



Cast Away
by
STRANGE TALK





I N T R O D U C T I O N

It's the final night of the final performance of 'Cast Away' - a musical by Strange Talk.

Performed onstage, we see the climactic denouement of a love story at sea, feel the excitement of the cast and participate in the audience's jubilation.

E X P L A N A T I O N

I'd love to present this song as if it were the rousing final song in a fictional musical being performed on stage, watched by an enthusiastic audience.

I vividly remember seeing 'HMS Pinafore' when I was a kid. The wonderful navy costumes, the women in their frills and bonnets, a bit of swordplay, the majesty of the Queen's navy and the pride and importance of everyone on stage right down to the bit players.

So the inspiration for the sets, costumes and show themes will come from the Gilbert and Sullivan musical 'HMS Pinafore'.



C A S T A W A Y - T H E M U S I C A L

CHARACTERS

CAPTAIN JIM CORNWALL.....the good-hearted, brave lieutenant.
FIRST MATE BENEDICT LINTON.....the caddish Sergeant.
ELOISE EGGLES.....a beautiful, pure-hearted young maiden.
ADMIRAL EGGLES.....the curmudgeonly major general of the Queen's navy. Eloise's father.
LADY EGGLES.....the cynical wife of General Eggles. Eloise's mother.
SWEET TULIP.....the pretty scullery maid.
SEAMAN 'POPPY' POPPERTON.....Cornwall's faithful cabin boy.
FATHER DEMETRI.....the scheming old priest.
THE SEAMEN.....a handful of sailors.
THE WOMEN-IN-WAITING.....a handful of Eloise's maids.
THE NATIVES.....a handful of islanders.

S T O R Y

During a Naval skirmish, Captain Cornwall of the HMS Beaufort is flung overboard. Upon the ship's return to dock, First Mate Linton takes credit for their victory and gets General Eggle's permission to marry his daughter, Eloise, partly because Eggles wants to deflect attention from his own affair with the scullery maid, Sweet Tulip. With the help of the ship's cook, loyal Seaman Poppy goes AWOL to rescue Cornwall who has been 'cast away' on an island and is slowly winning the trust of the locals, who were rumoured to be cannibals. Hijinks, mistaken identities and much farce ensues until, in the final number, Captain Cornwall returns to claim Eloise and slay Benedict Linton. *



*I envisage the lead singer of Strange Talk playing Jim Cornwall. Without knowing the personalities of the other band members it's difficult to know who might be suited for what. If they were up for it, they could even play the girl's parts. Depending on the theatre I am able to get we may have room for a small orchestra pit, in which case the other members of the band could also simply be playing instruments there if they weren't keen on miming and dancing.

V I S I O N

The song starts.

It's night. We're outside a theatre, moving in to a close-up of a theatre program for 'Cast Away', a musical by Strange Talk, drawn over a naval vessel. Over the program is stuck a sign, 'FINAL PERFORMANCE'.

Crowd applause brings us into the theatre. The stage is black - it's a scene change. There is anticipation and energy in the air.

Backstage, the wings of the theatre, the Women-In-Waiting are busily getting themselves ready for the final number, patting down costumes, linking hands, fixing each other's bonnets - a final nod of encouragement.

BOOM! The beat kicks in, the lights come up - revealing the set of a ship's prow. Eloise Eggers sits in a wedding dress, mournfully brushing her hair as the Women-In-Waiting canter across the stage in a line, carrying bridal veil, flowers and corsage. As they pin all the paraphernalia to her and fuss about her, she sings:

*Every day after day another question for you
If I could go back in time I'd find a reason for you
The more I seem to try another secret lies*



She casts off the flowery-crown and runs offstage - but is caught, held at the arms by Seaman, who march her back to the centre of the stage, startling the flushing Women-In-Waiting. Benedict Linton enters grandly in his full Navy colours. He sings to Eloise in anger:

*Cast away from the chain
I can give you what you want
Walk away from the flame
And I won't make the same mistakes*

BAM! He slaps her across the face.

*Cast away from the chain
I can give you what you want
Walk away from the flame
And I won't make the same mistakes*

He gets down on one knee, holds out a ring to put on her finger. She won't give him her hand. The Seaman behind them, just following orders, sing:

*Set fire to the night
See the ashes fall
Set fire to the night
Like kids of the night*

Eloise turns to look at her Women-In-Waiting - they cannot do anything but shrug and hopelessly join in:

*Set fire to the night
Leave it all behind
Set fire to the night
Set fire to the night*



Eloise finally holds out her hand in consent, dying inside. Leering, Linton puts the ring on and drags her to a makeshift marriage altar. Her parents General and Lady Egges appear with a priest, Mincing General Egges gets a laugh from the audience. Father Demetrius waves the Bible about and sermonises:

*Every end has a start just like a dream come true
It won't be long till you find the feeling inside you
Before we walk we crawl but we can only try*

A tear drops from Eloise's eye - Linton lifts her veil to kiss her when - Jim Cornwall appears on a ledge above - his uniform tattered, handsome and bold. A murmur of shock from the Seamen and Women. As Eloise's eyes light up he sings to the assembled:

*Cast away from the chain
I can give you what you want
Walk away from the flame
And I won't make the same mistakes*

*Cast away from the chain
I can give you what you want
Walk away from the flame
And I won't make the same mistakes*

The Islanders appear, bones through their noses and teeth necklaces, pointing their spears at the Seamen who raise their hands in surrender. The Islanders, the excited Women and the fearful Sailors all sing:

*Set fire to the night
See the ashes fall
Set fire to the night
Like kids of the night*



Cornwall swings down on a rope. The sputtering General stands in shock and Lady Eggles faints.

*Set fire to the night
Leave it all behind
Set fire to the night
Set fire to the night*

Cornwall turns to see Linton has drawn his sword, but Poppy throws Jim a rapier and he runs Linton through. Sweet Tulip jumps in the General's arms in fright (much to his delight) and Cookie wakes up the grateful Lady Eggles with smelling salts.

Eloise throws her arms around Jim and they embrace, united at last. The Islanders share bottles of beer with the Seamen and the Women-In-Waiting cheer.

Confetti falls from the sky as the curtain closes on rapturous applause. The crowd are on their feet, shouting encore.

Breakdown: behind the curtain the cast are bumping into each other in chaos; giggling, happy, sweating.

The crowd start clapping along with the song. The cast line up, ready, linking arms. Jim is looking hard at Eloise.

The curtain sweeps open as the final chorus is upon us - sung by the entire cast, now lined up on every level of the stage - box-stepping together and twirling around each other. The women's skirts fly, the men leap about, leading the women.

*Set fire to the night
See the ashes fall
Set fire to the night
Like kids of the night*



*Set fire to the night
Leave it all behind
Set fire to the night
Set fire to the night*

The cast finish the song on a rapturous high, hands in the air. The crowd goes wild. The curtain closes.

Away from the eyes of the public now, Jim looks again at Eloise.

And gives her a real kiss.





T O N E

The idea is to capture the exuberance and commitment to performance that even musical-theatre haters can find irresistible. It's the obvious joy of being on-stage that sets musical performers apart from just actors and I want that to come through in the performances.

It means the characters will be played quite broad, with the majority of the supporting characters played for laughs. If the band are all willing to be on-stage, I think it's a great chance for them to look pretty awesome. Every dude looks handsome in a Naval uniform and we won't be doing any of those massive mutton chops or over-drawn eyebrows that plague so much bad theatre.

In fact, all makeup will be far more subtle and tasteful than you would usually find in a musical, because I won't be filming it from a set camera up the back of the auditorium. Instead, I will be onstage covering the singers and dancers in as dynamic a way as possible, creating as much movement with the actions of the cast, the swirling of costumes and the marching of the sailors.

Similarly, I will be lighting the stage more in the manner of a TV drama than the traditional, flat bright lights of a theatre. You can find a nice example of this sort of on-stage lighting if you search Youtube for "The Gala Ensemble - When I Was A Lad".

Colours will be adjusted in post to create as smooth and modern a feel as possible. For instance, the traditional Navy blue will be toned into a more modern, creamier blue so that even though the clip eschews all the subject matter usually prevalent in an electronic music video - nightclubs and partying - the colours are still reminiscent of the neon vibes of party culture.

Much of the action will also be shot in slow motion to allow accentuation for any poetry in movement.



The scale of the production - in terms of costumes, set and theatre - will depend on what I am able to achieve in pre-production. But even if the theatre ends up being quite small and feeling more like a community theatre than Her Majesty's State (an idea which, as the storyboards develop, might be far more endearing than an enormous production), the idea is still to film the show as beautifully as possible, to give it more weight and importance than the vast majority of filmed theatre which is generally flat and washed out.

A good reference for the style of on-stage filming comes from 'The Company' by Robert Altman - which featured ballet performances filmed from several different angles at once, often simply capturing details on a long lens, like the dancer's feet, with the most breathtaking moments captured in slow-motion and a wide palette of pastel colours.

I will also be looking at 'All That Jazz', the original Bob Fosse film.





E X E C U T I O N

The majority of pre-production will consist of location scouting, wardrobe scouting and personnel hire, including sourcing the outside cast members. Then wardrobe fitting and rehearsals, set design and build. Shooting will most likely occur in one full day with an extra safety day for any pickups.

The majority of budget will be spent on wardrobe and set design. As much as possible I will be looking to borrow or cheaply hire these elements. As always with a tight budget, costs will be cut wherever it is possible to still maintain integrity of the image and it may be that money saved on borrowed costumes will be freed to spend on paying somebody or extra lights.

More specifically, this clip will most likely require the band's co-operation not only in performance but logistics.

For instance, in shooting an audience, I will be using a 'multiple pass' technique - whereby we get as many people as possible to turn up as audience members, sit them all together in the theatre, go through all the required responses, then move them to a different section of the seats and film it again. Then all the 'passes' are stitched together in post so it appears the theatre is full. It would be really helpful for the band to utilise their own contacts/fanbase in sourcing this crowd - the more numbers we have on the day, the less time has to be spent in post, the more attention can be given to other details such as grade/VFX and the quicker the clip will be ready.

A very rough timeline would be:

Pre-production: Two-and-a-half to three weeks.

Production: Two days.

Post-production: Two weeks.



F I N A L L Y

All good music videos create their own self-contained world; they don't just occur inside the everyday.

To be honest, this is a world I have long neglected, shunning musical theatre as a fool's pastime and a parade of over-acting, jazz-handsing idiots.

But I'd forgotten that thrill I felt as a child at junior-school seeing 'HMS Pinafore' performed by the students many years above me.

The women simply stunning in their makeup and bonnets.

The men so handsome in their crisp suits.

And the conviction of the cast and the love of the audience.

It's a special kind of magic that I'm excited about and I'd do my best to make it something that will excite others and bring a unique, surprising and ultimately memorable charm not only to 'Cast Away' but to Strange Talk as well. No one would see it coming.

There's plenty more to discuss but if you like the idea let me know and let's have a chat.

Warmest regards,

James McFay