

Bye Bye Birdie Synopsis & 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 springlike 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 lead-footed 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.

CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS:

Albert Peterson: (Tenor) He's our stories central character. What, you thought it was Birdie? Nope. He's the nervous and high-strung president of Almalou Records. 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. Show us something, gents!

Rose Alvarez (Alto): Poor Rose. She *really* puts up with a lot through the course of the show. Rose is Al'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.

Conrad Birdie (Baritone): Not gonna lie, he's kind of a undesirable sorta' fellow. He's rude. He's arrogant. He doesn't show much regard for others. He's rumored to have a drinking problem. Eh, he's a rock start

anyway. 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. I want to see the actual, no frills man during the acting auditions. Show us the change.

Kim MacAfee (Soprano): Well, 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.

Mrs. Mae Peterson (Alto): *Wonderful* character role, ladies. Her vocal requirements are a very minor consideration. Ma Peterson is sold via the read in acting auditions. We've 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, ladies. Go a little crazy with it, but be careful to find your own take. I don't want to see an early leader in audition set the end-all, be-all pattern of reads for everyone else. Find your own take on Mrs. Paterson. Take some risks. She's a wonderful character who commands volumes of laughter in the audience. Enjoy it!

Mr. Harry MacAfee (Tenor): Okay, guys, 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. Show me your understanding of the potential behind this guy. Give me some really character gusto in the acting reads. 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): 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. I don't have a ton to offer you in developing this role for the audition process. Give me some options and show me your thoughts. Be inventive, and take a few risks!

Hugo Peabody (Speaking Role): Not a bad role, guys. If you're not the strongest vocalist, Hugo may be the role for you. Hugo is Kim's understandably frustrated boyfriend. Well, come on, 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. Anyway, Hugo is a great role for the right actor. He has solid stage time and enjoys command of a couple of humorous moments. Give me the prototypical teenage boy, circa 1950's. Research? Come, watch a few films that reflect the era, guys!

Ursula Merkle (Mezzo): If Kim registers an excitement level of six on a scale of ten, Ursula hits twelve. Yeah, she's a pretty excitable kid. She is a supporting character, but she has some wonderful moments. She's Kim's number-one confidant. 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, she's a little quirky, high-energy, and busting with vitality. Show us the inner-tempo that pushes Ursula through life, ladies.

Randolph MacAfee (Tenor): Kim's younger brother, Randolph is almost like the MacAfee family's equivalent to the Griffin family's [Meg](#). 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. I will say this, Randolph's delivery of dialog is either going to be spot-on, or miss completely. Show me your ability to deliver spot-on, guys.

Mayor (Adult Chorus, variable range): He's the mayor of the good town of Sweet Apple, Ohio. There's some sense that he fits the bill of a big fish in a small town, but I am far from solidifying my understanding of how this man should present himself in the show. To be determined...

Edna (Adult Chorus, variable range): What? You don't know who Edna is? She's the mayor's wife! Anyway, 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.

Alice (Teenage Chorus, Mezzo): She's the mayor's daughter. You know what that means! Eh, actually, maybe you don't. I don't. I don't even know why I typed it.

Margie (Teenage Chorus, Mezzo): A teenage girl hailing from Sweet Apple and friend to Kim.

Harvey Johnson (Teenage Chorus, Tenor): Howard's son. Yeah, dad's kind of a big deal. No, he's just an average teenage kid in our fair town.

Nancy (Teenage Chorus, variable range): She's yet another teenage girl from Sweet Apple.

Helen (Teenage Chorus, variable ranges): Uh, huh. She's another teenage girl from you know where.

Ed Sullivan (spoken role): This is wonderful, albeit little, challenge, gentlemen. Technically, Ed's supposed to be an offstage spoken part. I think we may put Ed Sullivan onstage in our production. As such, do a little research. We'll be testing reads for our [Ed Sullivan](#), so have something prepared. Sell it, guys! He has to be right.

Charles F. Maude (Adult Chorus, Tenor): He's the hearty proprietor of Maude's Roadside Retreat. Decent guy.

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

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

Maude's Second Customer (Adult Chorus, Tenor): I 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.

Gloria Rasputin (Soprano): She's Mrs. Peterson's choice to replace Rosie. 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.

Penelope Ann (Teenage Chorus, variable ranges): She is a teenage girl. She has a couple of lines.

Mr. Johnson (Adult Chorus, variable ranges): Yeah, we might guess his first name is Howard. Yeah, he *may* be the guy.

Deborah Sue (Teenage Chorus, variable range): Yep, another teenage girl from Sweet Apple, Ohio.

Mrs. Merkle (Soprano): She's Ursula's mother. The apple doesn't fall too far from the tree, usually. Yeah, let's go with that thought her, ladies.

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 the order.

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

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

Traveler 1 (speaking role): He travels.

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

Train Conductor (speaking role, variable ranges): If the role of a conductor was good enough for *Ragtime*, it's good enough for this show.

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

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

TV Show Crew, x4 Stagehands (nonspeaking role): They may not be stage managing, but they're in the union. It's a living.

TV Show Crew, x2-3 Wardrobe (nonspeaking role): Again, not bad. They make a little money. Hey, it's television!

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

Sad Girl 2 (nonspeaking role): She's more sad still.

Sweet Apple Shriners (nonspeaking): I can't make this stuff up. Well, technically I can, but...

Doctor (nonspeaking role): Again, if it was good enough to be a role in *Ragtime*, it's good enough for us again in this production.