

"Musical! the Meta-Musical"

Book and Music by

Mick Axelrod

Musical Arrangement by

???

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Musical! the Meta-Musical

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CHARACTERS

Garrett	The playwright/composer.
Allen	The producer.
Maggie	The stage-hand.
Jenna	The lead of Smorgasbord! the Musical.
Joseph	The choreographer.
Michelle	The orchestra lead.
Mick Axelrod	The voice of the playwright.
Ensemble	Optional.

SETTING

Various location in New York City.

TIME

Now.

SCENES

ACT I

Scene 1	There's A Musical Inside Me.	Now
Scene 2	All It Needs Is a Stage.	Now
Scene 3	Concept vs. Story	Now
Scene 4	Lincoln	Now
Scene 5	Cuts: Garrett's Lament/Hagglin'	Now
Scene 6	Hagglin'	Now
Scene 7	Abuse of Power	Now
Scene 8	Auditions	Now
Scene 9	Directing	Now
Scene 10	Rehearsal	Now

"The theater is the only institution in the world which has been dying for four thousand years and has never succumbed. It requires tough and devoted people to keep it alive."

-- John Steinbeck, *Once There Was a War*

ACT I

SCENE 1 - "There's A Musical Inside Me"

(The STAGE is bare, except for a small desk with a typewriter and a telephone upon it, and a small piano (a laptop and a keyboard will do in a pinch) set to one side. GARRETT is sitting at the piano, tapping at keys and annotating. He finds the right combination, finally.)

GARRETT

(singing)

There's a musical inside me, I'm gonna find it,
There's a musical inside me, I'm gonna write it,
A flame to fill the silence,
notes to light the pilot,
And you know just where they'll file it when it's done,
under musicals the Tony it's won.

(Enter ALLEN, the producer of the play
Garrett's writing.)

ALLEN

(singing)

There's a musical inside me, I'm gonna fund it,
There's a musical inside me, I'll be its pundit,
There's money to be made with it,
The figures, yeah I'll play with it,
I know when all this tzuris is done,
I'll make a buck because the Tony it's won.

(Enter JENNA, the star of the musical
Garrett is currently writing.)

JENNA

(singing)

There's a musical inside me, I'm gonna sing it,
There's a musical inside me, I'm gonna bring it,
You know I'll be distinguished,
Once the play reviews are finished,
It'll finally be my time out in the sun,
When they announce the Tony I've won.

(Enter JOSEPH, the choreographer and
MICHELLE, the lead in the orchestra.)

JOSEPH

(singing)

There's a musical inside me, I'll pirouette with it.

MICHELLE

(singing)

There's a musical inside me, I'll play away with it,
The band will need my lead.

JOSEPH

(singing)

We'll all bend at the knees.

MICHELLE, JOSEPH

(singing)

When the lights come up our work will more than merely
stun,
And afterward our Tonys will be won!

WOMEN

(singing)

There's a musical inside me...

MEN

(singing, slightly staggered)

There's a musical inside me...

WOMEN

(singing)

Just waiting for an audience...

MEN

(singing, slightly staggered)

Just waiting for an audience...

WOMEN

(singing)

There's a musical inside me...

MEN

(singing)

We're going to be diligent.
There's a musical inside me...

WOMEN

(singing)

Brighter than a filament...

ALL

(singing)

It isn't merely swelled heads,
The songs, the dance,
our voice will knock them dead!
Because the musical inside meeeee's, coming out!

(Garrett sits back down at the piano and makes a final notation as the other characters exeunt. Garrett takes the sheet music off the piano and clutches it to his chest.)

SCENE 2 - "All It Needs Is a Stage"

GARRETT

It's done! It's done! Finally, complete!

(Garrett opens a draw from the desk and pulls out an extremely large and unruly script. He finds a place at the end and inserts the sheet he's just completed.)

GARRETT

Done! (singing)
Finally, this decade long devotion,
My heart and soul poured out on the page,
This strong-felt treatise something more than just a
notion,
Now all it needs is a staaaaage...

(The prompter, MAGGIE, enters with her headset still on and a script in hand. The music cuts abruptly.)

MAGGIE

Uh, Garrett, we just had a song. We can't have another just yet. There's still a lot of exposition to get through. Let's just jump to the part where you're talking to Allen, getting him to sign on.

GARRETT

What? But I just finished the play, Maggie!...okay. Can I at least keep the calling him scene?

(Maggie indicates the rather thick script that we're just beginning on in her own hands. Garrett makes with a pleading gesture and puppy dog eyes.)

MAGGIE

(sighs)

All right. But make it quick. I'd rather not be here for four hours.

(Maggie exits.)

MAGGIE

(OFF-STAGE)

Places for the next musical number! Places please!

SCENE 3 - "Concept vs. Story"

(Garrett picks up the phone still clutching the script. He punches in a phone number. He waits for three rings.)

GARRETT

Hey, Allen? It's Garrett. You better get your butt down to my studio, stat.

(Allen enters unceremoniously and sits down at the piano. Garrett doesn't notice him.)

GARRETT

Why? Because I just finished my musical. (beat) That's right, not the usual commercial crap that puts butts in the seats, this is that something with the true artistic merit I've been writing for ten years. (beat) Yes, it's done, why else would I finally be willing to tell you about it? (beat) Just get down here so I can tell you about it properly, you know I can't pitch right on the phone!

(Garrett hangs up the phone.)

ALLEN

So what's this story, Garrett?

(Garrett turns, is startled to see Allen already sitting there.)

GARRETT

Gah! How did?...uch, never mind: stupid cuts. (starting fresh) Well, first, let me say thank you, Allen, for taking a moment from your immensely busy schedule...

ALLEN

Give it a rest, Garrett. I know you don't think anyone's more important than you and your work. Why don't you just tell me what it is already?

GARRETT

I can't believe you'd think so callously of me.

ALLEN

Don't bullshit an ass-kisser...don't ass-kiss a bullshitter? Whatever, Garrett, quit buttering me up and get to the point.

GARRETT

All right, all right, jeez, relax, Allen. May I present to you: Smorgasbord! the Musical!

(Garrett drops the script in Allen's lap. Allen nearly collapses from the weight of it.)

ALLEN

Holy!...That's the play? I thought that was a phone book. Are you sure this isn't The Complete Works of Dostoyevsky! the Musical? It's awfully thick, Garrett.

GARRETT

Well, it took me ten years to write, Allen, should it be thin?

ALLEN

I'll tell you right now I can't produce a twelve-hour musical.

GARRETT

Will you stop? It's not twelve hours! (beat) Six hours, tops.

ALLEN

It needs to be trimmed.

GARRETT

You...you don't even know the concept yet!

ALLEN

So, what's the story?

GARRETT

Okay, okay. So, Smorgasbord is set at a *bar mitzvah*, okay, and the whole play captures every nuance, from getting called up to the *bimah* to...

ALLEN

What's the story, Garrett?

GARRETT

I'm telling you the story, Allen.

ALLEN

No, you're telling me the concept. The story is something different entirely.

GARRETT

How's that?

ALLEN

(singing)

A concept is an idea from out the writer's mind...

GARRETT

Wait a minute...

ALLEN

(singing)

An over-blown notion they blow out their behinds...

GARRETT

He's allowed to do his song?

ALLEN

The story is the essence of drama that unfolds...

GARRETT

I thought we cut this.

ALLEN

(singing)

Even in a comedy it's story that is told.
So hold the exposition,
And hold the soul it bears,
Just tell about your character,
What change he makes,
And why we care.

GARRETT

(singing)

Oh no,
I won't just boil
Into a sentence ten years of toil,
That's like asking
A *moyel* for half the price,
see what he'll slice.

GARRETT

(singing, continued)

This story took me ten years to get just where it's at.

ALLEN

(singing)

Even if took twenty, you'd have to cut the fat.

GARRETT

(singing)

But that would not be trimming, a sentence out, it's maimed!

ALLEN

(singing)

But a six hour musical would get booed off the stage!

GARRETT

(singing)

I won't..

TOGETHER

Hold the exposition.

GARRETT

(singing)

I won't...

TOGETHER

(singing)

Hold the soul it bears.

GARRETT

(singing)

I'll tell...

TOGETHER

(singing)

About the character,
what change he makes,
and why we care!

GARRETT

(singing)

Little Moishe Rosenthal's big day has come at last,
He steps up to the *bimah* and falls right on his ass,
When the party comes, he's brooding, a boy up to the
task,
But in the end he 'comes a man when he drops his mask!

ALLEN
(singing)
There goes...

TOGETHER
(singing)
the exposition.

GARRETT
(singing)
There goes...

TOGETHER
(singing)
the soul it bears.

GARRETT
(singing)
I told...

TOGETHER
About the character,
what change he makes,
and why we care!

ALLEN
(singing)
There goes...

TOGETHER
the exposition.

GARRETT
(singing)
There goes...

TOGETHER
(singing)
the soul it bears.

GARRETT
(singing)
I told...

TOGETHER
About the character,
what change he makes...

ALLEN
And now I care!

(Allen and Garrett hold for applause. Even if there are none. Especially if there are none. If possible, have Maggie step out on stage just before the number is done with a "HOLD THE APPLAUSE" sign. Garrett shoos her off.)

MAGGIE

(exiting)

What? It's in the script!

SCENE 4 - Lincoln...

(Allen thumbs through the script.)

ALLEN

You know, there's some real clever stuff in here.

GARRETT

So you'll produce the play!

ALLEN

As long as you cut it down...

(Garrett makes a noise of incredulity. Incredulousness?)

ALLEN

...to two, two and a half hours...

(Garrett makes a noise of shock and incredulosity.)

ALLEN

...tops.

GARRETT

What? Gah...I...(submitting) fine. Just find me a playhouse, okay?

ALLEN

I'll do better than that, I'll get you Lincoln...

GARRETT

You'll get me Lincoln Center?

ALLEN

I was going to say, "Lincoln Road's hottest Reggae Hut: Tiger's Reggae Hut."

GARRETT

But that's not even a theater! (beat) And Lincoln Road? That's not even Manhattan! What is that, Brooklyn?

ALLEN

Park Slope! It's practically a sister city!

GARRETT

But that's not even off-Broadway! That's, like, off-off-off-off-Broadway!

ALLEN

I might be able to get you into "Studio D", that's off the Lincoln Tunnel.

GARRETT

In Hell's Kitchen? (beat) Why are you so obsessed with Lincoln all of a sudden?

ALLEN

(deadpan)

He was a great man.

GARRETT

(beat)

How about off-Broadway? Like New World Stages?

ALLEN

I thought you had a problem with Hell's Kitchen?

GARRETT

New World isn't in Hell's Kitchen.

ALLEN

It's pretty close.

GARRETT

It's, like ten blocks away. Do you even live in the City?

ALLEN

Of course I do. (beat, off look from Garrett) Okay, so I live in Hoboken, what of it?

(Garrett makes a noise of reserved incredulosity. Incredulity. I got it right the first time.)

ALLEN

Look, how about we shoot for off-off-Broadway and work our way up?

GARRETT

Where are you thinking?

ALLEN

(grimacing)

Maybe La MaMa, Judson Poets...Nuyorican?

GARRETT

That...might work, actually.

(They shake hands.)

GARRETT

Rad. Super rad.

ALLEN

That won't work in Alphabet City. You cut that out right now.

(Allen crosses the stage as Garrett sits down to start cutting. He takes a pencil from his desk and starts dashing out great chunks of the script. Three members of the ensemble, dressed as owners of off-off-Broadway venues, come out to meet Allen and they quietly discuss business.)

SCENE 5 - "Cuts: Garrett's Lament"

GARRETT

(singing)

I thought I was done,
but I'm not,
there's more I've got to cut,
all I've poured from soul....

(Maggie enters, prompter-ed and scripted. The music cuts out abruptly.)

GARRETT

What the hell, Maggie, I don't even get to do my lament?

MAGGIE

You used all your lament time haggling with Allen! If you'd just accepted Tiger's Reggae Hut you would have had time for two laments!

GARRETT

But...that's not!...(submitting) fine! Just go on with the stupid musical without me for a minute. I'm gonna go do some editing in the can! (under breath) I might as well use my discarded pages for toilet paper....

(Garrett exits. The conversation between Allen and the location managers gets louder.)

SCENE 6 - "Hagglin'"

MAMA

...we produce it, you get to put it up. You get merch, we get the door and concessions.

ALLEN

That won't work. My man's gotta eat. (beat) And more importantly, I gotta eat.

JUDSON

...best I can offer's a 70/30 split.

ALLEN

How am I supposed to make a living like that?

NUYORICAN

...maybe, maybe!, I can work a 60/40.

ALLEN

That won't even get me a pair of sneakers.

NUYORICAN

What more are you looking for?

ALLEN

(singing)

For the work that I've put in, Much to your chagrin,
I'd hope you could be roped into agreeing,
To put 50/50 on the table, You seem more than capable,
When it comes to the writer, The divide I will finagle.

MANAGERS

(singing)

What a piece of work is this,
A producer and his twists,
You'll take the bliss of staging
to break apart the bank,
Other people have been happy
with the lighting we've provided,
The stage to put the play up, and our eternal thanks.

ALLEN

(singing)

How tight, my hagglin' skills,
Oh what a thrill, to get the thing I want,
Just a short fight, they're buying my shyte,
Oh what a sight, they'll swallow it down.

MANAGERS

(singing)

How light, his hagglin' skills,
Oh what a thrill, to get the thing we want,
Just this small fight, he's buying our shyte,
Oh what a sight, we'll swallow him down.

ALLEN

(singing)

Other mavens you've been playing,
Other moguls look for staging,
But the play that I'm persuading is more than just a
hit,
I'm in talks with other places,
If their stages see its' graces,
And you miss this opportunity you'll say more than just
"oh shit."

MAMA

(singing)

What a bargain that you drive,

JUDSON

(singing)

I wouldn't stay alive,

NUYORICAN

I've got other works considered here, we're more than
just a dive,

JUDSON

It's too steep for my consideration,

MAMA

I'll have to pass, to great frustration,

NUYORICAN

This seems to be my station, in the work we'll all
delight!

(Allen shakes hands with Nuyorican's
manager.)

ALLEN

(singing)

How tight, my hagglin' skills,
Oh what a thrill, to get the thing I want,
Just this short fight, they're buying my shyte,
Oh what a sight, they swallow it down.

(The managers join in, in a round.)

JUDSON

(singing)

How tight, his hagglin' skills,
Oh what a thrill, to get the thing he wants,
Out like a light, we're buying his shyte,
We're losing our fight, we swallow it down.

MAMA

(singing)

How tight, his hagglin' skills,
Oh what a thrill, to get the thing he wants,
Out like a light, we're buying his shyte,
We're losing our fight, we swallow it down.

NUYORICAN

(singing)

How tight, his hagglin' skills,
Oh what a thrill, to get the thing he wants,
Out like a light, we're buying his shyte,
We're losing our fight, we swallow it down.

ALLEN

(singing)

How tight, my hagglin' skills,
Oh what a thrill, I got the thing I want,
Just a short fight, they bought my shyte,
Oh what a sight, they swallow it down.

SCENE 7 - "ABUSE OF POWER"

(They hold for applause. Enter
Garrett, slightly after they
begin, with the "hold applause"
sign, Maggie chasing him down.
The Managers look pissed at
Garrett as they exeunt.)

MAGGIE

Hey, give it back!

GARRETT

What? It says in the script that I come out holding this sign. Besides, it's not fair: he's got to do two songs already and I haven't had one yet!

MAGGIE

Well, he's the one with all the rising action so far! All you've done is complain about having to make cuts. And it also says in the script that I knee you in the nuts!

GARRETT

No, no it doesn't. It says "Maggie does one of these: she gets her sign back by stomping on Garrett's foot, elbowing him in the stomach, or yanking his nose."

(Maggie does one of these: she gets her sign back by stomping on Garrett's foot, elbowing him in the stomach, or yanking his nose.)

MAGGIE

Thanks. You should have read the next stage-direction though.

(She knees him in the nuts, sticks her tongue out at him, and carts off with the sign.)

GARRETT

Oww! (shaking fist) You son-of-a-bitch, Mick Axelrod!

ALLEN

(beat)

If you're done berating the playwright....

GARRETT

Please, go ahead.

ALLEN

(carrying on)

That's nice, Garrett, I bust my hump to get you the Nuyorican and you're trying to steal my thunder.

GARRETT

I wasn't trying to steal your thunder! I was just trying to...wait a minute! Did you say you got me the Nuyorican?

ALLEN

Yeah, I did, but if you're gonna keep acting like an asshole...

GARRETT

I'm sorry! I'm sorry! (beat) I'm so excited, I could kiss you!

(Garrett kisses Allen on the cheek.)

ALLEN

Uch! Would you stop that?

GARRETT

I can't. The playwright's gone diabolical, with power.

(Allen kisses Garrett on the forehead.)

ALLEN

Now he has me doing it!

(Maggie enters and reads from her script.)

MAGGIE

The playwright, Mick Axelrod, apologizes for this brief interlude and promises it won't happen again. (beat) Much.

(She exits.)

ALLEN

Is it safe to go on now?

GARRETT

I...I think so. He just formally apologized.

ALLEN

Through Maggie.

GARRETT

Because nobody knows who he is! He piped his voice in, we'd all be like, "Who the hell is that?"

ALLEN

So potentially, it could be anyone.

GARRETT

Yeah, but voice-overs are lame and overused anyway.

ALLEN

Still, it would have been more representational of who he actually is, instead of using a character that doesn't actually portray himself.

GARRETT

But don't all characters in a work really portray the writer? Like, they're all extensions of his own personality...

(The VOICE OF MICK AXELROD pipes through the speaker.)

VOICE OF MICK AXELROD

Would you just get on with it?

GARRETT, ALLEN

(to AUDIENCE)

Yes sir.

SCENE 8 - "AUDITION"

(Allen and Garrett sit at the desk and piano respectively.)

GARRETT

So we've got the script and we've got...

ALLEN

You make those cuts yet?

GARRETT

I'm working on it! And we've got the venue, now all we need...

ALLEN

Is everything else. Set designer, costume designer, choreographer, director, a cast...

GARRETT

Wait, what do you mean by we need a director? I'm directing.

ALLEN

Oh no you're not. You've never directed before.

GARRETT

I've directed before!

ALLEN

College. And community theater. With disastrous results. Remember what happened when you directed your one-acts?

GARRETT

They were ruining my words!

ALLEN

And that Waiting for Godot?

GARRETT

They were ruining...Beckett's words.

ALLEN

You're a control freak.

GARRETT

Am not.

ALLEN

Are so.

GARRETT

Not.

ALLEN

Okay then, let's just move on to the next section, if you're so not controlling. (calling into the wings) Come on out Joseph, Michelle, we're moving to Auditions!

(Joseph and Michelle exit from the wings, carrying chairs. They set them up and take their seats, utterly ignoring Garrett.)

GARRETT

What, no! Go back into the wings! We're not ready for you yet! (to Allen) You just cut out the search! You can't just....

(Allen gives Garrett a look, indicating "see what I mean?".)

GARRETT

You just...(relenting) fine! Have it your way. (beat) But I'm sitting in on auditions.

ALLEN

That's okay with me. Just don't interrupt.

GARRETT

Interrupt? It's my...

(Allen shoots him a reproaching look.)

GARRETT

(withering)

Okay, I'll behave.

(Allen calls Joseph over and they quietly discuss the choreography aspect of the coming audition. Garrett walks to the chairs and sits next to Michelle.)

GARRETT

(in hushed tones)

Hey. Hey you.

MICHELLE

...Yes?

GARRETT

Who are you?

MICHELLE

I'm Michelle. The orchestra lead. You hired me.

GARRETT

We skipped that scene, remember?

MICHELLE

Didn't you read the script?

GARRETT

No! I don't have time! I've been ass-deep in cutting my own script, how the hell should I have time to read somebody else's?

MICHELLE

So you just read the scenes you were in then, didn't you?

GARRETT

Doesn't everybody?

ALLEN, JOSEPH, MICHELLE

No!

GARRETT

Jeez. I guess it's just me. (beat) We getting started anytime soon, Allen? I've still got, like, a hundred-and-fifty pages to cut.

MICHELLE

You still haven't got the final draft?

GARRETT

I thought you knew everything that was going on!

MICHELLE

(showing her copy of Musical!)

That's my line, asshole.

ALLEN

I think we're about ready. Michelle? Would you please play for my...the...those here to audition?

MICHELLE

(glaring coldly at Garrett)

It would be my pleasure.

(Michelle sits at the piano. Allen carries over the chair from the desk and sits in it, Joseph takes the seat vacated by Michelle.)

ALLEN

All right, ready? (to the wing) Send in the actors!

(Enter Jenna, Maggie, and at max two female members of the ensemble, if there are any.)

GARRETT

What is this? Is this everybody? What are you doing here, Maggie?

MAGGIE

The playwright is having me stand in the crowd to make it look more full.

GARRETT

Oh God. Allen!

ALLEN

(warning)

Garrett....

GARRETT

We can't do a musical with this few...right, I'll be quiet.

ALLEN

All right, ladies and...ladies. We'll be doing a musical number from the show.

JENNA

Which show, this one or the one we're auditioning for?

JOSEPH

Has anyone seen anything from the show we're auditioning for?

MAGGIE

Not as of yet.

GARRETT

I'm working on it! Just sing and dance and stuff already!

MICHELLE

And a one, and a two...

(Michelle plays. It is vaguely reminiscent of Fiddler on the Roof's "Tradition".)

GARRETT

(singing)

Audition, audition! Audition!
Audition, audition! Audition!

MEN

(singing)

Who, night and day must run between buildings,
Wait tables for a living, memorize their lines?
And who has the plight, as artists in the city,
To have a drink or two between?
The Actors, the actors! Audition.
The Actors, the actors! Audition.

WOMEN

(singing)

Who must have the wits to stay awake,
Through their mistakes, their lame attempts,
To sing a song that's hanging just beyond their range,
and not complain about their sour notes?
Auditioners, auditioners! Audition!
Auditioners, auditioners! Audition!

SCENE 9 - DIRECTING

(Garrett runs over to the piano and shuts the cover (or turns off the power on the keyboard).)

GARRETT

Whoa, whoa, what the hell? We can't be ripping off established shows!

(The Voice of Mick Axelrod pipes through the speakers.)

VOICE OF MICK AXELROD

Who's ripping off? It's called "parody," Garrett. See Coolio v. Weird Al Yankovic. Besides, I'm writing this on a deadline, I need all the help I can get.

GARRETT

Yeah, but couldn't you come up with something less...Jewy?

VOICE OF MICK AXELROD

You're the one who wrote a twelve-hour musical about a bar mitzvah.

GARRETT

Six hours!

VOICE OF MICK AXELROD

Whatever. How about we move to the rehearsal scene? That good with everyone?

GARRETT

No! I haven't had a chance to make cuts since the audition!

ALLEN

Sounds superb.

JOSEPH

Works for me.

MICHELLE

Garrett's not in that one, is he?

VOICE OF MICK AXELROD

Nope. Gives him plenty of time to make revisions.

JENNA

Perfect!

GARRETT

Who the hell are you? Allen, who the hell is she?

JENNA

I'm Jenna.

ALLEN

She's the star of the play.

GARRETT

The star?! But the show's about a bar mitzvah!

ALLEN

You saw the audition: we didn't have any males come through. Change it to a bat mitzvah.

GARRETT

What? But that completely changes the meaning of the challah cutting scene!

JOSEPH

That scene should be cut, it's a choreographer's nightmare.

GARRETT

You haven't even read the script yet! (to Allen) And the bimah scene! Moishe is supposed to get hit in the nuts with a bag of candy under the bimah and finishes singing "Knedlach" in falsetto. What, should she get hit in the boob?

MICHELLE

Sure, why not?

GARRETT

So why does she sing in a head voice then?

ALLEN

Because you tell her to. You're the writer, Garrett. Write.

(Garrett looks around at the other people on stage.)

GARRETT

Fine! I'll be off-stage, where it's less crowded.

JENNA

Tootles!

GARRETT

(mocking her)

Tootles!

(Garrett exits, everyone breathes a sigh
of relief.)

ALLEN

So, shall we get this show started?

(Maggie looks around at who's left on
stage.)

MAGGIE

But we still don't have a director.

ALLEN

Yes we do.

MICHELLE, JOSEPH

We do?

JENNA

Who?

ALLEN

(with arms extended)

Ta-da! (serious) Don't tell Garrett.

MAGGIE

Works for me.

(She exits.)

MICHELLE, JOSEPH

Me too. Hey.

VOICE OF MICK AXELROD

All in favor?

(Maggie pops her head out and
immediately withdraws after her vote.)

EVERYONE ON STAGE

Aye.

VOICE OF MICK AXELROD

All opposed?

GARRETT
(from off-stage)

Nay!

VOICE OF MICK AXELROD
The "ayes" have it. You may proceed.

SCENE 10 - REHEARSAL

(Joseph and Jenna stretch quickly. The ensemble ladies move the chairs out the way. The rest of the ensemble, if there are any others, enter shortly behind.)

ALLEN
All right everyone, let's take this number from the top!

MICHELLE
And a one, and a two, and a one two three four.

ALL
(singing)
We're the best of the best,
The creme de la creme,
Now we're rehearsing but when
It's done we'll be dispersing,
For gigs that keep us fed,
But soon acting will be our only bread.

JENNA
(singing)
It might seem cliche,
But I work as a waitress by day,
Running between customers I always run my lines,
But soon acting will take up all my time,
And the light inside will get a chance to shine.

MICHELLE, JOSEPH
(singing)
In our day gig, we teach dance to kids,

MICHELLE
(singing)
I play the music,

JOSEPH
(singing)
I teach positions and how to do the splits,

MICHELLE, JOSEPH

(singing)

We'd really like to quit it,
Those little snot-bags always get us sick,
And musicals are what really make us tick.

ALL

(singing)

We're the best of the best,
The creme de la creme,
Now we're rehearsing but when
It's done we'll be dispersing,
For gigs that keep us fed,
But soon acting will be our only bread.

ALLEN

To bring this show together,
A challenge I have chose to weather,
No one could do it better I'm supposing,
And hopefully this show will get me out of Jersey,
If only we could get rehearsing done,
Without giving all our history in song.

SCENE 11 - NO SHOW

(The music cuts out.)

MICHELLE, JOSEPH, JENNA

Sorry.

ALLEN

No, it's okay, it works as a montage. Good rehearsal,
guys, we'll pick up from the same place tomorrow.

MICHELLE, JOSEPH, JENNA

Who wants to go for a drink?

(They all begin to exit but are
interrupted by Garrett.)

GARRETT

Wait! Wait! Allen! We got a big problem.

ALLEN

What's the problem?

GARRETT

There's no show. We have no show!

JENNA

What? What do you mean we have no show?

GARRETT

I mean I couldn't figure out what to cut, so I started excising every other line and now it's nothing but nonsense.

ALLEN

So? Just put the words back in, what's so hard?

GARRETT

I can't, the playwright's already put them into another show.

(Everyone looks at him blankly.)

MICHELLE

But you're the playwright.

GARRETT

Not me, Mick Axelrod! He's cutting us off at every turn!

VOICE OF MICK AXELROD

Hey, blame story structure, not me. This is what Blake Snyder calls "The Dark Time of the Soul." Or maybe it's "All Is Lost"? I've never been very good with structure.

(Music starts playing.)

GARRETT

(singing)

We thought we had a show to stage,
But structure's torn our words from off the page,

(Maggie exits, prompter-ed and script-ed, the music cuts out.)

MAGGIE

Garrett, we don't have time for this, you need to write a new show.

GARRETT

(singing, ignoring her)

So all the work we've done for days
Are worthless so we're in a vast malaise...

MAGGIE

Garrett, the music's cut out.

GARRETT

(singing)

I know but you keep interrupting,
Every time I get the gumption
To sing, so go take a flying fling...

(The ensemble, if there is one, duck
their heads ONSTAGE and join in on the:)

ALL

GARRETT!

GARRETT

All right, all right! It's just that the show's almost
over and I still haven't gotten a solo.

JENNA

Neither have I.

MICHELLE, JOSEPH

Neither have we.

GARRETT

Yeah, but I'm a lead!

ALLEN

Look, Garrett. We open in three days. We need a show.
It doesn't have to be a long show, but you're the only
one here that can do it.

MICHELLE

Actually, I could do it. (pulling out a script) I've
actually got a musical right here, ready to go...

GARRETT

Go get your own show!

JENNA

But if hers is ready to go, we should probably go with
it.

GARRETT

Who's side are you on, anyway?

(Jenna stares at him a moment, takes a
look at everyone else on stage.)

JENNA

Uh...hers, actually.

MICHELLE

Aww, thanks, Jenna.

JENNA

No problem, Michelle. Us girls got to stick together. Especially when we're outnumbered.

ALLEN

Who's outnumbered? There's a three-three split.

MICHELLE

How do you figure?

JOSEPH

You, Jenna, Maggie.

JENNA

Maggie doesn't count, she's tech.

(Maggie, looking shocked and hurt, responds:)

MAGGIE

Uh! Why don't you go turn on your own damn mic?

(Maggie stomps off.)

MAGGIE

Places for the final number! Places please!

(Maggie exits, followed by the murmuring ensemble, Michelle, Jenna, and Joseph.)

SCENE 12- FINALE

(Garrett grabs Allen by the arms.)

GARRETT

What are we going to do, Allen? We still don't have a show!

ALLEN

Well, get to work on it.

GARRETT

I can't! It's hopeless! All is lost! I'm in a dark time of the soul!

ALLEN

(in an English accent)

Do they serve tea there? (beat)

(Allen smacks Garrett.)

ALLEN

Well snap out of it! And stop quoting Blake Snyder!

GARRETT

Should I quote Syd Field instead?

ALLEN

No, don't quote anyone, just sit down and start writing.

(Allen kisses Garret on the forehead.)

GARRETT

What, this again?

VOICE OF MICK AXELROD

Sorry, I accidentally copy and pasted.

(Allen wheels Garrett over to the piano.)

GARRETT

I don't have any musicals left in me, Allen, I used allit up with ten years of writing bubkiss.

ALLEN

Every musical starts with a single note. Play.

(Garrett plays a note. Then another.
Then another. He is suddenly struck by
an idea. He plays them in succession,
singing:)

GARRETT

(singing)

There's a musical inside me, I'm gonna find it...

ALLEN

Hey, that's pretty good.

(Garrett keeps playing.)

GARRETT

(singing)

There's a musical inside me, I'm gonna write it.

VOICE OF MICK AXELROD

Wait a minute...

GARRETT

(singing)

Flames to fill the silence...

VOICE OF MICK AXELROD

That's my song!

GARRETT

(singing)

Notes to light the pilot!

VOICE OF MICK AXELROD

That's plagiarism!

GARRETT

(singing)

And you know just where they'll file it when it's done!

VOICE OF MICK AXELROD

I'll sue!

GARRETT

(singing)

Under musicals the Tony it's won!

(The other actors and ensemble come out
on STAGE, to finish up the show.)

ALL

(singing)

There's a musical inside us, we're gonna sing it,
There's a musical inside us, we're gonna bring it,
We know we'll be distinguished,
once the play reviews are finished
It'll finally be our time out in the sun,
And afterward our Tony will be won!

GARRETT

There's a musical inside me, I'm gonna steal it,
If the playwright tries to sue me, I'll deal with it,
Because despite the heinous deed,
We'll all get what we need, I got my show,

ALLEN, JOSEPH, MICHELLE, JENNA

(singing)

The rest of us have had our fun,

GARRETT, ALLEN, JOSEPH,
MICHELLE, JENNA

(singing)

And afterward our Tony will be won!

ALL

(singing)

There's a musical inside us, just waiting for an audience,
There's a musical inside us, we're gonna be real diligent,
There's a musical inside us, brighter than a filament,
Although your asses are asleep,
Here's your chance to pee,
Because the musical inside meeee's, finally done!

(BLACKOUT.)

VOICE OF MICK AXELROD

What, no Metamucil jokes? I thought it would have been the very fiber of this thing. Not even a passing reference, huh? A mention slipped under the stool? It probably would have been strained anyway. Might as well flush this turd while we're ahead.

(The LIGHTS come up again.)

ALL

(singing)

There's a musical inside us, just waiting for an audience,
There's a musical inside us, we're gonna be real diligent,
There's a musical inside us, brighter than a filament,
Although your asses are asleep,
Here's your chance to pee,
Because the musical inside meeee's, finally done!

(BLACKOUT.)

(END.)