

Bye Bye Birdie Synopsis and Character Descriptions

SYNOPSIS (compliments of Tams-Witmark Music Library, Inc.):

BYE BYE BIRDIE is one of the most captivating musical shows of our time. It tells the story of a rock and roll singer who is about to be inducted into the army. The singer, Conrad Birdie, an Elvis Presley type, has a pompadour and thick sideburns; he wears gaudy gold costumes and speaks in a rugged voice. Albert Peterson, his agent, is a very pleasant mild-mannered young man. Albert's faithful secretary Rose Alvarez keeps him and Birdie moving forward in the world. Rosie concocts one final national publicity plan before Conrad's induction.

Conrad will bid a typical American teen-age girl goodbye with an all-American kiss. Kim MacAfee in Sweet Apple, Ohio wins the honor. All of the phones in her town are already busy during The Telephone Hour as Kim has just been pinned to Hugo, a local boy. She is a pretty girl of fifteen and sings with spring-like ardor How Lovely to Be a Woman, as she pulls on the plaid woolen socks and the baggy mustard colored sweater considered stylish and popular among young ladies.

The arrival of Birdie in Sweet Apple causes people of all ages to swoon. Birdie says that his success is due to the fact that he is Honestly Sincere when he sings, and the quiet little town goes into a spin. The MacAfee household is completely upset by the visiting celebrity. It is decided that Birdie will give his One Last Kiss on the Ed Sullivan show. Kim's father who laments the whole uproar, tries to break into the act and behaves like a ham on the TV show. Hymn for a Sunday Evening is a salute to the greater glory of Ed Sullivan.

Birdie becomes disgusted with his life and goes out on the town with the teenagers. He feels tense with Albert and is tired of being supervised. The parents of Sweet Apple cannot understand the new generation and express this in Kids. Rosie, still waiting for that band of gold from Albert after eight years, invades a Shriners' meeting. An extremely hilarious ballet ensues. She then decides to become the Latin American spitfire that she is painted as, by Albert's leadfooted catastrophe-ridden mother. She is determined to become Spanish Rose. Kim is reunited with Hugo, and Rose with Albert in the lovely number Rosie. Other hit numbers include A Lot of Livin' to Do and Put on a Happy Face.

BYE BYE BIRDIE is a satire done with the fondest affection. It gives an insight into the everyday life that is very much part of us all. It is the tops in imagination and frivolity; a show that will be enjoyed by the cast as much as the audience.

----- Leading Roles

Albert Peterson (Tenor): He's our story's central character. What, you thought it was Birdie? Nope. He's the nervous and high-strung president of Almalou Records who pays more attention to his mother than to his girlfriend (who is his secretary). The actor who seeks to fill this role must be a strong vocalist, but he also serves to carry the show's main action. As such, he must be spot-on in comedic timing and show the core of this man in audition. It's a great role.; some dancing skill a plus.

Rose Alvarez (Alto): Poor Rose. She really puts up with a lot through the course of the show. Rose is Albert's secretary but dreams of the day when she can adjust his title from "employer" to "hubby." That was always their plan, but time seems to have slipped away. Despite his oft selfish and callous treatment

of Rose, she continues to support him, biding her time. Well, for a while anyway. Every woman has her breaking point. The role of Rose requires a woman who can display a truly strong spirit and a spicy inner being who can't wait to escape. The role of Rose will be secured by the one in audition who can sell the character's spirit, both via dialog delivery AND vocals. Dancing skills are a must!

Conrad Birdie (Baritone): The "Elvis-style" rock star who is headed into the army; he must be able to sing well, move like a rock star, and... burp! Not going to lie, he's kind of an undesirable sorta' fellow. He's rude. He's arrogant. He doesn't show much regard for others. This is, essentially, the iconic role of the show. In truth, the character doesn't have much in terms of dialog, but he does command a heavy swath of vocals. In audition, you must sell the vocals, gentlemen. We also need to see, very clearly, the physicality of Birdie. The show was loosely based on Elvis' entrance into the army. Give us a few king-like indications of the guy, but don't go full-blown Elvis. The physicality is very important though. We need to see the performer fluidly at-work during the vocal auditions. We want to see the actual, no frills man during the acting auditions. Show us the change.

----- Supporting Roles

Kim MacAfee (Soprano): Fifteen-year-old, self-possessed teen-aged girl, who considers herself more mature than her "Conrad-Crazy" girlfriends. She's the president of Sweet Apple's Conrad Birdie Fan Club. Through random chance, she is selected to delivery Conrad Birdie his final kiss goodbye before leaving to join the army. Seems simple enough, and her political status in the town certainly indicates valid credentials to fulfill the duty. Unfortunately, her boyfriend Hugo has a few reservations. Kim needs to come across as a typical all-American teenage girl of the 1950's. She's convinced that she's already reached adulthood and enjoys all the marvelous perks that come along with being a woman. Of course, the jolt of news about Birdie's imminent arrival and her role in seeing him off is enough to send her reeling back down the ladder rungs into pure childhood bliss. Funny scene. Anyway, ladies, if you seek to fill this role, you need to be solid on the vocals. You also need to communicate the black and white line that defines Kim at the crossroads of development where she finds herself.

Mr. Harry MacAfee (Tenor): The frustrated father of Kim and Randolph who feels his stature as a parent is continually challenged. He's not the star male vocalist in the show, but he does need to be able to sing a little. He's also a great source of comedy in the production. Yeah, we aren't given a ton of opportunities to see old Harry's shtick. However, he does have a couple of really great scenes in which he has the potential to leave the house rolling on the floor laughing. Show us your understanding of the potential behind this guy. Give us some really character gusto in the acting auditions. And show us you can in fact handle the vocals that come with this role as well. "Parliament has been dissolved; the Magna Carta is revoked, and Nero is back in town!"

Mrs. Doris MacAfee (Alto): The tireless, caring mother of Kim and Randolph who knows just how to handle her irritable husband. She's on the back-half of female leads roles, but she is on the list! Mrs. MacAfee is a solid role. She has a wonderful scene early on in the show in which she is mortified with her daughter's abrupt assertion of adult status. We don't have a ton to offer you in developing this role for the audition process. Give us some options and show us your thoughts. Be inventive and take a few risks!

Randolph MacAfee (unchanged voice): Kim's younger brother; sings one feature song. Randolph is almost like the MacAfee family's equivalent to Meg from Family Guy's Griffin family. He's overlooked a

bit, and when he is acknowledged, he really isn't given much respect at all. It's not a huge role, but it is a visible one. Randolph shouldn't be played shy, but he is certainly the subordinate within the family. Randolph's delivery of dialog must be spot-on or it will be missed completely.

Mae Peterson (Alto): Albert's mother, the quintessential "Mamma," who never stops parenting Albert. A Wonderful character role! Her vocal requirements are a very minor consideration. You may have heard of the stereotypical "Jewish Mother" before, yes? Well, we've not reason to believe the Petersons are Jewish, but Mrs. Peterson does fit the bill for the stereotype popularized in American films and television. Every scene in which she appears presents Mae unabashedly working to guilt trip her poor son. Again, this is a character role. Go a little crazy with it but be careful to find your own take on Mrs. Peterson. We don't want everyone to audition the same way for Ma Peterson. Take some risks. She's a wonderful character who commands volumes of laughter from the audience. Enjoy it!

Hugo Peabody (Tenor): Kim's devoted steady boyfriend who is jealous of Conrad Birdie. This is a great role. If you're not the strongest vocalist, Hugo may be the role for you. Hugo is Kim's understandably frustrated boyfriend. Well, how would you feel? You've just pinned the girl you're completely in love with, and the next thing you know she's all onboard to deliver the official send-off kiss to the teen rock idol of the decade. Hugo is a great role for the right actor. He has solid stage time and enjoys command of a couple of humorous moments. Give us the prototypical teenage boy, circa 1950's. Research it. Watch a few films that reflect the era. (Google:1950's teen movies)

Ursula Merkle (Mezzo): The hyper-enthusiastic teen-aged girlfriend of Kim's who leads the fans screaming for Conrad Birdie. If Kim registers an excitement level of six on a scale of one to ten, Ursula hits a twelve. She's a pretty excitable kid. Although she is a supporting character, she has some wonderful moments. As Kim's number-one confidant, she's always looking out for her best friend's interests, Ursula offers wise council to Kim in times of need. Well, as wise of

council as a kid like Ursula can provide anyway. Ursula is a little quirky, high-energy, and busting with vitality. Show us the inner-tempo that pushes Ursula through life. -----

----- Featured Roles

Supporting Conrad Birdie Fan Club Teens (Teen Chorus): Teens in the Conrad Birdie fan club - Featured solos and speaking lines

Margie (Mezzo) - A teenage girl hailing from Sweet Apple and friend to Kim. Nancy (Mezzo) - She's yet another teenage girl from Sweet Apple. Helen (Mezzo) - Uh, huh. She's another teenage girl from you know where Alice (Mezzo) - She's the mayor's daughter. You know what that means! Eh, maybe you don't. We're not even sure what that means! Penelope Ann (Mezzo) - She is a teenage girl. She has a couple of lines.

Deborah Sue (Mezzo) - Yep, another teenage girl from Sweet Apple, Ohio.

Harvey Johnson (Tenor/Teen Chorus) - Teen. Howard's son. Yeah, dad's kind of a big deal. Harvey's just an average teenage kid in our fair town.

Mayor (Bari, Adult Chorus): Mayor of Sweet Apple, Ohio; sings one feature song; also appears on the Ed Sullivan Show. There's some sense that he fits the bill of a big fish in a small town.

Mayor's Wife (Mezzo, Adult Chorus): Mayor's wife, Edna; sings one feature song; also appears on the Ed Sullivan Show. Smaller role, but she does have a funny bit in the show as Conrad begins to sing during Sweet Apple's welcoming ceremony for the auspicious guest.

Gloria Rasputin (Soprano): The gum-chewing, lame-brained, dancing secretary who is Mae Peterson's choice to replace Rosie as Albert's fiancé. She's not exactly what one might expect as the embodiment of the ideal administrative assistant, Gloria is a forceful, broad woman with true gusto. This role will be given to someone who can eloquently command a character performance.

Charles F. Maude (Adult Chorus, Tenor): Proprietor of "Maude's Roadside Retreat"; sings the tenor part in the male quartet. Decent guy.

Maude's Quartet: Customers at Maude's who sing in the male quartet:

Maude's dishwasher (Adult Chorus, Tenor): He washes dishes for a living, but he's a member of our male quartet!

Maude's First Customer (Adult Chorus, Baritone): Who knows this guy's story. Anyway, he's also a member of the male quartet.

Maude's Second Customer (Adult Chorus, Tenor): We think he's into taxidermy, but he doesn't like talking about it much. Well, not while he's practicing with the quartet group anyway.

----- Other Roles:

Ed Sullivan: from backstage; vocal impersonation

Mr. Johnson (variable ranges, Adult Chorus) - We might guess his first name is Howard. Yeah, he may be the guy. Harvey's dad.

Mrs. Merkle (Soprano): She's Ursala's mother. The apple doesn't fall too far from the tree, usually.

Fred (Teenage Chorus, variable range): He's a teenage boy from Sweet Apple.

Suzie (Teenage Chorus, variable range): She's a teenage girl from Sweet Apple.

1st Reporter (speaking role): He's got something to say,.

2nd Reporter (nonspeaking role): He doesn't have something to say, but he does have a camera.

3rd Reporter (speaking role): He also has something to say, although everyone would prefer he changed places with the 2nd Reporter and remain silent instead.

Carl (Teenage Chorus, variable ranges): He's a teenage boy from Sweet Apple.

Policeman (variable range): He keeps order.

Girl 1 (Teenage Chorus): She's got a line!

Another Parent (speaking role): Yup, he or she has something to say.

Traveler 1 (speaking role): He travels.

Traveler 2 (speaking role): She travels as well.

Train Conductor (speaking role, variable ranges): Controls the train (which we don't see)

Lee (Adult Chorus, speaking role): He's a concerned parent.

TV Show Crew, Stage Manager (nonspeaking role): (S)he's got a decent gig; (s)he works for the Ed Sullivan Show.

TV Show Crew, Stagehand (nonspeaking role): They may not be stage managing, but they're in the union. It's a living.

TV Show Crew, Wardrobe (nonspeaking role): Again, not bad. They have a job to do.

Sad Girl 1 (teen-nonspeaking role): She's sad.

Sad Girl 2 (teen-nonspeaking role): She's sadder still.

Sweet Apple Shriners (nonspeaking): gentleman conducting a meeting that Rose interrupts

Doctor (nonspeaking role): He tends to Conrad after Hugo socks him!

----- Chorus

Teenagers: Lots of energetic male and female singer/dancers who are fans of Conrad Birdie.

Adults: Parents of the Teenagers who are very concerned with how their "kids" are behaving