

We'll Meet Again

(A story of the evacuees)

Junior Version

Book & Lyrics
by
Keith Dawson

Music
by
Gawen Robinson

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Miss Reynolds	Teacher
Mr Townsend	Caretaker
Tommy	Evacuee
Alan	Evacuee
Terence	Evacuee
Harry	Evacuee
Eileen	Evacuee
Isobel	(Non-speaking child part)
Sam	(Non-speaking child part)
Boy 1	Schoolboy in the city
Boy 2	Schoolboy in the city
Margaret	Evacuee
Prime Minister	Neville Chamberlain (<i>Could be the recording</i>)
Government Minister	
Mr Arnold	
Ray	One of his children
Christine	Another of his children
Mr Nunn	Father of an Evacuee
Mrs Fitzgerald	Mother of an Evacuee
Mrs Lloyd	ditto
Ronald	Evacuee
Alice	Evacuee
Jack	Evacuee
Lil	Evacuee
Stationmaster	
Adult Passer by	
Mrs Davidson	Mother of an Evacuee
Wendy	Her daughter
Mr Roach	Father of an Evacuee
Bert	His son
Teacher	
Janet Lightly	A teacher with the Evacuees
Barfoot	The Billeting Officer (<i>Can be male or female</i>)
Geoff	Country kid
Mollie	Country kid
Jimmy	Country kid
Villager 1-6	
Mr Jones	
Mrs Howe	
Mr Glenister	
Bus Driver	
Child 1-6	
Teacher	A teacher with the Evacuees
William	Evacuee
ARP Warden	Air Raid Precautions Warden
Brian	A Mancurian Boy adopted by the Welsh family
Beryl	Brian's 'adopted' sister
Emmie	Beryl's sister
Jeannie	Beryl's sister
Mrs Pugh	The girls' mother
Kath	Mrs Pugh's sister
Mrs Evans	A neighbour
John	}
Paul	}
Mary	} Kath's children
Jean	}
Gillian	}
Peter	}
Mr Jenkins	Welsh Headteacher
Aunty May	A formidable visitor

Chorus of: Soldiers, Sailors, Women & Children. Boys and girls in class scenes. Family group in Sc 2. Group of Evacuees in Sc 3. Village children.

CONTENTS

<u>Act One</u>		Page
Scene One	A Classroom Somewhere in Britain	5
<i>Song One</i>	<i>We'll Meet Again</i>	5
<i>Song Two</i>	<i>Air Raid</i>	6
<i>Music Three</i>	<i>Sir Roger de Coverley (Comic dance routine)</i>	8
<i>Music Three (a)</i>	<i>Sir Roger de Coverley</i>	9
<i>Song Four</i>	<i>(Reprise) Air Raid</i>	9
Scene Two	Evacuation	11
<i>Song Five</i>	<i>Now It's Time To Say Goodbye</i>	12
<i>Song Six</i>	<i>(Reprise) Now It's Time To Say Goodbye</i>	14
Scene Three	The Arrival	16
<i>Song Seven</i>	<i>I'll Take That One</i>	18
<i>Song Eight</i>	<i>Pastimes and Playtimes</i>	22
Scene Four	Schooldays	23
<i>Song Nine</i>	<i>Life Goes On</i>	24
<i>Song Ten</i>	<i>Dear Mom and Dad</i>	26
<u>Act Two</u>		
Scene One	Back Home	28
<i>Song Eleven</i>	<i>Stiff Upper Lip</i>	30
Scene Two	Pied Piper Two	33
<i>Song Twelve</i>	<i>Bathnight Blues</i>	36
<i>Song Thirteen</i>	<i>(Reprise) Pastimes and Playtimes</i>	39
Scene Three	Mrs Pugh's Kitchen	40
Scene Four	Armistice	44
<i>Song Fourteen</i>	<i>(Reprise) We'll Meet Again</i>	46
Production Notes		47

All characters in this play are entirely fictional. Any similarities in name or otherwise to persons living or dead is purely coincidental and unintentional.

Scene One – A Classroom Somewhere in London

(As the lights dim the music strikes up to Song One and we see a scene at the start of the war. This is a series of cameos showing different partings. It could be done by using Pathe News Reel clips of the time [see resources in Production Notes] or could be acted out by several groups. One group are clearly at a railway station and we see loved ones saying farewell to their HUSBANDS and BOYFRIENDS (SOLDIERS AND SAILORS) who are boarding a train. In another cameo there is a gangplank going up to rostra in an image of a ships rails. SAILORS are seen going on board, whilst on land WOMEN and CHILDREN are seen waving flags and waving goodbyes. In yet another cameo a group of SOLDIERS are seen assembling and marching off whilst more loved ones wave them off. This should be an emotional scene emphasising the heartbreak of loved ones leaving to go to war. Song One is sung during this setting and could be sung by the cast in the on-stage cameos or by an off-stage chorus.)

Song One – We'll Meet Again

*We'll meet again some day
You'll soon be home, I pray.
Back in the arms of those who love you,
Though you'll be far away
Close to my heart you'll stay
'Til you're safely back home again.*

Bridge

*In times of trouble, in times of strife
We hold on to what is dear in life
To what we cherish, to those we love
And pray to our God above:*

*We'll meet again some day
You'll soon be home, I pray.
Dark is the night alone without you,
Autumn skies are grey.
But bright is the dawning day
When you come safely home again.*

*We'll meet again some day
You'll soon be home, I pray
Say Au Revoir, my dear not farewell
We'll meet again some day
Then in my heart you'll stay
Pray return safely home again
Pray return safely home again.*

(As the song finishes, the lights fade out on the cameos and we hear a siren [SFX 1]. As the siren develops its cadence a search light sweeps the stage and we glimpse the setting of a classroom and a few children scurrying about. The siren resolves into the song as the lights come up and the children and teacher sing Song Two.

Song Two – Air Raid

*Sirens sound, we run to ground
Hitler's on his way.
Planes draw near, causing fear
To ev'ryone around
Helter skelter to the shelter
Let's get underground
Siren's blasting, everlasting
Hitler's on his way*

*Air raid, air raid, action stations please
Man the guns, put out those lights
Obey the ARPs
Air raid, air raid, action stations please.
Grab your bag, get underground
Watch out for UXBs!*

*Fearful drone, searchlights comb
Ack-ack hits the sky
Bombs will fall, fear for all
Are we going to die?
Helter skelter to the shelter
We'll be safe down there
Sirens screaming searchlights beaming.
Hitler best beware!*

*Air raid, air raid, action stations please
Man the guns, put out those lights
Obey the ARPs
Air raid, air raid, action stations please.
Grab your bag, get underground
Watch out for UXBs!*

(As the song concludes, a siren is heard wailing again [SFX 2] setting tension amongst the children. Some CHILDREN hide under their desks, others are hidden about the set – it is a bit too scary for these children. The TEACHER is attempting to instruct the children in the correct way to don their gasmasks. Most of the children put theirs on, some of them are on the wrong way round, upside down etc. Some of the children are having fun with them making rude noises etc. As the siren fades, Miss Reynolds picks up the dialogue...)

Miss Reynolds: It's just another practise drill - we aren't at war, despite what you may have heard. I want you all to get your gasmasks out. Quietly. **(They each pick up a cardboard box containing a gasmask.)** Now take them carefully out of their boxes - no, no, Isobel, don't drag at it...you show her how to do it, Margaret, will you. Have we all done that? Good. I want you to put them on...and let's see if everyone can get it right this time. Wait a minute. Remember, chin in, right in first, before you begin to pull the straps over your head. No don't rush at it Eileen, take your time. Now, is everybody ready? I'll tell you what I want you to do....

(She is interrupted by the caretaker (Mr Townsend) entering the classroom with some good news for the children.)

Caretaker: Ah, Miss Reynolds. The ARP Warden sends his apologies, but he's just testing the new air-raid siren. Apparently it's all about to.....

Miss Reynolds: **(Interrupting him)** Thank you Mr Townsend. **(He exits)** Right, children. You all heard that – nothing to worry about, but nevertheless, let us use the opportunity to practise our drill. I want you to get your books back out and settle down comfortably at your desks, then I want to see just how long you can sit there with your gasmasks on.

Tommy: **(Speaking with his mask on – almost inaudible)** I want to sneeze! Aa.. aaa.. aaa.. **(He suppresses the pretend sneeze).**

Miss Reynolds: Okay children, I think you have the general idea... now Tommy, stop making that rude noise **(Tommy is blowing a loud raspberry in his mask now much to the delight of his friends)**. Harry the filter should be at the front of your face not the back of your head! **(Harry fiddles with his mask and makes it stick on top of his head)**. Eileen, give Sam his mask back... **(Eileen has two masks on, one on each side of her head.)**. Margaret, show Sam how to put his mask on properly. **(Tommy finally sneezes into his mask very loudly).**

Tommy: Please, Miss. I can't see out of my mask now!
(The all-clear siren sounds [SFX 3])

Miss Reynolds: Now remember, that sound is the all clear, that means that the planes have passed over and it is safe to come out of the shelter. The warbling sound that we heard first is the warning siren. You can take your gas-masks off now.

Alan: I didn't like that sound, Miss, it frightens me.

Miss Reynolds: I'm sure that it did, Alan. But we mustn't panic when we hear it. We must go straight to the shelters. And if you hear the rattle being sounded by the warden we must put our gasmasks on – sensibly Harry and a few others – and then do as we are instructed. Anyway, I am sure it won't come to that as you will all be off to the countryside soon and Mr Hitler won't take his bombs there.

Terence: What do you mean, Miss? Are we going on a holiday?

Miss Reynolds: Sort of. If the Germans do invade us, Mr Chamberlain has said that all the children will go away from the cities and the ports and docks to what he calls Reception Areas. Some of you will be going to the countryside, others will be going to the seaside.

All Children: Wow!

Harry: Can I take my bucket and spade, Miss?

Miss Reynolds: I'm not sure about that, Harry.

Harry: But I want to take a bucket and spade if I am going to the seaside. How can I make sandcastles else?

Miss Reynolds: Well you may not go to the seaside, you might go into the country.

Harry: What's in the countryside, Miss?

Miss Reynolds: Well, ... er... country – things. Animals and trees and flowers and hills and streams and lots of things.

Harry: I'd rather have the seaside – with sea and sand and rockpools and things.

Terence: I'd rather stay here with my mates.

Alan: Will my mom and dad be going on holiday with me?
Miss Reynolds: Well – no, Alan. Your mother and father will stay here, they have work to do to help us win the war.
Alan: I don't want to go away, then. I want to stay with my mom and dad.
Miss Reynolds: It may not be safe for you to stay here.
Alan: If it's not safe for me, it's not safe for my mom and dad, is it?
Miss Reynolds: **(Skirting the issue)** You must carry the box and mask all of the time, wherever you go. Now, put your gas masks back in their boxes now and let's carry on with our lesson.

(The children remove their gasmasks during the ensuing dialogue.)

Eileen: My dad's in the army – he's already gone away.
Tommy: Well my dad's in the Navy – he says that it's the best because it is the senior service.
Eileen: Yeah – but they don't do proper fighting like in the army...
Miss Reynolds: That will do now, children. Everybody who is fighting for our country is doing a marvellous job and we must support them all. Now, let's do some old english dancing... **(There is a general groan from all of the boys in the class, but some delight amongst the girls.)** Let's start with the boys. **(She moves to the piano.)** Come along boys, don't be shy, let's see if you can remember what we did last week.

(The boys all, begrudgingly, come out of their desks and slowly form two lines facing each other. There is ragging from the girls as the boys form up. The boys are all wearing their standard hob-nailed boots. They are as un-enthusiastic about this lesson as the girls are enthusiastic about watching. Miss Reynolds moves to the piano and prepares to play.)

Tommy: Please, Miss, I can't do this today.
Other boys: Oh yeah!
Miss Reynolds: And why not, Tommy?
Tommy: Please, Miss, I've got a bone in my leg...
Miss Reynolds: Oh, dear. Well not to worry, exercise will do it good!

(Miss Reynolds strikes up (play recorded track) Music Three – 'Sir Roger de Coverley' and the boys, very badly, attempt to dance. They are out of step and show no skill whatsoever. They are clearly out to not impress.)

Music Three – Sir Roger de Coverley

(The music stops after a few bars as Miss Reynolds can bear no more.)

Miss Reynolds: No, boys, no! Be sprightly, Tommy! Light on your feet, Harry! You must be as Gazelles! Creatures of fire! Springing with verve and abandon!
Harry: **(Aside)** I wish she would abandon... abandon us... and annoy someone else.
Miss Reynolds: What was that, Harry? Please share it with the class.
Harry: Nothing, Miss.
Terence: What's she on about, Alan?
Alan: Dunno, mate. Summat about creatures on fire being abandoned. Lost me!
Terence: And me.

Miss Reynolds: If we have all quite finished... let's try again. (*The music strikes up again [Music Three (a)] and the boys leap about the stage, over-emphasising the 'gazelle-like' actions, their hob-nailed boots crashing about the floor. One of the boys strikes another's shin.*)

Boy 1: Oy! That hurt! (*He strikes back*) Tell him, Miss.

Boy 2: I din't do nuffin', honest.

Boy 1: Did too.

Boy 2: Did not. (*A scuffle of pushing starts and the dance becomes almost a brawl.*)

Miss Reynolds: STOP!! (*Silence descends upon the class*) What is wrong with you? A bit of culture in your lives will do you good.

Boy 1: I can't see any culture in 'im kicking my shins. (*Indicating the other boy.*)

Miss Reynolds: Well, I'm sure it was an accident.

Boy 2: Di'nt kick his shin. I just slipped while I was being a gazelle thingy. (*Laughter amongst the class.*)

Terence: Springing with verve and abandon, were you? (*He laughs*)

Miss Reynolds: Yes, well that will do for now. Back to your seats, boys.

(*The boys start to move back to their desks when the air-raid warning sounds again. [SFX 4]*)

Miss Reynolds: Okay, children. It's another drill – what do we do?

Eileen: Form two lines, Miss.

Margaret: Then we go to the shelter.

Terence: And skive off our lessons...

Miss Reynolds: Terence....

(*They all line up as the Music starts to the refrain of song two.*)

Song Four (Reprise) – Air Raid

*Sirens sound, we run to ground
 Hitler's on his way.
 Planes draw near, causing fear
 To ev'ryone around
 Helter skelter to the shelter
 Let's get underground
 Siren's blasting, everlasting
 Hitler's on his way*

*Air raid, air raid, action stations please
 Man the guns, put out those lights
 Obey the ARPs
 Air raid, air raid, action stations please
 Grab your bag, get underground
 Watch out for UXBs!*

*Fearful drone, searchlights comb
 Ack-ack hits the sky
 Bombs will fall, fear for all
 Are we going to die?*

*Helter skelter to the shelter
We'll be safe down there
Sirens screaming searchlights beaming
Hitler best beware!*

*Air raid, air raid, action stations please
Man the guns, put out those lights
Obey the ARP's
Air raid, air raid, action stations please
Grab your bag, get underground
Watch out for UXBs!*

(As the refrain finishes, the children are seen marching out of the classroom as the siren continues to warble [SFX 5]. The lights fade to a repeat of searchlights scanning the stage then blackout.)

END OF SCENE

Scene Two - Evacuation

(The scene is set at the local railway station – 1115 hrs, September 3rd 1939. If using a backcloth, it could depict a few buses lined up outside the station, having discharged their cargo of children. Before the lights come up, we hear a government announcement. SFX 6)

PM. Chamberlain: “I am speaking to you from the Cabinet Room at 10 Downing Street. This morning the British Ambassador in Berlin handed the German Government a final note stating that, unless we hear from them by 11 o'clock that they were prepared at once to withdraw their troops from Poland, a state of war would exist between us. I have to tell you now that no such undertaking has been received, and that consequently this country is at war with Germany.”

(A spotlight comes up on a government minister making a statement from the Lord Privy Seal's office. Another spotlight picks out a small family group gathered around a radio on a table or dresser, listening intently to the speech.)

Minister: As you know, the government have made plans for the removal from “evacuable” areas to safer places called “reception” areas, of school children, children below school age if accompanied by their mothers or other responsible persons, and expectant mothers and blind persons. The scheme is entirely a voluntary one, but clearly the children will be much safer and happier away from the big cities where the dangers will be greatest. There is room in the safer areas for these children; householders have volunteered to provide it. They have offered homes where the children will be made welcome. The children will have their school teachers and other helpers with them and their schooling will be continued. A number of mothers in certain areas have shown reluctance to register. Naturally, they are anxious to stay by their men folk. Possibly they are thinking that they might as well wait and see; that it might not be so bad after all. Think this over carefully and think of your child or children in good times. Once air attacks have begun it might be very difficult to arrange to get away.

(The spotlights fade out on the Government Minister and the family group as the music strikes up for Song Five. During the song, the children march on watched by their parents etc and finally form their various groups as the song concludes. The children, carrying their cardboard gas-mask boxes around their necks and a suitcase in their hands, are gathered in tight groups with some parents and teachers. There is tension, fear, trepidation and excitement all mingled together. This should be clear in the song as well as the ensuing dialogue. The children all wear a label on their lapel indicating their names. Some of them carry banners bearing the name of their school.)

Song Five – Now It's Time To Say Goodbye

Verse

*They say that parting is such sweet sorrow
That I shall say goodnight till it be 'morrow
It's never easy to walk away
From those we know and love today
For those we care for; near and dear
And those we cherish; friends sincere
Husbands, wives, daughters, sons
Long-time friends; school-day chums, but...*

Chorus

*Now it's time to say goodbye,
Not to sigh or shed a tear
Though far I go, you always know
In my heart you will ever be near.
With a cheer, not a tear, wave goodbye
Keep a smile, for a while, don't sigh!
There's a song in my heart, as we sadly depart
For I know that one day we'll return.*

*Now it's time to say goodbye,
Not to sigh or shed a tear
Though far I go, you always know
In my heart you will ever be near.
With a cheer, not a tear, wave goodbye
Keep a smile, for a while, don't sigh!
There's a song in my heart, as we sadly depart
For I know that one day we'll return.
For I know that one day we'll return.*

(SFX 7 runs as an underscore of atmospheric sounds through the next section.)

- Mr Arnold: **(To his son)** Now remember, Ray, whatever happens, you must look after your little sister. Stick together.
- Ray: **(Tearful)** I don't want to go, Dad. Why can't I stay here with you and Mum?
- Mr Arnold: It wouldn't be safe for you. There might be bombs dropping on the town – anything.
- Ray: But what about you and Mom?
- Christine: Don't want to go!
- Mr Arnold: Now, look, you've set your sister off! Mum and I will be alright. We've got the Anderson down the garden.
- Ray: You're dumpin' us. You don't want us!
- Mr Arnold: Now don't be so silly. It's for your own safety. You'll be back here in a couple of months.
- Christine: How long's a couple of months?
- Mr Arnold: Not long.
- Ray: **(At the same time)** A quarter of a year! – nearly!
- Christine: **(Tearful)** I don't want to go.