

Plays for Young Audiences

A PARTNERSHIP OF SEATTLE CHILDREN'S THEATRE AND CHILDREN'S THEATRE COMPANY-MINNEAPOLIS

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Mr. Popper's Penguins

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From the story by
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Music by
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Mr. Popper's Penguins was originally produced by Northern Stage in 2010.

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CAST

(In Order of Appearance)

THE CITIZENS OF STILLWATER**

MR. POPPER

MRS. POPPER

JANIE POPPER

BILLY POPPER

ADMIRAL DRAKE**

PAPERBOY**

SALESLADY**

MAILMAN**

DELIVERMAN**

CAPTAIN COOK

POLICEMAN**

DOC HARPER**

GRETA

STAGE MANAGER**

MR. GREENBAUM**

FOLKS IN VARIOUS CITIES**

MALE INGENUE**

FEMALE INGENUE**

WOMAN THEATRE OWNER**

POLICE OFFICER**

CREW OF ADMIRAL DRAKE'S SHIP**

**NOTE – These roles may be doubled utilizing members of the chorus and/or children who also play the young penguins. The show has been conceived for a cast of 23 – 5 adult males, 3 adult females, 15 children/teens. I would suggest doubling as follows:

- Deliveryman/ Clerk/ Admiral Drake
- Doc Harper/ Clerk/ Mr. Greenbaum
- Mailman/ Policeman/ Clerk/ Male Ingenue (Could also be a teenager)
- Clerk/ Stage Manager/ Police Officer

SETTING

Time: 1937

Place: Stillwater, USA and various cities in the U.S.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES:

ACT ONE

Scene One: Late afternoon on a Fall day on a street in Stillwater, USA

Scene Two: Early evening, that same day, the Popper living room/kitchen

Scene Three: The next day, the Popper living room/kitchen and a street in Stillwater, USA

Scene Four: The same day, the Popper living room/kitchen

Scene Five: Several weeks later, the Popper living room/kitchen

Scene Six: Several days later, the Popper living room/kitchen

ACT TWO

Scene One: Several weeks later, the basement of the Popper's home

Scene Two: One week later, backstage and on-stage at the Palace Theatre in Stillwater, USA

Scene Three: Seven weeks later, a train platform

Scene Four: The next day, backstage and on-stage at the Regal Theatre in Boston, USA

Scene Five: The same day and then 5 days later, a cell in a Boston jail

Scene Six: The next day, a dock in New York City

ACT 1

(The curtain opens. We see a street scene of a quiet, small town tree-lined street painted on flats or periaktoi. There are sheets hanging on a clothesline. A little girl is skipping rope in a steady rhythm (1,2,1,2). A boy crosses the stage on a soapbox scooter (push, push glide; push, push glide). A girl and her mother enter and start to take the sheets off the line. They take the ends and snap it before each fold (snap, snap, fold, fold; snap, snap, fold, fold. A man comes in sweeping the street with a broom (sweeep, sweep; sweeep sweep). Three boys enter passing a basketball (bounce, pass; bounce, pass). The postman enters, whistling, hitting his hand with the stack of mail he is about to deliver. The milkman enters with a container of empty bottles that rattle as he carries them. All the sounds build on each other rhythmically and then they all begin to sing...)

1. STILLWATER

ALL

Stillwater

A sleepy little town
Just a place to raise a family,
Just a place to settle down.

Stillwater...

As peaceful as its name.
Where the thing you can rely on
Is that things will stay the same.

Where the guy who is your neighbor
Also is your friend.
Where the buddies of your childhood
Are with you till the end.

Stillwater...

Nowhere special, nothing grand
But you'll search the world and one thing's clear
From the north to southern hemisphere
There's not a place on Earth that's nowhere's near
This great town we've got right here

Stillwater...

Stillwater...

Stillwater...

(The adults exit and the children gather together in the street. They greet Mr. Popper enthusiastically when they see him.)

(Mr. Popper enters while they are singing. He is a slight middle aged man with a walrus-like mustache and disheveled hair. A house painter, he carries the tools of his trade ie buckets, ladder, drop clothe, brushes and his clothes and hat are paint-spattered. He stops, putting down his tools, wiping his face with paint spattered handkerchief. He sighs and begins to sing...)

MR. POPPER

Stillwater...
A right fine town and yet...
Though I've lived here all my lifetime
I've got one great big regret.

(To the children)
I long to go exploring
To a place I've never been
Travel North Pole to South Pole
To see things no man has seen

I'd like to cross an ice floe
Ski down glaciers in a whoosh
I'd love to drive a dog sled
Yelling "Mush, you huskies. Mush"!

To sit down, brrr, in my boots and fur
By a campfire blazing bright
Then to rest my head on a tundra bed
'Neath the twinkling northern lights.

If only for an hour
I could do the things I dream...
To demonstrate ability
And bravely face adversity
Away from all normality
Known to all posterity

CHILDREN

He longs to go exploring
To a place he's never been
Travel North Pole to South Pole
To see things no man has seen

He'd like to cross an ice floe
Ski down glaciers in a whoosh
He'd love to drive a dog sled
Yelling "Mush, you huskies. Mush"!

To sit down, brrr, in his boots and fur
By a campfire blazing bright
Then to rest his head on a tundra bed
'Neath the twinkling northern lights.

(Musical interlude.)

(The children take Mr. Popper's equipment and begin to act out his "dreams". The buckets turned upside down become "ice floes" for him to cross the river (his white drop cloth which the children make ripple like water). He could fall in the "river" and be "swept away" ie the children can pull him away in the drop cloth. The ladder can become the dog sled with 3 children in the rungs and Mr. Popper sitting on the bottom as they pull him around. The ladder opened and covered in the drop cloth could become the glacier for Mr. Popper to "ski" down". Director and actors can use their imagination and see how the found objects can become part of Mr. Popper's daydreams.)

(At the height of this, Mr. Popper stops, realizing where he is and what he should be doing. He sings...)

MR. POPPER

If only for an hour
I could do the things I dream...
But I've a wife and family
And all of them depend on me
I can't explore the Bering Sea.
Time to face reality....

(The children help him gather his things as he exits. They wave to him and sing quietly...)

CHILDREN

(Exiting. They remove the flats of the street to reveal furniture. The flats reverse and become the upstage walls of the Popper home. A front door unit rolls in stage right while a backdoor unit rolls on stage left pushed in by Mrs. Popper.)

Stillwater...
Stillwater...
Stillwater...

1A. Change of Scene

(Scene 2 – The living room and kitchen of the Popper home. It is a simple but tidy middle American home circa 1938. In the living room there is a sofa, a desk, two comfortable chairs, a goldfish bowl, knick knacks, a round braided rug. While the furnishings are plain, the walls are liberally decorate with pages cut from the National Geographic and framed, and travel posters from the North and South Poles. There's an opening upstage between the walls that leads to the rest of the house. In the kitchen, there's a refrigerator, kitchen table and chairs, etc.

(Janie, a girl of about 10 and Bill, a boy of around 12 are lying on the floor by the large radio, surrounded by books. They are supposed to be doing their homework but are clearly wrapped up in their radio program. Mrs. Popper is straightening things up in the kitchen as Mr. Popper enters. He carries just his lunch pail which he puts on the table. He comes up behind Mrs. Popper and hugs her. She turns and kisses him.)

MR. POPPER

Well my love, the decorating season is officially over. I've painted all the kitchens in Stillwater. Every house in need of a fresh coat of paint is tidy and trim from roof to floorboards. And today, I wallpapered the very last wall of the very last room of the very last of the apartments in the building on Elm Street. So, there'll be no more work for me to do until spring when I'll start it all up again. My ladder, buckets, paints and brushes are stored away till then.

MRS. POPPER

(Sighing)

I sometimes wish you had the kind of work that lasted all year and not just springtime to fall. It will be nice to have you home every day for vacation of course. But, it is a little hard to clean with a man sitting around the house all day, his nose buried in the National Geographic.

MR. POPPER

(Looking around the kitchen)

I suppose I could redecorate the house for you...

MRS. POPPER

(Quickly)

No indeed! Last year you painted the bathroom four different times because you'd nothing else to do. I think that's quite enough of that. But what worries me the most, of course, is the money. I've saved a little of course, hopefully enough to last until you start work again in the spring. But as always, we'll need to be cautious with our spending...no roast beef, no ice cream... We'll manage but I'll be counting every penny...

MR. POPPER

And every bean! There's not a thriftier homemaker in all of Stillwater. Or a better cook! The sandwich and soup you made me for lunch were delicious and kept me going straight through the day.

MRS. POPPER

Does that mean you won't be wanting supper? I've kept a plate warmed for you of my chicken fricassee.

MR. POPPER

Hmmm...maybe there's a little space left for that. No one does a bird like you Mrs. Popper!

MRS. POPPER

Well, I was lucky to save any of it for you. Between Janie and Bill they nearly stripped the carcass bare! Growing children certainly means growing appetites.

MR. POPPER

We should be happy to have healthy children even if it means healthy appetites. Are they doing their homework?

MRS. POPPER

They are, by the radio in the parlor though. So I can't say how much schoolwork is getting done and how much time is being spent decoding the latest message from Little Orphan Annie! I swear when those children get to listening to the radio they lose track of everything else. (*She starts to get his plate out of the oven*). By the way, I wanted to remind you that you'll need to be here tomorrow when the children come home from school. It's the last Thursday in September, the 30th and I'll be at my regular meeting of the Ladies Aid Society...

MR. POPPER

(Looking up excitedly)

Wait! You don't mean that tonight is Wednesday September 29th, do you?

MRS. POPPER

Yes, I suppose it is but what of it?

MR. POPPER

(Rushing to the living room. We now hear the Little Orphan Annie program playing. He hurriedly goes to the dial of the radio, in the process stepping over the children who are sprawled out in front of it.

He frantically starts to tune in a new program.)

What of it? What of it! Why this is the night that the Drake Antarctic Expedition is going to start broadcasting!

MRS. POPPER

It'll be just a lot of men at the bottom of the world saying, "Hello Momma. Hello Papa". Seems to me it would get pretty boring down there with all that ice and snow.

MR. POPPER

(As he's dialing the radio to the new station over the protestations of the children)

You wouldn't have thought it dull if you'd gone with me last year to the Bijou to see the newsreel movies of Drake's polar expeditions.

MRS. POPPER

Well I didn't...and with our budget as tight as it is, it's just as well I didn't waste our money on such things. And with your nose buried in those arctic travel books, planted next to your globe for the next 5 months, I don't suppose I'll be getting out to see many movies this year either!

MR. POPPER

Oh, but if you had gone you'd have seen how beautiful the Antarctic is. And it wasn't boring at all. There were penguins everywhere, the cutest little birds. And the men had such fun playing with them...It's the strangest thing though. All the polar bears live at the North Pole and all the penguins live at the South Pole. Personally, I think that the penguins would probably like the North Pole too if they only knew how to get there...Shhhh! I think this is it!

ADMIRAL DRAKE

(His voice comes over the radio as the family listens attentively)

Hello. This is Admiral Drake speaking. Hello Momma. Hello Papa...

MRS. POPPER

(To Mr. Popper with a satisfied smile)

Ah-ha!

ADMIRAL DRAKE

...Hello Mr. Popper

MR. POPPER

(Sputtering)

What?!

MRS. POPPER

Goodness gracious! Did he just say "Papa" or "Popper"?!

ADMIRAL DRAKE

Hello Mr. Popper up there in Stillwater. Thank you so much for your nice letter about the movies from our last expedition. Watch for an answer...but not by letter, Mr. Popper. Watch for a surprise! Signing off. Signing off. *(The radio signal turns to static and then orchestra music from the 1930's comes on. The family looks at each other in shock at what they've just heard.)*

MRS. POPPER

(In amazement)

You wrote to Admiral Drake...!

MR. POPPER

I did. I wrote and told him how funny I thought those little penguins were.

MRS. POPPER

Well I never....

MR. POPPER

(Excitedly going to his globe and taking it over to the children to show them)
And to think he just spoke to me from there... *(He points to the South Pole.)*...From the very bottom of the world. And he even mentioned my name! *(He sits back on his heels in amazement and whistles quietly at the thought, then)*. What do you suppose he means by “a surprise”?

2. What Could It Be

JANIE

(Spoken)

Maybe it’s one of those furry coats like the Eskimo people wear! You know made from artic lynx or fox! *(She sings)*

What could it be?

I think a fur.

Snuggly and soft as cashmere.

Dressed up to the nines.

Just like Lamour

Stepping out of her car at a

Glamorous

Movie

Premiere. *(She sighs dreamily, Spoken)*.

At least that’s what I hope it will be...

BILLY

(Spoken)

No. No. Maybe it’s a hunting knife with a handle carved from real walrus tusks! Or a whalebone fishing spear. Boy, I’d love to show that off to the guys on the playground. *(He sings)*

What can it be?

I think a spear.

Something a warrior might need.

For battling a wolf

Duel to the death

Struggling to live till the beast’s

Howling last

Breath. *(He exclaims excitedly, Spoken)*.

Wouldn’t that just be aces...?

BILLY/JANIE

To get a gift so unexpected
From a place so far away
Is like a long lost Christmas present
Turning up on Labor Day!

MRS. POPPER

(To the children, ever the voice of practicality)

It's great fun to dream,
Wonder and guess
Hoping for things it might be
The only thing sure
Take it from me
We'll all have to try and be patient.
I know that it's hard to be patient

But this time you'll have to be patient
And wait till tomorrow to see...

MRS. POPPER

So I'm off to bed. Janie, Billy the sooner you're to bed, the sooner it will be tomorrow and this great mystery will be solved. So hurry upstairs and brush your teeth. We'll tuck you in shortly.

JANIE

(Getting up and kissing her mother. Then to her father)

If it is a fur coat, can I at least try it on, please?

MR. POPPER

We'll see...

JANIE

And that probably means no...

BILLY

If it's a knife do you think I might be able to...?

MRS. POPPER

(Quickly and sharply, stopping the idea in its tracks)

No!

BILLY

And that definitely means no!

(Janie and Billy exit offstage going to their bedrooms).

MR. POPPER

Don't you wonder at all my dear...?

MRS. POPPER

I wonder about a lot of things...How we are going to get through the winter with two very hungry children and no money coming in. I wonder how far a dollar can be stretched. I wonder if by springtime our diets will consist of beans and more beans. I suppose I could hope for a freezer full of whale blubber but then I don't know how one goes about cooking whale. I wonder if you can fricassee it...*(Mr. Popper looks disappointed at her failure to imagine with him but Mrs. Popper continues but in a gentler tone.)* But I never wonder about how much I love you and I never wonder about what a good man you are. *(She kisses him softly).* Are you coming to bed Papa?

MR. POPPER

(Sitting back down by his globe)

In a moment. I just want to see something in one of my books. *(Mrs. Popper exits. Mr. Popper sits spinning the little globe.)* Imagine, Admiral Drake spoke to me from the South Pole. Just as though I was there with him. *(Lights go down)*

(Scene 3 – The living room and kitchen of the Popper home the next day. Mrs. Popper is staring into the hallway mirror putting on her hat and gloves. Mr. Popper paces anxiously.)

MRS. POPPER

My Ladies Aid meeting shouldn't take too long unless Ruby Wentworth is there. Ruby certainly likes to talk. Why she can talk her way so far around a topic that she ends up arguing with herself.

MR. POPPER

Shouldn't the postman be here by now?

MRS. POPPER

He'll get here when he always gets here which is when he gets here. Relax Papa. There's no way of knowing if this surprise from Admiral Drake is even going to arrive today.

MR. POPPER

I suppose.... *(He sits in his chair and picks up the paper but his foot keeps tapping anxiously)*

MRS. POPPER

Now I have a casserole all made. Please put it in the oven at around 4:30 on 320?

MR. POPPER

(Distractedly)

Yes, 3:20 at 430...

MRS. POPPER

(Gathering her things, she crosses, kisses Mr. Popper on the head and starts for the door)

Have a pleasant day and please remember I don't care how bored you get, you are not to repaint any of our rooms! Last year I swear you painted our front hallway so often, I'd get home and have to check the door number to be sure I was in my own house!

MRS. POPPER

Yes my love. *(Mr. Popper waits until she is out the door and then hops up and begins pacing again. He speaks to himself.)* Wouldn't it be amazing if he sent me one of his maps? An actual map that he had with him in the arctic? I could have it framed and hang it in a place of honor right...*(He searches the room for the perfect spot, removing, twisting and generally upsetting most of the pictures in the room. He finds what he feels is a perfect spot and removes what is hanging there. He is standing with the picture in his hands when the doorbell rings. He rushes to it and swings the door open excitedly. A small boy of around 10 is standing there.)*

PAPERBOY

Afternoon Mr. Popper. I'm here to collect for the newspaper. That'll be 25 cents.

MR. POPPER

(Disappointed as he fishes the coins from his pocket)

Yes, of course. Here you go. And I've noticed how much better your arm is getting. The paper almost always reaches the porch now.

PAPERBOY

I know! I'm hoping to go out for the baseball team this spring.

MR. POPPER

Well, good luck with that... *(He returns to his chair, puts the picture down on the floor next to him. He again picks up the paper but his foot continues tapping. He leaps up with a new thought.)* Maybe Mrs. Popper is right. Not about the whale blubber but suppose he's sending us some exotic food from the North Pole. Wouldn't that be something? I've never tasted seal or walrus but I suppose it'd taste sort of like chicken. If so I'd wager Mrs. Popper would soon be winning the seal cook-off at the county fair! I'd better make room in the icebox for that. Wouldn't want the meat to spoil... *(He hurries to the kitchen and starts pulling things from the icebox and putting them on the floor. The doorbell rings and he rushes to it. A lady stands there with a sample case of cosmetics).*

SALESLADY

Good day sir. Is the lady of the house at home? If so, I'd like to tell her about a once in a lifetime offer. *(She liberally squirts a perfume atomizer at him.)* A bottle of our exclusive Au Des Colognes Evening in the Casbah can be hers for just one dollar!

MR. POPPER

(Wrinkling his nose in distaste at the smell)

Ma'am I don't mean to be rude but that stuff smells like an evening near McHenry's dairy farm and I hope inhaling that nasty stuff is only a once in a lifetime experience! *(As he closes the door)* Thank you kindly but I like the way Mrs. Popper smells just fine, sort'a like vanilla extract and lavender soap. *(One more time he returns to his chair, though still agitated. He again picks up the paper but this time he barely glances at it. He's had another thought.)*

MR. POPPER

Of course! I bet it's a kayak. Wouldn't that be something? I could take it out on the lake, maybe use it for fishing. Where can I put it though....? *(He looks around)*. Well, I'd think something that rare would have to be put somewhere very safe where folks could really study and appreciate it. It could probably go in a museum but Stillwater hasn't got a museum so.... *(He starts to frantically rearrange the furniture in the living room)* The Popper front parlor can be the beginning of the new Stillwater Museum of Natural History! *(The doorbell rings again and he rushes to it. It's the postman!)*

POSTMAN

(Lazily, in no great hurry)

Afternoon Mr. Popper. Nice to see you home. I've got something special for you today. *(He fishes in his letter bag. Mr. Popper waits anxiously)*. Sure wasn't expectin' to see one of these, no sir. Let's see.... Where did I put it? Ah, here you go.... *(He pulls out a fat catalogue)* The new Sears and Roebuck catalogue! Don't usually see these for another month or so.

MR. POPPER

(Disappointedly)

Is that all?

POSTMAN

(Slapping his head)

Why no it isn't. Thank you for reminding me! *(He again reaches into his bag and pulls out a stack of bills)* Got these bills as well. You have a nice day. *(He leaves as Popper shuts the door)*

MR. POPPER

(He crosses back to his chair crabily, tossing the bills and the catalogue on to a table. He picks up his pipe and fusses with it. NOTE – He will not smoke it! He will simply hold it in his mouth. He mutters to himself in a bad humor) Silliest thing I ever heard...Sears and Roebuck...What's so special about a catalogue. You can see a catalogue any day of the week. *(The doorbell rings. Mr. Popper stays firmly in his chair. He picks up the paper pointedly and ignores it. It rings a second time and Mr. Popper calls at the door.)* Go away!

VOICE AT THE DOOR

Is this the Popper residence?

MR. POPPER

It is but no one's home!

VOICE AT THE DOOR

But I got...

MR. POPPER

Just leave it!

VOICE AT THE DOOR

Listen Mister, I got papers...

MR. POPPER

Good for you. And I've got my paper and I plan on reading it. *(He pops his paper pointedly)*

VOICE AT THE DOOR

(Impatiently)

Hey, it's no skin off my nose mister. But if you don't sign the papers then this here box goes back to your Auntie-Artica *(Pronounced Anti – Arctica)*. She's going to be mighty unhappy to have this big box come back.

MR. POPPER

I don't have an Auntie Arctica. I have an Auntie Julia but she's... Auntie Arctica?! Antarctica! It's the package from Drake! *(He rushes to the door and flings it open. A deliveryman stands there with a large crate on a dolly. The crate is marked "This End Up", "Open at Once", "Keep Cool" and there are large air holes in the crate.)*

DELIVERMAN

Okay then, sign here, *(He hands him a clipboard with papers)*, here, here and initial here and here. *(He rolls the dolly into the living room)*. Glad you decided not to break your poor Auntie's heart! *(He exits, shutting the door behind him)*.

3. Underscore

(Popper rushes to the kitchen and gets a hammer. He opens up the crate. The front of the crate drops and through a fog of dry ice, out pops a penguin { NOTE – Penguins should be played smaller children so their proportion is no more than ideally chest high on the actor playing Popper. They should not be taller than the actors playing Janie and Billy} Popper and the bird examine each other, curiously sizing the other up. Popper touches the bird. The bird touches Popper. The bird chortles.)

CAPTAIN COOK

Gook. Gook. Ork. Gook. Gook.

MR. POPPER

(Scratches his head in wonder)

Well I'll be. Aren't you just the cutest little thing.

(Janie and Billy coming running through the door. They stop in their tracks when they see the penguin who eyes them curiously and continues to explore during their discussion, all the while chortling "Gook", "Quork", "Ork", "Gawk", "Gork".)

JANIE

Wow!

BILLY

Like Orphan Annie says..."Leapin' Lizards!"

MR. POPPER

Isn't he wonderful?!

JANIE

What is he?

MR. POPPER

He's a penguin from the South Pole sent to me by Admiral Drake.

BILLY

And Jimmy Evers thinks he's so special because he has a bulldog. Wait until the guys see this!

JANIE

What's his name?

MR. POPPER

(Checking the paperwork by the crate)

It doesn't say....I guess we should name him something appropriate.

CAPTAIN COOK

Gook. Gook. Gook.

MR. POPPER

Cook! We'll name him after the great explorer and world traveler, Captain Cook. *(To the penguin)* What about it? How does that sound?

CAPTAIN COOK

(Flapping his wings happily)

Gook! Ork! Gawk. Quork.

MRS. POPPER

(Entering through the front door, she does not see Captain Cook as she removes her hat and gloves)

Call who Captain Cook

JANIE

Him!

(She gestures at Captain Cook who waddles over to examine Mrs. Popper, startling her in the process.)

MRS. POPPER

Heavens! I assume then that this is our surprise from Admiral Drake?

MR. POPPER

(Desperate to please his wife and excite her with this new arrival.)

Surprised?!

MRS. POPPER

Yes I can certainly say I am. *(Looking around at the mess in the living room, aghast)* Did he do all this?

MR. POPPER

(Sheepishly)

No. I did...

MRS. POPPER

And this? *(Pointing at all the pictures tilting on the walls)*

MR. POPPER

(Sheepishly)

Me again...

MRS. POPPER

(As she heads into the kitchen and sees all the food on the floor.)

(During this conversation, Janie, Billy and Captain Cook remain in the living room with Captain Cook exploring and examining things. By the end of the scene with Mr. and Mrs. Popper he should have gotten to the goldfish bowl and eaten the goldfish.)

Don't tell me...!

MR. POPPER

(Sheepishly)

I was making room for the walrus...

MRS. POPPER

There's a walrus too!

MR. POPPER

(Reassuring her quickly)

No! No! I just thought maybe the Admiral had sent us a walrus steak and I wanted to be sure it didn't spoil... I'm sorry.

MRS. POPPER

(Looking at the items on the floor)

Well, it looks like tonight we're having roast with lemon sauce, tuna casserole, cottage cheese and prune whip.

MR. POPPER

(Nervously)

Well, Momma, can we keep him?

MRS. POPPER

(With mock gruffness)

Absolutely. We're keeping the penguin and I'm shipping you back to Admiral Drake! He's clearly far less messy. *(Softening)* Of course he can stay. I can see he makes you happy which makes me happy. We'll find a way to make this work. Now, what do you suppose a penguin eats?

JANIE

(Running in)

Goldfish. Penguins eat goldfish and Captain Cook just had a snack!

CAPTAIN COOK

(Waddling into the kitchen to see what all the excitement is about)

Quork. Gawk. Ork. Ork. Gook. Grok. *(He sees the emptied refrigerator and hops right in. He trills happily)* O-r-r-r-r-h. O-r-r-r-r-h. O-r-r-r-r-h.

MR. POPPER

That's a penguin's way of saying how pleased he is. I read about it in one of my Antarctica books. I think that's about the right temperature for him. We could let him sleep there at night. After all...It is an Admiral!

MRS. POPPER

And where will I put our food! I don't want some bird nesting in my Jell-O mold.

MR. POPPER

I suppose we could get a second refrigerator. And make some adjustments to this one - air holes so he'll be able to breathe and maybe a handle on the inside of the door.

MRS. POPPER

(With a sigh)

I suppose I can call and have the icebox service man deliver a good used refrigerator and while he's here he can see to drilling some holes and putting a handle on the inside. But you'll need to teach the Captain how to use the handles. I won't spend my days playing doorman for a bird. *(Starting to bustle around the kitchen, she shoos Mr. Popper out)* Why don't you take Captain Cook out for a stroll or a waddle or whatever it is penguins do. Let him stretch those tiny little legs. He must feel terrible having been all cramped up in that little box for such a long time. Give me time to take care of things here.

MR. POPPER

That's a wonderful idea! Let him get to know the neighborhood. I'll need a leash and collar though....

JANIE

How about your ties? They would be soft and wouldn't hurt his neck.

MR. POPPER

A tie around his neck would work well and add to his dapper look. But I don't have enough of them to make a leash, even if I include the very ugly one I got from Auntie Julia two Christmases ago. I need something long and strong...

BILLY

What about the clothesline?

MR. POPPER

Good thinking! And mother doesn't need it until Friday. Captain Cook and I will stroll over to the hardware store and pick up another length of rope. Why don't you two go get me what I need and then you can help your mother...straighten up.

(Janie and Billy run off to go get their supplies)

MRS. POPPER

Are you sure about heading downtown Papa? Maybe you should try a short trip around the neighborhood first?

MR. POPPER

Nonsense! I think Captain Cook would love to get a look at downtown Stillwater and won't Stillwater be excited to get a look at him.

(Janie and Billy return with a necktie and a long length of rope. Mr. Popper goes to Captain Cook and puts the bowtie on him and then attaches the clothesline to it. He puts on his coat and hat. The two now look very much alike. {See Illustration} He faces Mrs. Popper.)

MRS. POPPER

Don't the two of you look fine, all ready to parade right down Main Street.

MR. POPPER

Exactly! That's exactly what I plan to do. *(He sings)*

4. Parading

When you're feeling grand,
In something new to wear
Ya don't want to stay inside

Ya just got to move,
Get out and breathe some air
Hit the floor
Open the door
And take a step outside
and
go

(He steps outside and begins to walk. Captain Cook follows waaaay behind on the length of rope. The rope should be long enough that Mr. Popper and Captain Cook are not on stage at the same time. As Mr. Popper walks, he meets people along the way...a little girl and her doll, a

matronly woman carrying groceries, a boy with a scooter, a teenager with some schoolbooks, a milkman, a girl with a jump rope. He nods and acknowledges each of them as they pass him. As they near the offstage side where Captain Cook would be, we see them react and then disappear offstage. Mr. Popper does not notice this, he is so wrapped up in his giddy excitement. We do not see Captain Cook at the end of the rope through all this.)

Parading

Stepping out for everybody to see

Parading,

Side by side, my penguin and me.

Anyone would have to note a pair that's this unique.

My new friend's turning heads...wearing tails... and a beak.

Parading

Walking on, our heads held way up high.

Parading,

Smiling at the world passing by

We don't even mind if other people stop to stare

It's hard not to admire such savoir fare.

I'll even grant to some we seem a trifle weird.

But life is more exciting since this fellow first appeared.

Parading

See them gawking as we saunter past

Parading,

With a style that's just unsurpassed.

I know I may sound boastful and I don't like to crow.

I know I'm just a painter, a regular working Joe.

But

Right now I feel finer than anyone I know.

Parading down the street

A feeling oh so sweet

Parading down Main Street

And feeling swell!

(During the last Captain Cook waddles in. Wrapped up/tangled in the clothesline is everyone Mr. Popper passed including a policeman, his ticket book out who asks angrily...)

POLICEMAN

You got a license for this thing?!

(Scene 4 – The living room and kitchen of the Popper home the next day. Mrs. Popper is dusting. Captain Cook is staring at his reflection in the hall mirror. Mister Popper is holding the ticket trying again to explain things to Mrs. Popper)

MRS. POPPER

(With a sigh)

I don't understand. The policeman gave you a ticket for not having a license for a penguin!

MR. POPPER

The problem was he wasn't sure if there was even any kind of municipal ordinance about penguins on public streets off leash or on. But he wasn't taking any chances he said because the way I was walking this penguin was clearly a public nuisance. He said I needed to call City Hall and check out what the ruling about penguins is.

MRS. POPPER

(Exiting into the house)

Well it would probably be best to get him a license. He's bigger than most dogs, that's for sure. Will you keep an eye on Captain Cook while I make the beds? He keeps trying to eat the buttons on the mattresses.

MR. POPPER

Certainly.

(On hearing his name, Captain Cook wanders over to Mr. Popper as he goes to get the phone. Captain Cook attempts to eat the cord thinking it's some kind of curly green worm, as Mr. Popper dials The lights fade and Mr. Popper is isolated in a spotlight.)

MR. POPPER

(Into the phone)

Hello? Hello?

(The clerks "dance" in seated in rolling office chairs and each holding a telephone receiver. They roll to a stop at various points around the stage, downstage of the Popper house, to be hit by a spotlight when they speak.)

5. GOOD MORNING CITY HALL

CITY HALL CLERKS

Good morning, City Hall.
We thank you for your call.
We'll happily answer anything you ask.
'Cause here at City Hall.
We try to do it all.
Professionally handling any tiny task!

MR. POPPER

(Spoken, pleasantly)

Well hi there! I've got a new pet and I'm not sure if I need one but I'd like to get a license for it....

OPERATOR

(Efficiently)

Very good sir. I'll connect you with our Animal Control department...

CITY HALL CLERKS

(Slightly faster than first time)

Good morning, City Hall.

We thank you for your call.

We'll happily answer anything you ask.

'Cause here at City Hall.

We try to do it all.

Professionally handling any tiny task!

MR. POPPER

(Spoken, still pleasant)

Okay, I guess this is the right place. I'd like to get a license for my bird...

OPERATOR

(Efficiently)

Oh, I'm sorry. You need the Department of Fish and Wildlife for a bird hunting license. But I'm afraid bird season doesn't start until November. Happy hunting!...

CITY HALL CLERKS

(Slightly faster the time before)

Good morning, City Hall.

We thank you for your call.

We'll happily answer anything you ask.

'Cause here at City Hall.

We try to do it all.

Professionally handling any tiny task!

MR. POPPER

(Starting to get testy)

Listen, I think there's been a mistake. I wanted to get a license for Captain Cook, my pen...

OPERATOR

(Efficiently)

I see. Is he an army captain, naval captain or police captain?

MR. POPPER

(Sputtering in frustration)

He is not...He's a penguin

OPERATOR

(Efficiently)

Would you repeat that please?

MR. POPPER

(Irate)

Penguin – P.E.N...

OPERATOR

(Efficiently)

Oh, you mean Captain Cook's first name is Benjamin. Really sir, if I might suggest, you should try to speak more clearly. Anyway, Mr. Topper, I'm going to connect you with our Veteran's Affairs department. They should be able to help Captain Cook. Thank You!...

CITY HALL CLERKS

(Dizzily fast)

Good morning, City Hall.

We thank you for your call.

We'll happily answer anything you ask.

'Cause here at City Hall.

We try to do it all.

Professionally handling any tiny task!

MR. POPPER

(Totally frustrated by the bureaucracy)

Okay, listen, all I need a license for my penguin Captain Cook and you folks are driving me crazy!

OPERATOR

(Efficiently)

Oh sir, I'm so sorry you've gotten such a run-around. Let me connect you at once to the correct department. Have a nice day!...

CITY HALL CLERKS

(Ridiculously fast!)

Good morning, City Hall.

We thank you for your call.

We'll happily answer anything you ask.

'Cause here at City Hall.

We try to do it all.

Professionally handling any tiny task!

OPERATOR

(Efficiently)

Good morning, Department of Motor Vehicles. I understand that Captain Benjamin Cook needs a driver's license. Does he have the same car as last year and if so may I please have the license number?

MR. POPPER

(Apoplectic, raging at the phone)

Fine then! If you dang fools at City Hall don't even know what a penguin is, I guess you don't have any rule saying they need to be licensed! Good day!

OPERATOR

(Pleasantly)

And you have a great day too sir!

CITY HALL CLERKS

(To each other, pleased with themselves)

So here at City Hall.

We have ourselves a ball.

Confusing folks with every call we take

'Cause here at City Hall.

We do nothing at all.

Until its time to take our coffee break....

(They all stand, in unison, hang out signs on their chairs and speak)

Out to Lunch!

(They roll chairs off and exit. Lights out)

(Scene 5 – The living room and kitchen of the Popper home several weeks later. The family is sitting by the radio. A radio show is playing. Mrs. Popper is knitting. The children are doing homework. Mr. Popper is reading, his pipe [unlit] is in his mouth. Throughout this scene Captain Cook will cross behind the family picking up things and putting them in the fridge. They should not notice this behavior until the unraveled knitting.)

MRS. POPPER

I just can't get over the change in the children.

MR. POPPER

Change my dear?

MRS. POPPER

Indeed. Since that bird has arrived. Why I've never seen the house so tidy. I used to spend hours picking up their things...baseball cards, bits of old kite string and pieces from Billy's erector set, Janie's tiny little teacups for her dolls, her jacks and her hair ribbons, pieces from their checkers game, or jigsaw puzzles or all those marbles.

MR. POPPER

There you have it! Owning a pet has helped them mature, taught them responsibility!

MRS. POPPER

Yes, I suppose it's been a healthy change for the better.

MR. POPPER

Speaking of healthy, I am a bit concerned about Captain Cook. His appetite has been off and his feathers don't have the shine they once did. He seems less chipper than he was when he arrived.

MRS. POPPER

Well, it can't be the quality of the food. He eats better than we do most nights with the canned shrimp and fresh fish.

MR. POPPER

Still, I am worried. I even sent a letter off to Dr. Smith. He's the curator at the big aquarium in Mammoth City. If anyone would know what to do for an ailing penguin, he would. He's an international penguin expert. In the meantime I've asked Doc Harper, the vet to stop by and take a look, see if he can find anything.

MRS. POPPER

Really Mr. Popper... I could be down with the influenza, near death's door before you'd summon a doctor for me but.... *(She stops and watches in amazement as the scarf she is knitting slowly unravels. Mr. Popper notices she has stopped and looks up as well, taking in the strange site. She spies the yarn leading into the kitchen and she and Mr. Popper track it to the refrigerator where it disappears into one of the airholes. She opens the door and an assortment of "stuff" [See book for ideas] piles out. Captain Cook sits inside on a pile of more stuff.)*

CAPTAIN COOK

(Looking very sad and forlorn, near death's door)

Ork. Ork.

MRS. POPPER

I declare this penguin has been a great help in cleaning up this house. But now that you mention it Papa, he does look a little down

CAPTAIN COOK

Greeb. Ork. Gawk. Gook. Gook.

MR. POPPER

Maybe he needs more exercise?

CAPTAIN COOK

Grek. Quorg. Kreeg.

MRS. POPPER

I suppose we could get fresh shrimp instead of canned?

CAPTAIN COOK

Ork. Greeb. Gook. Ork.

MR. POPPER

Maybe some shiny beads? He certainly loves to play with shiny things.

(The lights change to a fantasy feel. MR. and Mrs. Popper freeze as do the children. A spotlight hits Captain Cook and he begins to sing plaintively in English)

6. LONELY LOVE SONG

CAPTAIN COOK

I'm just a lonely one miserably looking for a two.
Is it any wonder that I'm sad and blue?
These creatures seem quite friendly but nowhere do I see
A single female penguin to keep me company.

Lonely
Hear my lonely love song.
I'm pouring out my heart, does no one hear!
Lonely,
Answer please my love song.
This loneliness I feel's too much to bear.

Lonely
Sing a lonely love song.
My heart is aching for a someone sweet.

Lonely,
Could you share my love song.
Without a mate how can I be complete?

I've left my home, my family
And all my friends behind.
If there was someone I could love
I don't think I'd mind...the sadness.

Lonely
One more lonely love song.
Can no one sense the longing in my cry?
Lonely,
It's my final love song.
If I must live alone...
(How sad to live alone!)
If I must live alone – I'd rather die.

(He returns to the refrigerator and the lights return to normal.)

CAPTAIN COOK

Greeb. Gork. Ork. Gook. Gook.

MR. POPPER

I just don't understand it but this penguin doesn't look like himself

DOC HARPER

(Calling from the front door)

Hello? Mr. Popper?

MR. POPPER

(Calling back)

We're in the kitchen Doc. Come on back.

DOC HARPER

(Entering)

Evening folks. Hope this isn't too late. I was out delivering a calf at the Millers.

MR. POPPER

Not at all Doc. Here's the patient himself.

DOC HARPER

So I can see. Can't say I've had any experience with penguins. Chickens, turkeys, even a few geese but this...*(He examines him briefly)* this is one sick bird. I'll leave you some pills. Try

giving him one every hour, feeding him sherbet, wrapping him in ice packs. Beyond that, I'm afraid I can't offer you much hope. This kind of bird was never made for this climate. I can see you've taken good care of him but an Antarctic penguin can't thrive in Stillwater.

MRS. POPPER

(Clearly upset by this news)

Are you saying he may...die?

DOC HARPER

I'm truly sorry but this is one very sick bird. *(He exits. The lights fade).*

(Scene 6 – The living room and kitchen of the Popper home several days later. The family is in the kitchen. Mr. Popper paces nervously, thumbing through his penguin book. Mrs. Popper puts a cold rag on Captain Cook who looks near death's door. The children try to tempt him with fish but nothing rouses him. He has given up.)

MRS. POPPER

His temperature has gone up to one hundred and four degrees!

MRS. POPPER

That seems high. I don't know what to do. The books don't give any ideas on medical treatment for penguins.

JANIE

Is Captain Cook going to be okay?

MRS. POPPER

We all hope so sweetheart.

(The doorbell rings and the postman calls through the open door.)

POSTMAN

Mr. Popper! Mr. Popper! I got a very special delivery here for you. From Mammoth City!

MR. POPPER

(Hurrying to the door, he grabs the letter from the postman.)

The letter from Dr. Smith! I hope it's not too late! *(He reads)* Dear Mr. Popper. Unfortunately it is not easy to cure a sick penguin. Perhaps you know that we too have, in our aquarium at Mammoth City, a penguin from Antarctica. It is failing rapidly, in spite of everything we have done for it. I have wondered lately whether it might not be suffering from loneliness. Perhaps that is what ails your Captain Cook...

(During this next section, Greta waddles in unnoticed by Mr. Popper but not by Captain Cook who senses her arrival from the kitchen. He rises up and waddles in to meet her followed by Mrs. Popper and the children. The bird's eyes meet across the room and it is true love. They waddle towards each other.)

MR. POPPER

I am, therefore, shipping you our penguin by U.S. Postal Service. You may keep her. Her name is Greta. There is just a chance that the birds may get on better together. *(He looks up to see Captain Cook and Greta greeting each other affectionately in penguin talk. The lights change back to fantasy, the family freezes and the birds sing as they waddle back to the refrigerator).*

7. LONELY LOVE SONG (First Reprise)

CAPTAIN COOK/GRETA

Lonely
No more lonely love song.
I've found a love that makes my whole life grand.
Lonely?
No, you heard my love song.
I found someone I know will understand.

To live here in this strange new world
Is hard when it's just you.
But I can manage anywhere

CAPTAIN COOK

Since I've a love that's true!
true!

GRETA

He's a love that's

CAPTAIN COOK/GRETA

Lonely
Final lonely love song.
I sing this song from deep within my soul.
Lonely,
No, it's just a love song.

CAPTAIN COOK

I'll never be alone...

GRETA

You'll never be alone!

CAPTAIN COOK/GRETA

No more to be apart... We now are whole.

(The two birds enter the refrigerator and close door. The lights fade as Lonely Love song underscores. A sign drops that says "1 month later". The family rushes in. The refrigerator door opens. Greta and Captain Cook stand their proudly flanking a nest with baby penguins {puppets})

CURTAIN

End Act I
