of what is now Germany.

## ACT ONE

The town square. About noon.

## ACT TWO

Scene One -- The following day.

Scene Two -- One week later.

## ACT ONE

The town square. There's an important-looking chair UP CENTER for the MAYOR. A stool to the RIGHT, another to the LEFT.

A flower stall or cart STAGE RIGHT with pots of blooms. A bench STAGE LEFT.

To these basic stage props can be added anything that adds to the stage "picture" -- a backdrop with a painted scene -- mountains, maybe. A cutout tree or two would also look good.

**AT RISE:** We hear the VOICE of the TOWN CRIER coming from the back of the auditorium and up onto the STAGE [or he can ENTER from STAGE RIGHT]. He is ringing a large hand bell.

**TOWN CRIER:** IT'S MORNING IN HAMELIN TOWN AND ALL'S NOT WELL!

IT'S MORNING IN HAMELIN AND ALL'S NOT WELL!

*(Ringing, ringing, ringing.)*

WHAT'S TO BE DONE AND WHO'S TO DO IT?

WHO ATE THE STEW AND GOBBLED THE SUET?

*(Ringing, ringing, ringing.)*

IT'S MORNING IN HAMELIN AND ALL'S NOT WELL!

IT'S MORNING IN HAMELIN AND ALL'S NOT WELL! *(As he is calling out, some CITIZENS of the town ENTER the square from LEFT and RIGHT. To include -- RATTYTATTY, the town pest control officer, and his assistant, a young girl*

*by the name of DILLY. Both are dressed in rather ragged fashion. Two WOMEN -- INNKEEPER and FLOWER STALL LADY. ALL surround the TOWN CRIER.)*

INNKEEPER: What's happened now?

FLOWER STALL LADY: What do you mean "all's not well?"

RATTYTATTY: Has someone been robbed?

DILLY: Has someone fallen into the river?

TOWN CRIER: No one has been robbed. That is to say no one has had his money stolen. No one has fallen into the river. That is to say no one has drowned.

INNKEEPER: Then what's the problem?

DUCHESS DINGALING'S VOICE: *(From OFFSTAGE, LEFT.)*

*RATSI (ALL look amazed -- and horrified.)*

FLOWER STALL LADY: Someone said the FORBIDDEN word!

DUCHESS DINGALING'S VOICE: RATSI!

INNKEEPER: There it is again!

DUCHESS DINGALING'S VOICE: RATSI!

DILLY: *(Points OFFSTAGE, LEFT.)* She said it.

OTHERS: Who?

DUCHESS DINGALING'S VOICE: RATSI!

DILLY: Duchess Dingaling.

INNKEEPER: The woman says whatever pops into her head.

*You can afford to be mad when you're rich. (DUCHESS DINGALING marches IN, LEFT. A proud, outspoken woman dressed in regal fashion. She has a long nose, offset by two large circles of rouge.)*

DUCHESS DINGALING: I speak my mind. I'm no sheep to follow the mayor and his stupidity.

DILLY: Did you say what I think you said, Duchess? The forbidden word.

DUCHESS DINGALING: I said rats. I meant rats. I intend to say it again -- RATSI *(OTHERS react, alarmed. They hate that word. BONGO, the local policeman, ENTERS RIGHT. He's a dim-witted fellow wearing a comical costume. Funny helmet, rubbery billy club in one hand and rolled scroll in the other. Large badge of some sort on his uniform.)*

BONGO: See here, Duchess Dingaling. You can't go around saying a word that's against the law to use.

DUCHESS DINGALING: *(Defiant.)* You're the police, Bongo. If I've done wrong, arrest me. Charge me with a criminal offense. Lock me up.

BONGO: I'm not looking for trouble, Duchess.

**DUCHESS DINGALING:** The mayor is useless. He thinks the problem will go away if no one says the word.

**BONGO:** *(Innocently.)* What word?

**DUCHESS DINGALING:** RATS!!! *(ALL react.)*

**BONGO:** *(Cringes.)* Why did I ask?

**FLOWER STALL LADY:** Duchess Dingaling is right. We've been silent long enough. *(Points to flower stall.)* They've nibbled the flower petals and swallowed the bulbs.

**INNKEEPER:** Not saying the word won't solve anything.

**TOWN CRIER:** I say we should acknowledge the problem, and then find some way to get rid of it.

**BONGO:** *(Innocently again.)* Get rid of what?

**OTHERS:** RATS!!! *(Again, BONGO cringes. ALL step to the edge of the STAGE and speak directly to audience.)*

**ALL:** Rats! *(As CHARACTERS recite, they become more and more agitated, move about. One kneels and points into the audience, another bends from the waist. Another hops up and down. They exchange positions. Their voices getting louder and louder. They're eager to publicize their woe.)* Rats!

They fought the dogs, and kill'd the cats,  
 And bit the babies in the cradles,  
 And ate the cheeses out of the vats,  
 And lick'd the soup from the cook's own ladles.

**INNKEEPER:** Split open the kegs of salted sprats --

**FLOWER STALL LADY:** Made nests inside men's Sunday hats...

**RATTYTATTY:** And even spoil'd women's chats --

**DILLY:** By drowning their speaking --

**ALL:** *(Voices rising in volume.)*  
 With shrieking and squeaking,  
 In fifty different sharps and flats. *(Making horrible rodent faces, hands held like claws.)* RATS!!! *(BONGO suddenly becomes quite efficient and military.)*

**BONGO:** That's enough, I say. No more of that. Hush up. Be quiet. I'm the police. I know what's what. We do not have a "rodent" problem in Hamelin Town. The mayor says so. *(Holds up scroll.)* I have an important edict here. *(He strolls to some tree or post and tacks up the scroll. In large red letters it says -- "DON'T SAY RATS" -- NOTE: If you're not using a tree, have BONGO tack up the notice on a stage wall facing out to audience. INNKEEPER and*

**FLOWER STALL LADY and TOWN CRIER follow after BONGO and read the notice. They're slow readers.)**

**DILLY:** What does it say?

**FLOWER STALL LADY:** It says -- "DON'T SAY RATS."

**BONGO:** (*Furious.*) Then don't say it! Whatsamatter, you can't read or something? (*As the dialogue with DUCHESS DINGALING, DILLY and RATTYTATTY plays, BONGO might leave the stage and pass out some "leaflets" or business cards to children sitting down front. The leaflets or cards proclaim: "DON'T SAY RATS."*)

**DUCHESS DINGALING:** Rattytatty, you are the official pest control officer here in Hamelin Town. What are you doing about this terrible situation? The scratching and the squealing. The gnawing and the chawing.

**RATTYTATTY:** As you know, Duchess, the mayor likes to pretend we don't have a problem. Consequently, he has cut my budget to the bone.

**DUCHESS DINGALING:** What do you say to that?

**RATTYTATTY:** I say ouch.

**DILLY:** It wouldn't matter, anyway. There are too many rats for us. (*On hearing the forbidden word, BONGO yells to DILLY.*)

**BONGO:** DON'T SAY RATSI! (*To audience.*) Everybody, when I say "three," you say "Don't Say Rats." Ready? One -- two -- three: "DON'T SAY RATSI!"

**AUDIENCE:** "DON'T SAY RATSI!"

**DUCHESS DINGALING:** Silly man. (*Points to Dilly.*) Who's this?

**RATTYTATTY:** That's my new assistant, Duchess. Dilly.

**DUCHESS DINGALING:** Dingaling.

**RATTYTATTY:** No, your name is Dingaling. Her name is Dilly.

**DILLY:** I've never seen "rodents" like the ones we've got here in Hamelin Town. They're big as children.

**RATTYTATTY:** Huge.

**DILLY:** Gigantic.

**RATTYTATTY:** Awesome.

**DILLY:** HUMONGOUS!

**RATTYTATTY:** They're nasty!

**DILLY:** They're mean!

**RATTYTATTY:** Ruthless!

**DILLY:** Unclean!

**DUCHESS DINGALING:** (*A call to arms.*) CITIZENS!

**RATTYTATTY/DILLY:** No, rats.

**BONGO:** The next person I hear saying that word is going to get a ticket. Don't say rats!

**OTHERS:** Aha! Aha! *(Pointing to him, accusingly.)* You said it!

**BONGO:** *(Trying to control his temper. Bangs his own head with the rubbery billy club.)* Ooooooooooooh. You've got me so confused.

**DUCHESS DINGALING:** Citizens of Hamelin Town, it's obvious something must be done. I suggest we march to the mayor's house and demand action. United we stand!

**CITIZENS:** Bravo! *(ALL but BONGO applaud.)*

**BONGO:** The mayor won't like it. He's busy.

**DUCHESS DINGALING:** So are the rats.

**BONGO:** That does it, Duchess Dingaling. I'm writing you a ticket!

**DUCHESS DINGALING:** Go ahead. See if I care. What are you waiting for?

**BONGO:** It's a lot of work to write a ticket. I have to print everything in big block letters. *(OTHERS laugh.)* Besides, I can't spell too good. *(Louder laughter.)*

**DUCHESS DINGALING:** While Bongo prints everything in big block letters, we will confront the mayor. We will force him to do his civic duty. *(Sweeping gesture LEFT.)* To the mayor's house!

**CITIZENS:** TO THE MAYOR'S HOUSE! *(DUCHESS DINGALING moves LEFT. Standing in place, she moves her feet up and down like a soldier marching. ALL but BONGO get in line behind her. They, too, march in place.)*

**DUCHESS DINGALING:** Are we ready, citizens?

**CITIZENS:** Ready, Duchess Dingaling!

**DUCHESS DINGALING:** Forward! *(Lifting one arm as if it were a saber, DUCHESS DINGALING marches OFF LEFT. CITIZENS, instead of marching forward, march backward.)*

**BONGO:** She said forward, not backward.

**CITIZENS:** *(Realizing their error.)* Oops. *(They march forward and OUT.)*

**BONGO:** And they say I'm not too bright. I'm smarter than that bunch of cabbage heads. *(He takes a pencil from some pocket, along with a pad of police tickets/citations. To audience.)* That Duchess Dingaling thinks she's so smart just 'cause she's a noblewoman. That don't mean nothin' to Bongo here. The law's the law. *(Wets tip of pencil and studies pad.)* Hmmmmmm. Anyone out there know how to spell "rat?" Is it one "T" or two? Or is it two for tea? I get

so confused. (*BONGO starts to write out the ticket. From the back of the auditorium COME the scurrying RATS. Squeaking noises. NOTE: If you prefer, they can scamper in from STAGE RIGHT and STAGE LEFT. You can utilize as many "rats" as you wish. In Act Two these actors will portray the CHILDREN of HAMELIN TOWN. SEE PRODUCTION NOTES for costume suggestions. If the RATS ENTER via the audience, they should pause every now and then to chatter their teeth at some boy or girl and "scratch" with their nails on the back of seats. BONGO is so engrossed in his ticket-writing that he doesn't notice the rodents are forming a semicircle about him. The SPEAKING RATS are: RAT KING, RAT QUEEN, LOUD RAT, and an elderly female rodent wearing spectacles, who hobbles about with the aid of a cane and wears a shawl over her shoulders – OLD WIDOW WHISKERS. RAT KING and RAT QUEEN might wear little crowns.*) Let me see here. Hmmmmm. "Time of the crime." Anyone know what time it is?

RAT KING: (*Gentlemanly.*) I think I have the correct time. (*Takes out a pocket watch, checks.*) It's almost noon.

BONGO: (*Without looking up from the pad, he writes.*) I'm obliged. Noon. (*RATS "chatter" softly, step closer. RAT KING puts away his pocket watch and strokes his whiskers in vain fashion. ALL "wrinkle" their noses as if they were smelling melted cheese. BONGO reads slowly from pad.*) "Name of the criminal." Duchess. (*Attempts to spell it out.*) Capital "D," small "u," small "c," small "k" --

RAT QUEEN: That spells duck. (*RATS chatter in a funny fashion, point to BONGO. They find him amusing.*)

BONGO: Hmmmmm. I'll just put "D." Dingaling. Might as well keep it simple.

OLD WIDOW WHISKERS: Let me have a look at that. (*She pulls away the paper pad.*)

BONGO: Hey! Give that back to me. Official business.

RATS: (*Mockingly.*) Official business! Official business! Chatter, chatter, chatter. Squeak, squeak, squeak. (*They "chatter," wrinkle noses. Only now does BONGO realize he's surrounded by rats. He looks from one to another. He can barely get the word out.*)

BONGO: Ra-ra-ra-ra --

RATS: (*Chanting.*) RAT-A-TAT-TAT.  
RAT-A-TAT-TAT.

**Rat! Rat! Rat!**

**RAH! RAH! RAH!**

**OLD WIDOW WHISKERS:** *(Like a disappointed parent.)* Oh, dear. Oh, my. Goodness gracious. Look what he's written here. "Name of arresting officer" -- Bingo. *(Shakes a finger at him.)* Your name's not Bingo. It's Bongo. Unless you're an impostor.

**BONGO:** I'm no impostor.

**RATS:** BINGO! BINGO!

**OLD WIDOW WHISKERS:** The poor fellow can't spell worth a lick. *(RATS chatter/laugh. BONGO, who has been shaking in fear, finally manages -- )*

**BONGO:** RATS!!!

**RAT KING:** Quite so. Allow me to introduce myself. *(A gracious bow.)* I am RAT KING!

**RATS:** Rat King -- KING OF RATS! *(BONGO begins to shake again. His teeth chatter. His knees knock together in terror.)*

**RAT KING:** *(Indicates.)* My lovely wife -- QUEEN OF RATS! *(She chatters her teeth at BONGO. He recoils.)*

**RATS:** Rat Queen -- QUEEN OF RATS!

**BONGO:** *(Shaking outrageously.)* Oh! Oh! Oh!

**RAT KING:** My faithful advisor -- *(Indicates.)* Old Widow Whiskers.

**RATS:** Faithful advisor -- OLD WIDOW WHISKERS.

**OLD WIDOW WHISKERS:** *(Returning pad.)* You should have studied harder in school, you stupid boy.

**BONGO:** *(Mustering courage.)* You have no right to speak to me like that. After all, I'm a human being and you're a rat.

**OLD WIDOW WHISKERS:** Isn't he observant? *(RATS chatter/laugh.)*

**RAT KING:** What shall we do with him?

**RAT QUEEN:** Why don't we bite him?

**RAT KING:** That's a good idea.

**RATS:** Let's! *(With that, RATS move in even closer and begin to "nip" at BONGO. Some RAT has apparently bitten him on the backside because he leaps straight up into the air, hands slapped to his rump.)*

**BONGO:** OOOOOOOOooooooooowwwwwwwww... *(Poor BONGO begins to run around the town square. The RATS pursue. Around the flower stall. Around the important-looking chair. Over the stools. He jumps atop the bench and the RATS claw at him. He jumps off and*

*runs around some more. NOTE: If desired, he might leave the stage and come into audience, still chased by some of the rodents.)* HELPI POLICE! MAYOR! RATTYTATTY! DILLY! DUCHESSI HELPI HEEEEEEELP! RATS! RATS! RATS! *(RATS chase him OFF, STAGE LEFT. Only OLD WIDOW WHISKERS is left in sight.)*

**OLD WIDOW WHISKERS:** *(Calls after them.)* Give him a good nip for me. *(Hobbling on her cane, she moves CENTER, muttering to herself.)* That Bongo doesn't need a policeman's hat, he needs a fool's cap. *(PATTYCAKE, a lovely young girl, ENTERS from STAGE RIGHT. With her is her pet kitten KITTYKAT. PATTYCAKE carries a large basket or two of apples. Neither she nor the kitten notice OLD WIDOW WHISKERS as she hides behind the important-looking chair.)*

**PATTYCAKE:** I do hope the mayor's wife will enjoy these delicious apples. *(She holds one up.)* There's not a nibble in the lot, Kittykat. No rat has sampled these tasties.

**KITTYKAT:** Meow.

**OLD WIDOW WHISKERS' VOICE:** *(From behind chair.)* They are lovely apples. Tasty looking. Round and juicy. *(Squeaking sound.)* What is your name, my dear? *(PATTYCAKE doesn't look in the direction of the voice. Instead, she bends down to stroke KITTYKAT.)*

**PATTYCAKE:** My name is Pattycake and this is my new kitten Kittykat. Isn't she lovely?

**KITTYKAT:** Meow.

**OLD WIDOW WHISKERS' VOICE:** I'm not fond of cats. Much too conceited. I am fond of apples.

**PATTYCAKE:** *(Straightens up.)* These are for the mayor's wife. I suppose she won't notice if one is missing. *(She dips into basket and holds out an apple. Looks about.)* Where are you, whoever you are?

**OLD WIDOW WHISKERS' VOICE:** I'm close. A lonely old widow and -- here -- I -- come. *(OLD WIDOW WHISKERS pops INTO VIEW and shakes her cane at PATTYCAKE.)* I'll take those apples! *(Calls STAGE LEFT.)* Everybody in here! It's apple-eating time! Yum! Yum!

**PATTYCAKE:** *(Alarmed. To audience.)* They're everywhere now! Even in the daytime. Rats! Rats! Do something, Kittykat.

**KITTYKAT:** *(Terrified.)* MEOW! MEOW! MEOW! *(With that, KITTYKAT clings to PATTYCAKE for dear life, or grabs*

*her around the leg and holds tight. PATTYCAKE drops the basket of apples.)*

**PATTYCAKE:** You stay away from us! We're not afraid of you. *(Bravely.)* Are we, Kittykat? *(KITTYKAT clings all the tighter.)*

**RATS' VOICES:** Apples! Apples! Yum, yum, yum! If we want to eat them, we'd better run. *(RATS scurry IN. PATTYCAKE screams and runs OFF, RIGHT.)*

**KITTYKAT:** MEOOOOOOOOW! *(KITTYKAT FOLLOWS after PATTYCAKE. The RATS scurry for the apples. Each takes one. They position themselves about the STAGE FLOOR as they munch greedily.)*

**RAT QUEEN:** These are very fine apples. Excellent taste. I had an apple like this once in the Black Forest.

**RAT KING:** *(Points to the notice BONGO tacked up.)* What's that?

**RAT QUEEN:** I'll have a look, dear. *(RAT QUEEN crosses to notice, looks.)*

**RAT KING:** What does it say?

**RAT QUEEN:** It says -- "DON'T SAY RATS."

**RAT KING:** Don't say rats? Ha! Ha! Ha!

**RATS:** *(Joining in, rolling on the floor.)* Don't say rats! Don't say rats! Rats! Rats! Rats! Rats! Rah! Rah! Rah!

**RAT KING:** We've got Hamelin Town on the run. They're afraid of us. *(Points to important-looking chair.)* Who sits there?

**OLD WIDOW WHISKERS:** That's where the mayor sits. He's a greedy fellow. If you ask me, Hamelin Town is full of dolts and simpletons.

**RAT KING:** I shall be the new mayor, and that is where I'll sit. *(RATS applaud. RAT KING sits in chair.)*

**RAT QUEEN:** Is it comfortable, dear?

**RAT KING:** I've made a nest in better.

**RAT QUEEN:** We ought to find a tailor's shop. You could do with a new suit.

**RAT KING:** Do you remember the sailor suit I used to wear?

**RAT QUEEN:** How could I forget, dear? I never could resist a rat in uniform. Your white trousers and your little blue jacket.

**OLD WIDOW WHISKERS:** The best thing about Hamelin Town is the food. I've never tasted such treats. *(Holds up apple.)* Like this apple. It would make a fine cider.

**RAT QUEEN:** I like the pastries better. All that puffy crust and sweet-tasting whipped cream. *(RATS chime in, declaring their preference.)*

**RATS:** Chocolate cake!  
Lemon tarts!  
Cheese biscuits!  
Caramel corn!  
Pretzels!

**LOUD RAT:** WALLPAPER!

**RAT KING:** *(Leans forward.)* Here's the plan.

**OLD WIDOW WHISKERS:** Hear ye! Hear ye! The Rat King speaks. *(RATS become attentive.)*

**RAT KING:** First, we'll eat them out of house and home. Then, we'll drive them from the town.

**RAT QUEEN:** We'll give the town a new name.

**RAT KING:** Suggest something, Old Widow Whiskers.

**OLD WIDOW WHISKERS:** Hmmmmm. We'll call the new town -- **RODENTBURG.**

**RATS:** *(Savoring the name.)* Hmmmmm. Rodentburg.

**RAT QUEEN:** I like it.

**RAT KING:** So do I. Rodentburg. Makes me think of a fine old cheese.

**OLD WIDOW WHISKERS:** *(Proclaiming.)* Bow down, one and all, to the new mayor of -- **RODENTBURG!** *(RATS stand and bow.)*

**RATS:** TO THE NEW MAYOR OF -- **RODENTBURG!** HIP! HIP! HOORAY! HIP! HIP! HOORAY! HIP! HIP! HOORAY!

**LOUD RAT:** For he's a jolly good rodent! *(RATS laugh and chatter, applaud. Their little celebration is cut short by the excited VOICES OF CITIZENS from OFFSTAGE, LEFT.)*

**VOICES:** You're the mayor. Do something!

Before it's too late!

I'll be ruined!

Get rid of the pests!

No more rats!

Save Hamelin Town! *(RATS cluster STAGE LEFT and look OFFSTAGE.)*

**CITIZENS:** They're eating me  
out of house and home!  
They're in the walls!  
They're in my well!  
In the barn!  
They ate my spaghetti!

**MAYOR'S VOICE:** Nonsense.  
Rubbish.  
You exaggerate.  
Bah.  
It was probably your  
cat.

Clawed my teddy!

Buy another.

RAT QUEEN: They're coming this way.

RAT KING: Scatter and scamper! *(On the command, RATS scatter and scamper, "chattering wildly," OFF RIGHT. OLD WIDOW WHISKERS does her best to keep up, but she's not as fast on her furry feet. As OLD WIDOW WHISKERS EXITS, the MOB APPEARS from LEFT. First in is the harassed MAYOR. He is followed by his WIFE, a haughty lady. She carries a basket covered with a napkin. She is followed by their DAUGHTER, a tall girl with a squeaky voice. CITIZENS are behind them. Some carry signs on sticks: "JUST SAY NO RATS" -- "RATS OUT" -- "RATS -- YUCK." PATTYCAKE and KITTYKAT ENTER from DOWN RIGHT. KITTYKAT holds a sign reading: "CAT POWER." BONGO moves here and there, tries to hold the mob back. MAYOR, a pompous man, moves in front of chair. In addition to the townspeople we have already met, discovered in the crowd are: DANCING TUTOR, SCHOOLTEACHER. DANCING TUTOR wears a comical "dance" costume. EXTRA CITIZENS, if desired. Arrange the characters some STAGE LEFT, some STAGE RIGHT. FLOWER STALL LADY moves behind her cart. The excited voices continue to jeer at the MAYOR as BONGO attempts to quiet them: "None of that" -- "Watch it" -- "Calm down" -- "I'm the law" -- "Get back.")*

CITIZENS: Do something, Mayor!

We need help!

Save Hamelin Town!

They're creeping!

They're crawling!

They're here!

They're there!

Rats!

MAYOR: *(Hands up, attempts to quiet the uproar.)* Good people of Hamelin Town... I implore you... quiet, please.

CITIZENS: No more promises!

My best dress chewed to shreds!

My best hat ruined!

They're on the stairs!

In the beds!

Underfoot!

MAYOR: Good people, good citizens --

CITIZENS: Actions not words!

Answers not questions!  
Down with the mayor!  
Vote him out!  
Toss him out!  
Run him out!  
They're creeping!  
They're crawling!  
Everywhere!  
Rats!

**BONGO:** *(Loud and fierce.)* AW, SHUUUUUUT UP!!! *(This does the trick. MOB quiets. BONGO is pleased with himself.)* That's better.

**MAYOR:** Much better. Thank you, Bongo.

**BONGO:** You're welcome, Mayor.

**MAYOR'S WIFE:** Bongo may be dumb, husband. But he's polite.

**MAYOR'S DAUGHTER:** Mommy knows best. *(She performs a stupid curtsy to no one in particular.)*

**MAYOR:** Sit down, daughter. Sit down, wife. I'll settle this business in no time. Purely a routine matter. *(Regally, MAYOR'S WIFE sits on one stool. MAYOR'S DAUGHTER on the other. As soon as the DAUGHTER hits the wood, she stands and gives another dumb curtsy. The MOB sighs. It finds the MAYOR and his family a bit boring.)* Well, well, citizens. I am sitting in the official chair of civic power. Why the uproar?

**RATTYTATTY:** But you're not sitting, Mayor.

**MAYOR:** How's that, Rattytatty?

**DILLY:** You're not sitting. You're standing. *(MAYOR realizes he's standing.)*

**MAYOR:** So I am. Sorry. *(He sits. MAYOR'S DAUGHTER stands, performs another stupid curtsy. MOB gives a collective sigh. MAYOR'S DAUGHTER sits.)* Now, good citizens of Hamelin Town, what is the problem?

**DUCHESS DINGALING:** As if you didn't know.

**CITIZENS:** RATS!

**BONGO:** Don't say that. I'll write you a ticket. *(Points to sign he tacked up.)* Can't you read? *(DUCHESS DINGALING steps forward.)*

**DUCHESS DINGALING:** Enough of this idle chatter. Mayor, you know very well what's been happening in this town. We demand that you solve the rat problem.

**MAYOR:** Enemies mean to harm me by harming the town's reputation. Rats are bad for business. The wisest course is to ignore the situation. Say nothing. I tell you there is nothing amiss in Hamelin Town.

**FLOWER STALL LADY:** But, Mayor. The rats have chewed my flowers. No one will buy a pot of plants that are half-eaten. (*INNKEEPER steps forward.*)

**INNKEEPER:** No one will stay at my inn. The rats are in the writing room, on the stairs, in the luggage. I don't dare to go into the kitchen anymore. They're in the souffle.

**SCHOOLTEACHER:** (*Steps forward.*) As the town schoolteacher, I feel it's my duty to tell you, Mayor, that there's no education.

**MAYOR'S WIFE:** Surely, Schoolteacher, you exaggerate.

**MAYOR'S DAUGHTER:** Poppa, could I have a jelly bean?

**MAYOR:** Later.

**SCHOOLTEACHER:** The children don't come to school anymore. The books have been eaten and the chalk chewed to powder. The creatures have even drunk all the ink.

**DUCHESS DINGALING:** (*Indicates direction of the river.*) The children do nothing but play down by the river, all day.

**MAYOR:** Pish-posh. So, here and there, a rat has been seen. No big deal. Rattytatty, what are you doing about catching the little monster?

**RATTYTATTY:** (*Steps forward.*) As you know, Mayor, my budget has been severely cut.

**MAYOR:** The treasury is in a bad way.

**DUCHESS DINGALING:** No wonder! You take such a large salary for -- YOURSELF! (*Indignant, MAYOR rises.*)

**MAYOR:** Are you accusing me of taking money from the treasury illegally? (*To WIFE.*) What's for lunch? (*MAYOR'S WIFE dips into the basket and produces a leg of lamb. She passes it to MAYOR. He chews at it as he speaks.*) Be reasonable. Is it my fault the treasury is empty?

**CITIZENS:** YES!

**MAYOR:** I'll pretend I didn't hear that.

**MAYOR'S WIFE:** I ask you, citizens -- in all seriousness -- has anyone seen more than the occasional -- "rodent?"

**PATTYCAKE:** I have! Why, they scared Kittykat something awful. Hundreds of them.

**KITTYKAT:** Meow.

**DILLY:** They're not ordinary rats, Mayor. They're super-human and they're smart.

**MAYOR:** Rubbish, I say.

**DANCE TUTOR:** That's where some of them live. In the rubbish.

**MAYOR'S WIFE:** Rattytatty, either get rid of the creatures or resign.

**RATTYTATTY:** I won't resign unless the mayor pays me my back salary.

**MAYOR:** *(Munching on his leg of lamb.)* Don't be so greedy, Rattytatty. You have a civic duty to perform.

**DILLY:** Rattytatty does his best. But this problem is bigger than both of us.

**MAYOR'S WIFE:** Don't speak unless you're spoken to, child.

**DANCE TUTOR:** *(Waving her hand.)* Mayor! Mayor! I know how to get rid of the rats. *(Reaction.)*

**MAYOR:** Who's that speaking?

**MAYOR'S WIFE:** It's the dance tutor.

**MAYOR'S DAUGHTER:** She taught me how to dance the polka.

**MAYOR:** Step forward, Dance Tutor. *(DANCE TUTOR, a ridiculous character, steps CENTER. Those who are already CENTER step to the sidelines.)* You have some scheme or other?

**DANCE TUTOR:** I do, indeed, Mayor. I have a most ingenious method to rid Hamelin Town of its unwanted visitors.

**FLOWER STALL LADY:** That's all I get at my flower stall. No customers. Just "unwanted visitors."

**INNKEEPER:** It's the same at the inn.

**RATTYTATTY:** How are you going to get rid of them, Dance Tutor? *(DANCE TUTOR is only too happy to demonstrate.)*

**DANCE TUTOR:** I have created a new dance sensation which I call "Doing the Rat."

**CITIZENS:** "Doing the Rat?!"

**DANCE TUTOR:** By performing the dance, the rats will be attracted to the dancer. I demonstrate. With your permission, Mayor.

**MAYOR:** You may proceed. *(Another bite of the lamb. He sits. MAYOR'S DAUGHTER stands, curtsies. Sits.)*

**DANCE TUTOR:** *(Announces.)* For the first time anywhere -- "DOING THE RAT." *(Applause from CITIZENS. DANCE TUTOR sticks her upper teeth over her lower lip and "chatters." She hunches over to suggest a rat walking on*

*tiptoes. From her costume she produces a length of rope to suggest a rat's tail. She holds it to her backside with one hand.) As I dance I recite. (DANCE TUTOR "tiptoes" here and there, pretending to be a dancing rodent.)*

Great rats, small rats, grey rats, brawny rats!

Long, trailing tails and fine black whiskers.

Rat-a-tat-tat and that's what I call --

**ALL: DOING THE RAT!**

**DANCE TUTOR:** *(Repeats.)* Rat-a-tat-tat and that's what I call...

**ALL: DOING THE RAT!**

**DANCE TUTOR:** And when all the rats are dancing in carefree fashion, I STOMP -- ! *(With that, in a swift change of mood, DANCE TUTOR becomes a demented executioner.)*

I STOMP HERE -- *(She stomps on an imaginary rat.)* I

STOMP THERE -- *(Another stomp.)* HERE! *(Another stomp.)* THERE -- *(Another stomp.)* EVERYWHERE!

*(Stomp, stomp, stomp.)* I STOMP THEM ALL TO OBLIVION! AND THAT'S WHAT I CALL --

**CITIZENS:** *(Most unimpressed, mumbling.)* Doing the rat. *(ALL stare blankly at DANCE TUTOR. They're appalled by her idiotic scheme. DANCE TUTOR smiles, bows to audience, even though there's no applause.)*

**MAYOR:** *(Flat.)* Thank you so much for sharing that with us, Dance Tutor. *(MAYOR'S WIFE applauds indifferently. One or two people in the crowd do likewise.)*

**MAYOR'S WIFE:** Does anyone else have anything to say?

**MAYOR'S DAUGHTER:** I do.

**MAYOR'S WIFE:** Yes?

**MAYOR'S DAUGHTER:** *(Stands.)* What about my jelly bean? *(CITIZENS groan. MAYOR'S DAUGHTER sits.)*

**MAYOR:** I suggest I give this matter my full attention.

**DUCHESS DINGALING:** I suggest we vote for a new mayor.

**CITIZENS:** Yes!

Good idea!

Excellent idea!

New mayor for Hamelin Town! *(Shaken by the possibility of being booted from office, MAYOR stands, protests.)*

**MAYOR:** Citizens! Please! You don't know what you're saying!

**DILLY:** Yes, we do!

**DUCHESS DINGALING:** If you don't wish to be removed from office, do something!

**INNKEEPER:** Be quick about it!

**MAYOR:** As you know, I am dedicated to the welfare of Hamelin Town.

**MAYOR'S WIFE:** My husband loves Hamelin Town.

**TOWN CRIER:** You mean he loves his fat salary!

**MAYOR:** *(Infuriated.)* Who said that?

**TOWN CRIER:** *(Hiding behind someone.)* Must have been a rat. *(Laughter.)*

**PIED PIPER'S VOICE:** Good people of Hamelin Town!  
*(Laughter subsides. NOTE: PIED PIPER can ENTER from the rear of the auditorium and walk down an aisle and up ONTO THE STAGE. Or he can ENTER from DOWN RIGHT. Repeats -- )* Good people.

**SCHOOLTEACHER:** Who's that?

**PATTYCAKE:** What a strange-looking person.

**INNKEEPER:** I don't recognize him.

**BONGO:** He's a stranger.

**FLOWER STALL LADY:** He won't stay long.

**DANCE TUTOR:** They never do. Not nowadays.

**MAYOR'S DAUGHTER:** *(Hopeful.)* Maybe he's looking for a wife. *(She giggles. PIED PIPER takes STAGE CENTER. CITIZENS gawk. The new arrival wears a long coat that reaches almost to his ankles, a pointed cap with a long feather, scarf around his neck.)*

**MAYOR:** You have business in Hamelin Town, sir? *(PIED PIPER bows.)*

**PIED PIPER:** Please, Your Honor, hear me out. I have heard of Hamelin Town's sad plight.

**SCHOOLTEACHER:** The news has spread over the entire countryside.

**DANCE TUTOR:** Tsk, tsk.

**MAYOR'S WIFE:** We have no idea what you are talking about, fellow. There is no sad plight in Hamelin Town.

**DUCHESS DINGALING:** Pretending there's nothing wrong won't solve anything.

**TOWN CRIER:** The duchess is right.

**MAYOR:** Well, well, fellow, if you have something to say, speak up.

**PIED PIPER:** I can offer my services. For a fee, of course.

**MAYOR'S WIFE:** I thought so. He's nothing more than a beggar.

**PIED PIPER:** I am no beggar.

**MAYOR:** What services can you offer? *(He recites in dramatic fashion.)*

**PIED PIPER:** I'm able,  
 By means of a secret charm, to draw  
 All creatures living beneath the sun,  
 That creep, or swim, or fly, or run,  
 After me so as you never saw! *(ALL are impressed by his boast. "OOOOh" and "AAAAH.")*

**MAYOR'S WIFE:** Can this be true?

**PIED PIPER:** And I chiefly use my charm  
 On creatures that do people harm,  
 The mole, and toad, and newt, and viper;  
 And people call me the Pied Piper.

**ALL:** *(In awe.)* The Pied Piper.

**SCHOOLTEACHER:** Can you really do what you say?

**PIED PIPER:** Of course.

**MAYOR:** Boastful fellow.

**PIED PIPER:** I know my worth. If I can rid your town of rats,  
 will you give me a thousand guilders?

**MAYOR:** One thousand? Fellow, if you can do what you say, I  
 will give you -- FIFTY THOUSAND!

**CITIZENS:** Hooray!

**MAYOR:** *(Stands.)* Citizens, to your homes. I would have a  
 word or two in private with this fellow. Go along, go along.

**BONGO:** You heard the mayor. Everybody out. Go home.  
 Don't say rats. *(Having said it, he bangs his head with the club. ALL but the PIED PIPER, MAYOR and MAYOR'S WIFE EXIT scene.)*

**MAYOR'S WIFE:** *(To MAYOR, stands.)* Have you lost your  
 senses? Fifty thousand guilders?

**PIED PIPER:** Not fifty thousand. One thousand is my fee.

**MAYOR'S WIFE:** Sir, I would have a word with my husband.  
 Would you excuse us for a moment?

**PIED PIPER:** I won't be far. I will await your decision.  
 Remember this. I, and I alone, can rid this town of rats.  
*(He bows and EXITS DOWN LEFT. MAYOR'S WIFE waits until he's out, and then she whacks her husband on his shoulder.)*

**MAYOR'S WIFE:** Nincompoop! *(She whacks him again.)*  
 Simpleton! *(Another whack. MAYOR moves STAGE RIGHT.)*

**MAYOR:** Wife, wife, this isn't seemly. What if anyone saw  
 you? I must maintain my dignity.

**MAYOR'S WIFE:** Dignity? I'll show you dignity! *(She takes the leg of lamb and whacks him on the head.)*

**MAYOR:** Ow! What's wrong?

**MAYOR'S WIFE:** Fifty thousand guilders we don't have.

**MAYOR:** He only wants a thousand.

**MAYOR'S WIFE:** Even that is much too much. We need every bit to maintain our standard of importance. If you give this Pied Piper such a sum, it will come out of our pockets. Besides, I'm planning on buying an ermine-trimmed cape. That'll cost.

**MAYOR:** Hmmmmm. I was planning to purchase a new carriage with my name on the door. Spelled out in seed pearls.

**MAYOR'S WIFE:** Then it's settled. Not one copper coin for the rat catcher.

**MAYOR:** But the rats --

**MAYOR'S WIFE:** Rats are not a serious problem in Hamelin Town. You said so yourself! *(Head high, she walks LEFT. Realizes she is holding the leg of lamb. She steps back to her husband.)* Here. *(Hands it to him. She EXITS. Absent-mindedly, MAYOR nibbles at the meat.)*

**MAYOR:** What a dilemma. People don't realize the problems I have. What am I going to do? *(RAT KING ENTERS RIGHT.)*

**RAT KING:** For starters, you can give me that leg of lamb. If you don't, I'll give you a bite.

**MAYOR:** A rat! *(RAT QUEEN ENTERS.)*

**RAT QUEEN:** Make that two. *(OLD WIDOW WHISKERS ENTERS.)*

**OLD WIDOW WHISKERS:** Three.

**MAYOR:** *(Repulsed.)* Ugh. *(RAT KING swipes the leg of lamb from the MAYOR, strides to the important-looking chair and sits. Nibbles at the food.)*

**RAT KING:** Not bad. I've had better. Too much garlic.

**MAYOR:** That's my chair.

**RAT KING:** Not anymore it isn't. Finders keepers.

**RAT QUEEN:** We're taking over Hamelin Town.

**OLD WIDOW WHISKERS:** Every street, every nook and cranny.

**MAYOR:** No! No! *(RAT QUEEN moves to the sign BONGO tacked up.)*

**RAT QUEEN:** First off, we'll get rid of this. Nobody paid any attention to it, anyway. *(She rips down the "DON'T SAY RATS" sign and tears it in two. The MAYOR is on the verge of fainting.)*

**OLD WIDOW WHISKERS:** I'm going to invite families by the tens and dozens. They'll enjoy living here. It's a rather dull town, but we'll change that.

**RAT QUEEN:** Every cobblestone will sing the same tune.  
Pit-a-pat, pit-a-pat.

**OLD WIDOW WHISKERS/RAT KING:** Rat, rat, rat. *(Dismayed, MAYOR presses his hands to his ears, shuts his eyes, and drops to his knees.)*

**MAYOR:** I won't listen! I won't look! No. No. No.

**RAT KING:** Spread the news. Hamelin Town is OUT and Rodentburg is IN! Ha, ha, ha. Squeal, squeal, squeal.  
*(RAT KING leaps from the chair and scurries OFF, RIGHT. OLD WIDOW WHISKERS and RAT QUEEN FOLLOW. "Squeal, squeal, squeal." Still on his knees, MAYOR rocks from side to side, lamenting.)*

**MAYOR:** No. No. No. My beautiful town. Rodentburg? Ugh.  
*(As he moans and groans, the PIED PIPER RETURNS. He stands silently for a moment watching the MAYOR.)*

**PIED PIPER:** What is your will? Do I stay or do I go? *(MAYOR opens his eyes and fast "knee-walks" to the PIED PIPER.)*

**MAYOR:** Oh, sir. Oh, lucky day you came to Hamelin Town.  
Yes, yes. Whatever you say, whatever you want. Rid us of this plague and the money is yours. This I vow. This I promise.

**PIED PIPER:** Then we have a deal?

**MAYOR:** We do, indeed.

**PIED PIPER:** Done. *(He holds out his hand for the MAYOR to shake.)*

**MAYOR:** *(Shaking hands.)* Will it take long?

**PIED PIPER:** Not long.

**MAYOR:** I'll go and tell the others. Happy day for Hamelin Town! *(He stands and runs OFF, LEFT. The PIED PIPER looks about the square -- as if he were trying to figure out from what direction the rats would appear. He produces a flute. He puts it to his lips and begins to pipe. He moves about. SLIGHT SHIFT IN STAGE LIGHTING. In a moment or two, attracted by the tune, LOUD RAT sticks head INTO VIEW. Smiles. The music is so soothing and pleasant. Another RAT APPEARS -- and ANOTHER -- and ANOTHER. RAT KING and RAT QUEEN and OLD WIDOW WHISKERS. Soon every RAT in the production is lined up behind the PIED PIPER. PIED PIPER marches about the STAGE, RATS in a line behind him. As they*

*march, CITIZENS creep IN from UP LEFT and UP RIGHT and bunch together behind the important-looking chair and stools. Eventually, the PIED PIPER leads the RATS from the STAGE and into the auditorium, up an aisle and OUT. Or he leads them OFFSTAGE, RIGHT. [NOTE: The "river" in which the RATS will supposedly drown will be in the back of the auditorium or OFFSTAGE RIGHT.] As the PIED PIPER and RATS LEAVE the scene, CITIZENS scurry down to the edge of the STAGE and peer out into the audience. Or they cluster STAGE RIGHT and peer OFFSTAGE.)*

**SCHOOLTEACHER:** Look!

**DANCE TUTOR:** It's true what he said.

**DILLY:** He can draw creatures by means of a secret charm.

**BONGO:** That's no secret charm. It's a flute. He's a piper.

**MAYOR'S DAUGHTER:** Look! He's leading the rats to the river.

**DANCE TUTOR:** They must be water rats.

**TOWN CRIER:** What are the rats doing? I can't see.

**RATTYTATTY:** The rats are jumping into the river. One on top of the other.

**INNKEEPER:** They're drowning.

**DUCHESS DINGALING:** Good riddance.

**KITTYKAT:** Meow. *(ALL are greatly excited.)*

**PATTYCAKE:** Listen. *(From the back of the auditorium or from OFFSTAGE, we can hear LOUD SQUEAKING and the SOUND OF SPLASHING WATER... the SQUEAKING FADES. Silence.)*

**MAYOR'S DAUGHTER:** Splish, splash.

**DANCE TUTOR:** Now that's what I call "Doing the Rat."

**MAYOR'S WIFE:** That's the last of them.

**FLOWER STALL LADY:** He's done it. The Pied Piper has rid us of the rats!

**MAYOR:** Long live Hamelin Town!

**SCHOOLTEACHER:** Long live the Pied Piper!

**INNKEEPER:** Everyone -- into the inn. We'll have a celebration!

**ALL:** HOORAY! *(INNKEEPER moves LEFT and CITIZENS FOLLOW. SOUND: HAPPY MUSIC.)*

**END OF ACT ONE**

*(NOTE: If you wish an INTERMISSION, it comes at this point. If not, the action will be continuous. The CURTAIN will CLOSE or the LIGHTS will GO TO BLACK to signify a passage of time.)*

**End of Script Sample**

## **PRODUCTION NOTES**

**Stage Properties:** Important-looking chair, 2 stools, flower stall or cart with pots of flowers, bench. Optional scenic backdrop, cutout tree(s).

**Brought On, ACT ONE:** Hand bell (TOWN CRIER); policeman's helmet, billy club, badge, whistle, paper pad, pencil, large scroll reading "DON'T SAY RATS," thumb tack (BONGO). Spectacles, shawl, cane (OLD WIDOW WHISKERS). Optional crowns (RAT KING, RAT QUEEN); pocket watch (RAT KING); basket(s) with apples (PATTYCAKE). Basket, napkin, leg of lamb (MAYOR'S WIFE). Signs on sticks -- "JUST SAY NO TO RATS" -- "RATS OUT" -- "RATS -- YUCK!" (CITIZENS); sign reading "CAT POWER" (KITTYKAT); rope tail (DANCE TUTOR). Long coat, scarf, cap with feather, music pipe or flute (PIED PIPER).

**Brought On, ACT TWO, Scene One:** Watering can (FLOWER STALL LADY); basket with apples (PATTYCAKE, KITTYKAT); white jacket, push broom (RATTYTATTY, DILLY); cape with white fur trim (MAYOR'S WIFE); pitch pipe (SCHOOLTEACHER); coins (MAYOR).

**Brought On, ACT TWO, Scene Two:** Chest with coins, small pouch with coins (RATTYTATTY, DILLY).

**COSTUMES:** The time setting is approximately the 13th or 14th Century. The usual fairy tale wardrobe. For specific suggestions, consult Sheila Smolensky's Costuming For Children's Theatre (Pioneer Drama Service). When the children of Act Two portray the rats of Act One, they can wear black or brown tunics or night shirts over their Act Two costumes. Gloves for rats' hands. Tips of noses painted black, as well as some whiskers painted on. Tails of rope. Mickey Mouse cap ears will adapt easily into rats' ears with a bit of trimming or none at all. The actors' movements and "sounds" will add to the rodent persona. If you don't use the long overcoat for the Pied Piper, he could be dressed like Robin Hood. Do try to come up with something comical for the loony Dance Tutor.

**SOUND:** All rat noises will be done by the actual actors. Water splashing for the river scene (optional) and happy music for the ending of ACT ONE can be recorded sound effects. May use pre-recorded sound effects and public domain music.

**ABOUT THE PIPER'S TUNE:** The pipe can be a flute. If the actor can "pipe a tune," fine and good. If not, a FLUTE PLAYER can play from OFFSTAGE and the actor can mime. Or you can use a tape recording. The actual tune is left to the director and the musician.

Some incidental music, at logical spots, will add to the atmosphere -- Dance Tutor's dance, ending and beginning of scenes.

### **MISCELLANEOUS**

**BONGO'S RUBBER BILLY CLUB:** Stuff a black sock -- this way when he hits himself no damage is done.

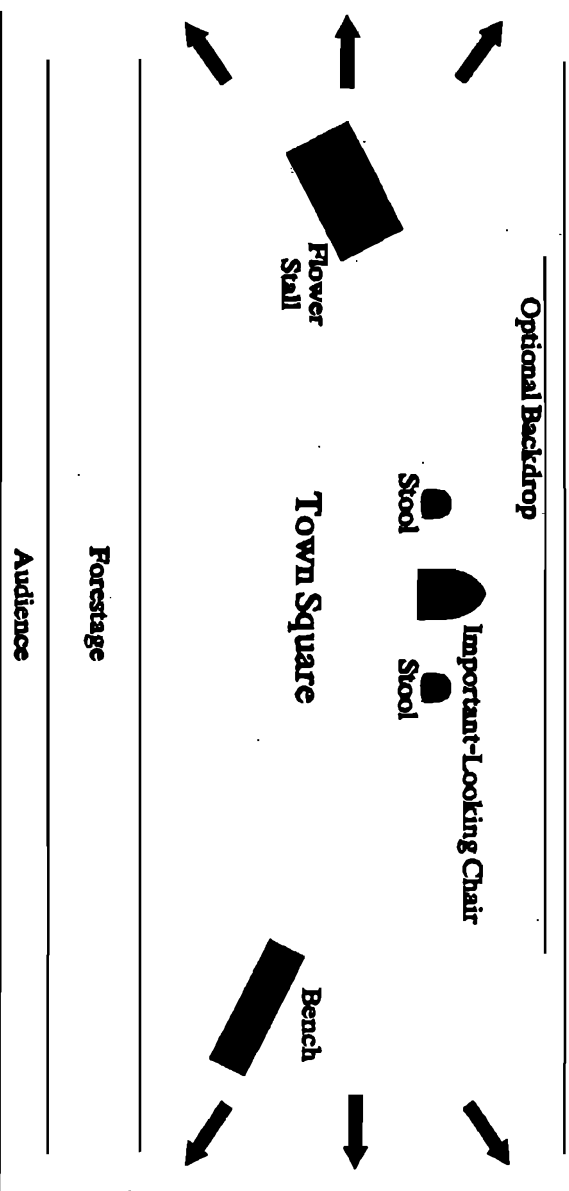
**FLEXIBLE CASTING:** Adjust to your needs. Don't be afraid to turn a male role into a female role (RATTYTATTY, BONGO, TOWN CRIER.) Or a female role into a male one (INNKEEPER, DANCE TUTOR, SCHOOLTEACHER, etc. OLD WIDOW WHISKERS could become simply OLD WHISKERS).

**EXTRA CITIZENS:** Use them as part of any mob scene.

**RAT KING, RAT QUEEN and LOUD RAT** can also become CITIZENS in ACT TWO (with a change of costume, naturally).

**EXIT OF RATS AND CHILDREN:** If you're taking them out through the audience, establish one aisle as leading to the river and another aisle as leading to the mountain.

**THE PIED PIPER OF HAMMELIN**  
**Basic Unit Set**



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