

THE PIED PIPER

A PARTICIPATION PLAY FOR CHILDREN

**by
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and
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**PIONEER DRAMA SERVICE, INC.
Englewood, Colorado**

THE PIED PIPER

CAST OF CHARACTERS

MAYOR HOFFMAN	An incompetent, but well-meaning official
VERONIKA	School teacher; mother of Gretchen
GERTRUDE	Clever servant of the Pied Piper
BRUNO	A boy of Hamelin
GRETCHEN	A girl of Hamelin; daughter of Veronika; walks with a crutch
PIED PIPER	An arrogant egotist, in search of fame and fortune

NOTE ON THE MUSIC:

The PIED PIPER'S THEME may be played live or over the sound system with a cassette tape. The suggested music included on the inside back cover is adapted from Edvard Grieg's PEER GYNT SUITE NO. 1, "In the Hall of the Mountain King". Other music, live or taped, may be substituted at the discretion of the director.

For preview only

THE PIED PIPER

SET: The Town Square of the quaint village of Hamelin. To **LEFT** and **RIGHT** of **CENTER** are benches, sturdy enough to stand on. **UP CENTER** is a backdrop or screen depicting a mountain scene.

AT RISE: **MAYOR HOFFMAN** **ENTERS** running from **LEFT**, panic stricken. He jumps onto the bench **LEFT CENTER**, pointing **OFF LEFT**.

MAYOR: Rats! I've never seen so many rats in my life. Little rats, big rats, thin rats, fat rats. *(Sees audience.)* Oh, hello there. I didn't know we had visitors. Not many people come to Hamelin anymore. It's those rats. They've practically ruined the tourist trade. I should know. I'm the mayor. I'm in charge of everything here. It's a lot of responsibility. *(VERONIKA ENTERS from RIGHT, carrying a handful of flyers.)*

VERONIKA: Mayor Hoffman! What are you doing up on that bench?

MAYOR: What bench?

VERONIKA: The bench you're standing on.

MAYOR: Oh, this bench. *(Pauses briefly as he thinks of an excuse.)* I'm just testing it. This is my day to test all the benches. The town carpenter will repair the ones that are not sturdy.

VERONIKA: Are you sure?

MAYOR: Of course I'm sure. *(Climbs down from the bench.)* The town carpenter always repairs our broken benches.

VERONIKA: *(Knowingly.)* I see. I only thought you might have been afraid of all those rats over there. *(Points OFF LEFT.)*

MAYOR: *(Again in a panic, leaps up on the bench.)* Rats! What rats? Where?

VERONIKA: That's what I thought. *(Hands him a leaflet.)* This whole thing has gotten entirely out of hand. The Town Council is calling a meeting to see what can be done.

MAYOR: What can the Council do that I haven't already tried?

Didn't I bring in a dozen of the hungriest cats in the county to chase them out?

VERONIKA: Yes, and the rats chased the cats out instead.

MAYOR: Didn't I buy the best rat traps available anywhere?

VERONIKA: Yes, and the rats ate the bait without setting off the traps. They're just too smart for you, Mayor.

MAYOR: I'm working on the problem all the time. In fact, I have another plan.

VERONIKA: What do you mean?

MAYOR: I'm thinking of having the town declared a "disaster area". That way we'd qualify for government money.

VERONIKA: It could be weeks before we get assistance. What do we do in the meantime?

MAYOR: I'm not sure.

VERONIKA: Neither am I. That's why we've called the town meeting. You'd better come up with something right away, or we're taking things into our own hands.

MAYOR: But . . . Veronika . . .

VERONIKA: No more excuses. We want action. I'm going to pass out the rest of these leaflets before the town meeting. *(EXITS.)*

MAYOR: *(Reading leaflet.)* "Town Meeting to discuss the rat disaster in Hamelin." *(Climbs down and sits on bench.)* That's all I need right now. *(GERTRUDE ENTERS from OFF RIGHT, carrying a large knapsack.)*

GERTRUDE: Good morning.

MAYOR: *(Absently.)* Good morning. *(Looks up.)* Do I know you?

GERTRUDE: No, I'm a visitor just passing through town. My name is Gertrude.

MAYOR: *(Setting leaflet on bench.)* Happy to meet you. I'm Mayor Hamelin of Hoffman. I mean, Mayor Hoffman of Hamelin. I'm sorry, I've had a terrible day.

GERTRUDE: That's too bad. Maybe things will improve this afternoon. I wonder if you could help me. I'm looking for a place to spend the night, and perhaps get something to eat.

MAYOR: Of course, there's the Hamelin Inn. It's just off the town square. And as for eating, may I recommend our apple cider, our apple sauce, our apple strudel . . .

GERTRUDE: Hamelin must be famous for its apples.

MAYOR: Yes. Wait until you taste them.

GERTRUDE: *(Picking up the leaflet.)* It must be about harvest time. Is that what this town meeting is about? *(MAYOR attempts to retrieve the leaflet, but isn't fast enough.)* Rat problem, hmm. According to this, rats are threatening your apple harvest and eating everyone out of house and home. *(Tucks leaflet away.)*

MAYOR: Exaggerated. Highly exaggerated.

GERTRUDE: Still, I'm sorry to hear about your difficulties.

MAYOR: Thank you. I'm doing my best. May I show you the way to the Inn?

GERTRUDE: No, thanks. I'm waiting for someone.

MAYOR: Well, I must be off, attending to my duties. *(Starts to EXIT LEFT.)* Welcome to Hamelin. I hope you enjoy your visit. *(EXITS.)*

GERTRUDE: I'm sure we will. *(GERTRUDE sits on the bench UP LEFT, removes her shoes, and massages her feet as she looks around.)* This looks like a nice little village. I'll have to tell the Pied Piper about it. What was the name of this place again? Hamlet? *(Waits for response.)* Hamelin, that's right. I've been

GERTRUDE: *(Continued.)*

looking for a place just like this for a long time. Someplace where I can have a real job. This wandering life is all right for some people, but not old Gertie. Besides, the Pied Piper is a difficult person to work for. He thinks so much of himself, he doesn't pay any attention to anyone else. You'll see him coming a long way off, because he wears what they call "pied" clothing. That means one half of his suit is white, and the other half is green. Personally, I think it's a silly looking outfit, but he's so vain I don't dare tell him. I'd appreciate it if you'd tell me when he arrives. Just shout out, "He's here, he's here!" He really doesn't like it when I take off my shoes and relax this way. *(GERTRUDE doesn't notice as PIED PIPER ENTERS from UP RIGHT, looks around, marches over, looking at her.)* He seems to think I should always be on the job, ready to go. So when he arrives . . . *(Notices response from children.)* He's here? Who's here? The Mayor? *(Children respond.)* The Pied Piper is here? Uh-oh.

PIPER: Gertrude! What are you doing, sitting there with your shoes off?

GERTRUDE: I just thought I'd relax. There's nobody around.

PIPER: Then let's be on our way. We'll never make our fame and fortune in a town whose town square is deserted this time of day.

GERTRUDE: Fame and fortune, fame and fortune. Don't you ever think of anything else?

PIPER: What else is there?

GERTRUDE: Well, you could find a home . . . a job . . . work at helping people. Lots of people could use a hand now and then.

PIPER: Work? You think I, the Pied Piper, son of a great wizard, should work? And who are you to lecture me? My dead father's servant! Ungrateful wretch.

GERTRUDE: What is it you want?

PIPER: I could use a little appreciation now and then.

GERTRUDE: Appreciation?

PIPER: When I come into a town, I expect a proper greeting for someone of my talent. It's bad enough the town square is deserted. Those children out there will have to be my welcoming committee. I'm going to march right back out of this town, and when I return, I want a welcome fitting for someone of my quality. *(Stomps RIGHT, then turns to GERTRUDE. Condescendingly.)* Can you arrange it?

GERTRUDE: I don't know, but I'll try. *(PIPER EXITS RIGHT. To audience.)* Have you ever seen such an egotistical show off in your life? I wouldn't put up with the Pied Piper another second--except, well, I promised his father. He was a great wizard,

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GERTRUDE: *(Continued.)*

and I was the family servant until he died. I swore that I would stay with the Pied Piper to help protect his magic pipe, and keep him out of trouble. The magic pipe has been easy . . . but the Pied Piper seems to be in trouble all the time. That's the hardest part of my job. Anyhow, would you all do me a favor? *(Audience responds.)* Thanks. When the Pied Piper comes back, please clap your hands and shout, "Yeah, Pied Piper!" If everyone joins in, it will put him in a better mood.

PIPER: *(Shouting from OFF RIGHT.)* I'm about to make my entrance!

GERTRUDE: Here he comes. Remember, clap your hands and yell, "Yeah, Pied Piper!" Maybe we'd better practice it once. He is very particular. Ready, one . . . two . . . three . . . YEAH, PIED PIPER! That was very good. All right, get ready, one . . . two . . . three . . . YEAH, PIED PIPER! *(PIED PIPER ENTERS, graciously accepting the applause.)*

PIPER: Thank you for this most unexpected welcome. Never have I been greeted with such enthusiasm. It's too bad we have to be leaving now.

GERTRUDE: Leaving? Why?

PIPER: I told you, we can never win our fame and fortune in a town where there are no townspeople.

GERTRUDE: I guess you're right. *(Getting an idea.)* I'd better put my shoes back on. While you're waiting, perhaps you'd care to read this. They're posted all over town. *(Produces the leaflet.)*

PIPER: *(Reading.)* I see they're having a town meeting. That must be where all the villagers are.

GERTRUDE: *(Puts on shoes. Nonchalantly.)* Yes, it seems the town has been invaded by rats, and they are causing all kinds of mischief. Nothing seems to get rid of them.

PIPER: *(Thinking.)* This could be the opportunity I've been hoping for. Maybe I'll attend this meeting, and see what's going on.

GERTRUDE: Now, why didn't I think of that? *(Gets a scheming look on her face.)* But . . . oh, no, it's impossible. It won't work.

PIPER: What? What won't work?

GERTRUDE: A town meeting is for people of the town. You'll be recognized as an outsider if you show up in that pied outfit of yours.

PIPER: Yes, I do look rather distinguished, don't I? *(Gets an idea.)* Maybe I should wear a disguise!

GERTRUDE: What a brilliant idea! I've got something here that might work. *(She pulls a long dress and bonnet out of her knapsack.)* Yes, it's just the thing.

PIPER: *(Aghast.)* You want me to wear that?

GERTRUDE: It's up to you. I'm only a lowly servant, and you are the Pied Piper. I don't have anything to gain by going to the meeting. You're the one who's after fame and fortune.

PIPER: Fame and fortune. Right. *(Pauses.)* But that's a dress.

GERTRUDE: Yes, beautiful, isn't it? I've been saving it for a special occasion. If you wear this, you'll fit right in at the meeting.

PIPER: *(Taking the dress.)* I guess I don't have any choice. *(Holding it up.)* How do I get into this?

GERTRUDE: Here, I'll help you. *(GERTRUDE helps PIED PIPER into the dress.)*

PIPER: This is humiliating. *(GERTRUDE giggles.)* You're enjoying this, aren't you?

GERTRUDE: *(Innocently.)* Whatever do you mean? Hold still, so I can get you dressed.

PIPER: I don't see how this will fool anyone.

GERTRUDE: You'll see. No one will recognize you. *(After some struggle, the dress is on.)* There. *(Steps back.)* You look lovely.

PIPER: *(Vainly.)* Really?

GERTRUDE: Now, to top it off with this bonnet. *(She puts bonnet on the PIED PIPER'S head.)* Oh, yes. You look fine.

PIPER: Are you sure?

GERTRUDE: Don't take my word for it. I'll ask them. *(Points to audience.)* Doesn't he look great? *(Audience responds.)*

PIPER: What did they say?

GERTRUDE: They said they would never recognize you. It's a perfect disguise.

PIPER: *(Having doubts.)* That's not what it sounded like to me.

GERTRUDE: *(Hearing sounds of GRETCHEN and BRUNO OFF LEFT.)* Somebody's coming. Quick! Get over to the meeting!

PIPER: Oh, all right. But this had better work. *(PIED PIPER EXITS RIGHT. GRETCHEN and BRUNO ENTER from LEFT. BRUNO runs on, followed by GRETCHEN, who uses a crutch to help her walk.)*

BRUNO: Hurry up, Gretchen.

GRETCHEN: I'm walking as fast as I can.

BRUNO: The town sure is quiet, isn't it?

GRETCHEN: That's because everyone is at the town meeting. Do you think they'll come up with an answer for the rat problem?

BRUNO: I hope so. The rats ate our apple dumplings this morning before we could even get to the table.

GRETCHEN: And the schoolhouse is crawling with them. Mother can hardly keep her mind on teaching the class, with all those hairy rodents running around the room. I even caught one gnawing on my crutch. *(They notice GERTRUDE.)* Hello there. I thought everyone was at the meeting.

GERTRUDE: I'm a stranger in town. My name is Gertrude, but you can call me Gertie.

BRUNO: I'm Bruno, and this is my friend Gretchen.

GERTRUDE: Pleased to meet you both. I couldn't help noticing that your town is having some trouble.

BRUNO: It's those rats. They get into everything. They have almost completely destroyed my father's apple orchard.

GRETCHEN: And they're not afraid of anything.

GERTRUDE: I've seen a few rats in my time, but not many up close. Could you show me what they're like?

BRUNO: Well, they wriggle their noses.

GRETCHEN: And they scurry around.

GERTRUDE: I see. What does it look like when they wriggle their noses?

BRUNO: Like this. *(Demonstrates.)*

GERTRUDE: I think I'll try that. *(Tries to wriggle her nose, without much success.)* I don't seem to be very good at it. I wonder if the children in the audience would like to try it. *(To audience.)* On the count of three, everyone wriggle your noses, just like a rat. Keep your eyes on Bruno. He does it very well. One . . . two . . . three . . . *(BRUNO wriggles his nose and encourages the audience to do the same.)* Oooo, that is so realistic, it sends shivers up my spine. Now, what else did you say rats do?

GRETCHEN: They scurry around, but I can't do that very well. I hurt my leg when I was little, and it's very hard for me to walk now. That's why I have to use this crutch.

GERTRUDE: Does your leg hurt?

GRETCHEN: Not so much anymore.

BRUNO: Why don't we let them show us how to scurry? *(Gestures to audience.)*

GERTRUDE: Yes, we could bring some children up here. That would give me a much better idea.

GRETCHEN: That's a good idea. *(To audience.)* Would any of you like to come up here and show Gertie how rats scurry about? *(BRUNO selects about six children, and helps them onto the stage.)*

GERTRUDE: Now, what do we do first?

GRETCHEN: Well, if we could get everyone into a straight line . . . *(BRUNO lines the children up, facing the audience.)* There, that's fine.

GERTRUDE: First, could you all wriggle your noses for me again? *(BRUNO leads the children in nose wriggling.)*

BRUNO: Rats run on four legs, of course. But that's kind of hard to do.

GERTRUDE: That's right. The children could get their clothes dirty, and I wouldn't want to be the one to wash them. I have a hard enough time cleaning up after the Pied Piper.

GRETCHEN: Maybe everyone could hunch over a little bit, like this. *(Demonstrates by hunching her shoulders.)*

GERTRUDE: That looks good. Noses wriggled, shoulders hunched; what next?

BRUNO: Suppose I play the Chief Rat, and everyone can follow me as I scurry once around the town square? Are you all ready? Then, let's go! *(BRUNO leads children once around the stage.)*

GERTRUDE: My, that was fun.

BRUNO: *(To children.)* Yes, you were all very good rats. *(VERONIKA ENTERS from OFF RIGHT.)*

VERONIKA: Bruno, Gretchen, I've been looking for you. We have work to do.

GRETCHEN: But you cancelled school this morning, Mother.

VERONIKA: I know, but I just came from the town meeting. We're going to have a demonstration.

GERTRUDE: *(Showing children back to their seats.)* Thanks for your help.

VERONIKA: Who's that with the children?

GRETCHEN: She's our new friend, Gertie. She's a visitor to Hamelin. *(GERTRUDE finishes with the children and crosses up to VERONIKA.)*

VERONIKA: Hello, Gertie. I'm Veronika, the school teacher here in Hamelin. I'm sorry I can't give you a proper welcome, but we're having a terrible problem with an invasion of rats. We hope a demonstration will move the Mayor to action. I need Gretchen and Bruno to help me with the signs.

GRETCHEN: A demonstration!

BRUNO: With signs and everything!

GERTRUDE: Well, it was nice meeting you.

VERONIKA: We'll be back soon. The demonstration is being held here at the town square in just a few minutes. You're invited, if you'd like to attend. *(VERONIKA, GRETCHEN and BRUNO EXIT, waving.)*

GERTRUDE: *(Paces back and forth, thinking.)* Rats, rats, rats. I wonder what can be done for these good people? Hmm. I think I'm getting an idea. If only I can get the Pied Piper to cooperate. *(PIED PIPER ENTERS excitedly from OFF RIGHT. He is still wearing the dress.)*

PIPER: Gertrude, Gertrude!

GERTRUDE: *(Pretending not to recognize him.)* Hello, Madam. Do I know you?

PIPER: What do you mean? Of course you know me.

GERTRUDE: Wizard's gizzards, it's the Pied Piper! I didn't recognize you in that disguise.

PIPER: Well, my plan worked fine. But I'm through with it now, so how about helping me get undressed?

GERTRUDE: *(Feigning shock.)* Undressed! I couldn't.

PIPER: I mean out of this dress. *(Taking off bonnet.)* Here's your bonnet.

GERTRUDE: But it looks so attractive on you.

PIPER: Stop joking. I just got back from the town meeting, and have a brilliant plan.

GERTRUDE: So do I. You have an opportunity to do something wonderful for this town. *(He struggles as she helps him out of the dress.)*

PIPER: Who cares about the town? I know how to win my fame and fortune, virtually overnight, without even having to work very hard.

GERTRUDE: Maybe so, but this is much better. All you have to do is take your magic pipe. . .

PIPER: *(At last getting dress off.)* Pheww. That was not very comfortable. I don't know how you stand it.

GERTRUDE: I don't usually wear another set of clothes underneath.

PIPER: It was worth it. All I have to do . . .

GERTRUDE: . . . is take your magic pipe . . .

PIPER: I know, I know. It's MY idea. Where is my pipe?

GERTRUDE: *(Reaching into knapsack.)* Right here, where I always carry it.

PIPER: Give it to me! *(He grabs it from her.)*

GERTRUDE: Be careful. You promised you'd treat it respectfully when your father passed it on to you. Don't you remember, he said it could do wonderful things if used properly . . . and a wizard should know.

PIPER: Maybe this old pipe is magic, and maybe it isn't. I haven't had much luck with it. Remember when I played it and asked for a great palace?

GERTRUDE: It didn't work.

PIPER: That's right. And what about the time I wanted a large sack of gold?

GERTRUDE: You tried very hard, I must admit.

PIPER: And I'm still as poor as ever.

GERTRUDE: That's true, but your father said the magic in the pipe was to be used only for good.

PIPER: A palace or a sack of gold would be pretty good.

GERTRUDE: That's not what he meant.

PIPER: Anyhow, I'm ready to give it one more try. At the town meeting everyone said they would give anything to get rid of the rats in Hamelin.

GERTRUDE: (*Feigning ignorance.*) How interesting. Tell me more.

PIPER: Well, the music from this pipe does seem to have a kind of special charm. I think I could get all the rats together and lead them out of Hamelin forever.

GERTRUDE: What a wonderful idea. Let's try it now.

PIPER: There's no rush. I want to strike up a bargain with the town before I start.

GERTRUDE: Is that necessary?

PIPER: Of course. If nobody knows that I was the one who solved the problem, how would I win fame and fortune?

GERTRUDE: Oh, I see. You only want to do something good if people are there to give you all the credit.

PIPER: Sure. Why should I go to the trouble of helping the town, if I can't get anything out of it for myself?

GERTRUDE: That is just about the most selfish thing I have ever heard. Still, the important thing is to get the rats out of Hamelin. (*VERONIKA ENTERS from OFF RIGHT, followed by GRETCHEN and BRUNO. They carry signs and banners.*)

VERONIKA: We'll set up right here, and then pass the signs out when the rest of the townspeople get here.

GERTRUDE: (*To VERONIKA.*) I see you have your signs made up already.

VERONIKA: Yes, it goes quickly when everyone pitches in.

GERTRUDE: Veronika, Gretchen, Bruno, I'd like you to meet the Pied Piper. (*PIED PIPER bows with a flourish.*)

VERONIKA: Happy to meet you, Mr. Piper. There was a stranger at the town meeting who looked very much like you. But she was wearing a dress. Do you have a sister?

PIPER: No, I do not!

GERTRUDE: (*Stepping in.*) When will the others be here for the demonstration?

VERONIKA: (*Looking at audience.*) Looks like everyone is here, now. Bruno, Gretchen, please pass out the signs and banners. (*GRETCHEN and BRUNO distribute signs and banners. Wherever possible, give signs to adults in the audience, so they will be encouraged to participate as well.*)

GERTRUDE: With this many people, the Mayor will have to listen. (*To audience.*) Hold up your signs so everyone can see them. (*Reading one.*) "No more Rats." That's a catchy slogan. But signs alone are not enough.

VERONIKA: You're right. We need to let the Mayor know how unhappy we are about the rats.

GERTRUDE: I remember seeing a demonstration once. Everyone chanted the same thing over and over again. It was very impressive. How about if we all shout "No More Rats!"?

VERONIKA: Good idea.

GERTRUDE: On the count of three, then, let's all shout "No More Rats!" and keep repeating it until the Mayor comes out. I'll raise my hand when it's time to stop. Keep your eyes on Bruno and Gretchen. They'll lead you from out there.

GRETCHEN: I'll lead this section, here.

BRUNO: And I'll lead all of you, here.

GERTRUDE: All right, everybody. One . . . two . . . three . . .
NO MORE RATS! NO MORE RATS! etc. *(After about fifteen seconds, the MAYOR ENTERS running, in a panic. GERTRUDE signals for the chanting to stop. BRUNO and GRETCHEN quiet their groups.)*

VERONIKA: Hello, Mayor.

MAYOR: What's going on here? I've never heard so much noise in my life!

VERONIKA: We're having a demonstration.

MAYOR: I can see that. Is this what you decided at the town meeting?

VERONIKA: Yes.

MAYOR: *(Addressing audience.)* Well, citizens of Hamelin, I uh, I assure you that I have . . . I have done everything I can think of to get rid of the rats. Nothing seems to work.

VERONIKA: If that's the best you can do, the demonstration will have to go on!

GERTRUDE: Once again, everybody. NO MORE RATS! NO MORE RATS! NO MORE RATS!

MAYOR: Wait, wait! I'll do something. Anything. Just stop the demonstration. *(GERTRUDE stops the chanting.)* This used to be such a quiet little town.

VERONIKA: Now, what do you have to say?

MAYOR: Well, there's still a little money left in the city treasury. Maybe we can hire an exterminator?

VERONIKA: All right, it's worth a try. The demonstration is over, for now.

BRUNO: The demonstration is over. I'll take the signs back.

GRETCHEN: I'll help return the signs. Let's hope we won't need them anymore.

MAYOR: *(Relieved.)* Oh, thank goodness.

VERONIKA: How soon can you get an exterminator?

MAYOR: Let me see. First, I should probably write a letter to the district office in Hannover, and find out what committee handles these problems. Then I can formally request an investigation of the situation, and they'll send someone out. After they write up a report and make recommendations, oh, I don't know. Maybe a month or so.

PIPER: *(Stepping forward.)* Wait a minute. I have a much better idea.

End of Script Sample

VERONIKA: I'm in favor of that. People will come from all over to see it, and hear the story of the Pied Piper of Hamelin. We could even hold an apple festival in his honor.

GERTRUDE: Just think. The Pied Piper will become famous after all, and he doesn't even know about it . . . yet.

MAYOR: Come on. Let's begin making plans for the statue, and our first apple festival, of course.

GERTRUDE: (*As ALL EXIT.*) I'll start working on the invitations as soon as we get back to town.

CURTAIN

PROPERTIES

Leaflets (VERONIKA)

Knapsack (GERTRUDE)

Dress and Bonnet (GERTRUDE)

Wooden flute or recorder (GERTRUDE)

Crutch (GRETCHEN)

Protest Signs (VERONIKA, GRETCHEN, BRUNO)

Slogans may read: NO MORE RATS; RATS OUT OF HAMELIN
EVICT THE VERMIN, etc.

Pocketwatch (MAYOR)

Two benches; sturdy, but badly in need of painting

STAGE SETTINGS

Drop or Screen



"TOWN SQUARE"

Drop or Screen

Bench



"MOUNTAIN SCENE"

PIPER'S THEME

FLUTE

slowly

acc. al.

poco

poco

cresc.

poco

ff

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