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Micky Salberg's Crystal Ballroom Dance Band

A play with music

Ade Morris
Original music by Paul Kissaun

Samuel French — London
www.samuelfrench-london.co.uk

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MICKY SALBERG'S CRYSTAL BALLROOM DANCE BAND

First presented on 1st April 2008 at the Watermill Theatre, Newbury, with the following cast and creative team:

Micky Salberg	Paul Kissaun
Samuella Salberg	Pam Jolley
Tommy Bostock	Alex Tomkins

Directed by Guy Retallack
Musical direction and original music by Paul Kissaun
Designed by Helen Goddard
Lighting by Lawrence T Doyle

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(See also page ii)

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CHARACTERS

Micky Salberg, middle-aged, post-war Jewish immigrant. A musician and small-time farmer. A Polish accent. A great flamboyance.

Samuella Salberg, Micky's daughter, 24. An earlier immigrant than her father having left Poland in 1938 on the *Kindertransport* scheme. A moderately refined Stoke accent with the slightest hint of Polish. Feisty and independent. Very mannish — dresses in man's clothes. A reluctant musician who will not sing.

Tommy Bostock, 18. Stoke boy and gifted musician. Calls a spade a spade. Pretty sure of himself, wears glasses.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

The action of the play takes place on a small farm on the rural outskirts of Stoke-on-Trent, and at various local dance halls

ACT I

SCENE 1 The farm
SCENE 2 The Crystal Ballroom, the following Friday
SCENE 3 The farm, some time later
SCENE 4 The farm, the following Thursday
SCENE 5 Brown Edge Working Men's Club, a week later
SCENE 6 Fenton British Legion, a week later
SCENE 7 The Crystal Ballroom, a week later
SCENE 8 The farm, a month later

ACT II

SCENE 1 The farm
SCENE 2 The farm, some time later
SCENE 3 The farm, the next day
SCENE 4 The farm, the following evening
SCENE 5 The farm, two weeks later
SCENE 6 The farm, later that evening
SCENE 7 The farm, two weeks later
SCENE 8 The Crystal Ballroom, later that evening

Time — 1952

PRODUCTION NOTE

The general style should ideally be that of an actor-musician ensemble, with characters playing instruments live and as underscore to each other's scenes, all on and around the same stage, but only being in the same dramatic space when required by dialogue or action. The company are telling a story with words and music, creating an atmosphere for each other and for the audience. It would however also be possible to incorporate a small jazz, rock or skiffle band into the show, perhaps in the style of a pit band, to release the actors from playing all the instruments. This would allow certain or all instruments to be mimed if required, or it could fill out the sound in addition to anything played on stage.

Ade Morris

ORIGINAL MUSIC

What's the Plan Sam?
Words by Ade Morris, music and orchestration by Paul Kissaun

The Girl In My Mind
Words by Ade Morris, music and orchestration by Paul Kissaun

Dancing All Night
Words by Ade Morris, music and orchestration by Paul Kissaun

Vocal score and orchestration are available on hire from Samuel French Ltd

INCIDENTAL MUSIC

Bye Bye Blues
by Fred Hamm, Dave Bennett, Bert Lown and Chauncey Gray

Goomp Blues
by Johnny Otis

The Third Man Theme
by Anton Karas

My Very Good Friend the Milkman
by Harold Spina (version by Fats Waller)

I Got Rhythm
by Jimmy Dorsey

Rock The Joint
Words by Bill Haley, music by Bill Haley and the Comets

A Little Love And A Little Luck
Words by unknown (Yiddish traditional), music by Joseph Rumshinsky

Avreml
Traditional Yiddish dancing song

Please see the notice on page 69 regarding the use of incidental music in this play

Also by Ade Morris published by
Samuel French Ltd

I Dreamt I Dwelt In Marble Halls

In memory of my father, Philip Morris,
and his fabulous 1950s youth.

ACT I

Scene 1

The farm: a smallholding on the rural outskirts of Stoke-on-Trent. January 1952

One space represents all settings: a farmyard and cowshed, the interior of a small farmhouse, the varied dance halls of Stoke

In the farmhouse there is a window with curtains overlooking the lane outside, several chairs and a mantelpiece with a clock on it. On the mantelpiece rests a box of matches, a small leather suitcase containing a makeshift shrine — a woman's photograph and a lit candle — and a mandolin next to it. Also in the room is a period upright piano with an accordion on top of it, an early fifties practical "Dansette" style record player and a shovel. In the cowshed is a pigsty and milking stool

The gentle sound of three cows and a pig

Sam (*off*) Pop! Pop!

Sam Salberg enters the farmhouse with a shopping basket. She is wearing a long coat and a man's hat ... the coat is smeared in pig shit; she is very mannish. She looks for Micky, puts the basket away, fetches the shovel and exits

Micky Salberg enters the farmhouse. He goes unsteadily to the mantelpiece and looks at the photograph. He takes the accordion and goes to the pigsty

Micky sings and plays, slightly drunkenly, to Charley the pig

Micky If my cows don't milk then vhat's the plan Sam?
I'll sit down singing till they understand.

(*Speaking*) Hey Charley, have some peelings, might be your last.

(*Singing*) If my cows don't sing vhat's the plan, Sam?
I turn down the lights and I turn up the band

If my cows don't fly right over that moon
Then I swing my baby till she damn near swoons.

(*Speaking*) Hey you are hungry today, eh? Here ...

(*Singing*) If my cows all clap on a Saturday night
'Cus the cows sure think that the mooosic's all right.

(*Speaking*) "Moooosic" eh ... haha ...

(*Singing*) Vhat's the plan, Sam?
I'm a desperate man
There's a bill in the post,
Here's a log in a jam.
Vhat's the plan, Sam?
I'm a desperate man
I'm singing this song
Till you give me a hand.

Micky continues to play, underscore

Tommy enters the farmyard, a young man in a cheap suit wearing glasses and carrying a tatty document case. He listens

Sam enters, sees Tommy listening and watches

Sam Hello.
Tommy 'Ow at, duck?
Sam What can I do for you?
Tommy The music — I were jus' listening.
Sam Yes, I saw.
Tommy Er, Mr Saulberg, is 'ee in?
Sam Salberg. I'm Sam Salberg, can I help you?
Tommy Er, no ...
Sam What do you mean, no?

A pause

Tommy Er ... I dunner know.
Sam You don't know?
Tommy They's covered in pig shit, duck.
Sam Do you suppose that I am unaware of that? Duck.
Tommy No, no, I s'pose not. But tha' smells bloody terrible.
Sam Look, are you floggin' insurance or "summat" because if you are ...

Tommy No, no! ... Er ... I'm lost, I were jus' out for a walk and I got me'sen lost.
Sam Really?
Tommy Yeah.
Sam Do you always go for a walk in a demob suit and cardboard brogues?
Tommy It's me dad's suit. I'm on a break, from me job, er ... (*He opens his case; it contains a sandwich in greaseproof paper*) Me snappin' ... Me dinner!
Sam And your job is?
Tommy Oh ... Borin' job, you know, like 'em all, mind you, it dunner cover me in shite so that's summat.
Sam Well I'd love to chinwag here all day but you must be famished for your dinner.
Tommy (*with a nod towards the music*) That sounds grand.
Sam Yes. I think it is ... remarkable.
Tommy Remarkable.
Sam Remarkable. Well, the road's behind you. Left is down to Stockton Brook, right's up to Brown Edge, take your pick.
Tommy Oh. Ta. Er, nice chattin'.
Sam Was it?
Tommy Yeah! 'Appen see yer agen, on one of me walks?
Sam I doubt it.

Tommy leaves awkwardly

Sam goes to the pigsty

Sam Are you singin' to that bloody pig?
Micky Yes! Bubella! I am singing to my dear friend Charley, and my three dry cows!

Beat

Was there someone out there?
Sam Yes, were you expecting someone?
Micky No!
Sam Just some lad lost his way.
Micky Good, good.

Pause

Sam You're playing?

Micky I'm playing. I usually play when you are out. I play in here, vhen I have drunk enough for the music to run from my fingers, I bring myself here and I sing ... to Charley.

Sam Pigs don't appreciate jazz, pigs appreciate pig swill and bowel movements.

Micky Charley is a very refined pig, I would even go so distant as to say that he is musically cultured.

Sam He farts in C Major?

Micky He has elegance, he has finesse! Look at his skin, like a baby. His lovely legs, he is a dancer, for the ballet!

Sam How d'y' work that out?

Micky He taps his little trotters, in syncopation. I have seen him.

Sam He knows 'e's edible. It makes him nervous.

Micky What's he got to be nervous about? His luck is entirely enviable — he's a pig — and I'm Jewish!

Sam I. Have. Got. A. Buyer! — For Charley!

Micky I don't want to sell. I have completely changed my mind!

Sam We talked about this! He's a pig, what's the point of a pig?

Micky I have grown fond of him, I am teaching him how to dance the Watoosie.

Sam He stinks!

Micky So do I, on occasion, all beasts make a pong!

Sam Look, Pop, we need the money, there's a butcher in Endon interested.

Micky Shush! He will hear you and be distressed at your plot. (*Quietly*) However ve do need the gelt, you are right. How much?

Sam Three pound.

Micky Is that the price of friendship? Is that, in the end, vhat love is worth? (*Loudly*) Charley if you are listening, there's some Fenton putz coming tomorrow to take you dancing!

Sam Three pound is good!

Micky You are a hard woman, Samuella, with a heart of flint and a face of marble — fit for a pig's tomb.

Sam Someone has to be! We owe a month on the feed, and the gas is being cut off if we don't pay.

Micky Don't they know who I am? How will I cook my sausage?

Sam In the fire, like back in Poland.

Micky The life of a farmer is not agreeing with me, something seems not right, I should be rosy-cheeked and rich, not penniless and pale.

A beat

But I have news!

Sam You form attachments with animals, you're soft!

Micky We do not need to sacrifice Charley! Because ve have got a date, (*bigging it up*) at ... The Crystal Ballroom, Burslem, next Friday evening at eight p.m. ... Are at last appearing, yes, ladies and gentlemen, for the first time since farming dropped its cow cake on the smiling face of their leader — Micky Salberg's Dance Band!

Sam You're pulling my leg!

Micky I am not pulling either of your lovely little legs.

Sam Really?

Micky Really!

Sam You went there? You spoke to Billy Mason?

Micky I went there, I spoke to Billy Mason, I got us a gig. It was as simple as that. Like your mother always said ... "Necessity is the father of action!"

Sam How did you talk him into that?

Micky I said we'd do it for half price, a trial.

Sam Half price!

Micky It is the same as Charley is worth dead!

Sam No, Pop!

Micky I'll work out a set, a mixture, old and I have some new.

Sam But there's no band! There's only you!

Micky And you ... We need the money!

Sam Me? You want me to play? Oh no, Pop ...

Micky The one thing I said to the Simcocks, if I said it once then a thousand times I said it, teach her to play, give her music, make her breathe and drink music ... Then she will never be poor! And they did that for me — but then I come here in silence. Years of it. And we live like the, the ... moose in the pantry!

Sam Mouse.

Micky I am sorry for that, Samuella. I fear I stopped my bird from singing.

Sam Even if I played, there's only the two of us, it just won't work!

Micky Two is a pair. You will sing for me, Bubella?

Beat

Yes, they've booked a band so they will expect more than one old Polack, and so naturally I thought, well, we could be a duo and you might sing, like ... well, like ... And then at least ...

Sam You're not old ...

Micky I'm older than you, by at least two centuries! You are avoiding my question.

Pause

Sam Why do this now?
Micky Look at this! (*He hands Sam a letter*)

Sam sits down on a milking stool and reads it

Sam (*reading*) "Lawson and Company. Certified bailiffs" ... They're sending a bailiff?
Micky We have not paid the mortgage for two months.
Sam But I gave you the money!
Micky Sammy. I drank the money!
Sam WHY DID YOU DRINK THE MONEY!! THEY'RE SENDING A BAILIFF!! I GAVE YOU THE MONEY TO TAKE TO THE FARMERS' MUTUAL!!

Pause. Micky is quiet and desperate

Micky Because the music will not stop, inside me it will not stop. I have tried to make it and it ... will not. It dances in my head like ... the Krakow girl, in her red stockings ... I drink to drown her out ... I can not quiet her ... she will not be quiet ... I need you to sing with her.

Pause

Sam No. I won't sing.
Micky Please, Samuella?
Sam No!
Micky (*shaking himself out of it*) Sammy if you do this you help this old Jew live again, my heart will fly on tattered wings, and thoughts of pigs and stinking cows will vanish from my mind ... Please, Sammy. Do I have to go on my ragged knees again? Your own father!

Pause

Sam If you give up the booze. I'll play. But I won't sing.

Pause

Micky You'll play!
Sam But I won't sing ... I'll have to play, what choice have I got with you "on your ragged knees"?

Beat

But only if you give up the booze!

Micky Are you saying that I drink too much?
Sam I'm saying that you drink like a pulled bath plug! I'm saying that if you didn't drink we WOULDN'T BE IN THIS BLOODY MESS!!!
Micky Shuss, Bubella. Do not be so hot!
Sam BAHHRRGG! (*She kicks something*)
Micky For such a request. At this high price. You might also, perhaps, sing?
Sam I'LL PLAY! I'll play! I've said I'll play "IF" you cut out the booze ...
Micky You vant to make a drunk man sober so he can see the world, it is an ugly world!
Sam But I'm not wearing a dress!
Micky What do you mean you are not vearing a dress?
Sam And I'm not doing any girl stuff.
Micky "Girl stuff?!" ... You say no "girl stuff". Fantastic! Oh help me cope, she dresses like a peasant — and I have to look at her sober!
Sam Look, don't start ...
Micky Don't start! You're twenty-four, you should be married.
Sam I don't want to be married! This is nineteen fifty-two, a girl can wait, and a girl can choose!
Micky And a girl can sit on the shelf and gather dust like a pretty clock that will not chime — not for love nor shilling!
Sam I'll chime, when it's time!

Beat

Micky Look at you. I don't know what she would say if she could see you now ...
Sam Leave her out of this, please.
Micky Your mother would have had words, she would have told you something!
Sam Told me what?
Micky Vhat's vhat! That's vhat! Told you that life is short like a poodle's putz and you never know vhat might come, who might come, "Take the stairs two at a time," she would say, "Life is too short for each step" — and think what you save on shoe leather!
Sam Look, Pop, perhaps it's too soon, to play.
Micky No! Do not go back! The sound may be thin, but nevertheless I wish to start again, to show these Potters what it means to dance to a Micky Salberg tune. You will make me a happy man, Samuella, despite your goy's trousers and your crow-fearing hat.
Sam Crow-scaring!
Micky We will be the Crystal Ballroom Dance Duo! We will move around a lot, make them think there are more of us than there are. It will be hard work, I warn you, a steep hill in heavy clogs, carrying

the heavy burden of art, possibly even a piano! What do you think, eh, Sammy?

Sam Happen we can strap the piano to Charley?

Beat

Micky Thank you, Bubella.

Micky embraces Sam. She struggles free, then blows out the candle and closes Sadie's shrine

Listen ... Sammy, listen ...

Sam I need to milk the cows. I'll get the bucket.

Micky starts to play — intro to "The Girl In My Mind"

Sam leaves

Scene 2

The Crystal Ballroom, Burslem, the following Friday

Micky still plays, but now at the gig. He now has a microphone

A general hubbub of people

Micky Thank you very much Crystal Ballroom. That was "Honeysuckle Rose", and now a self-composed duet entitled "The Girl In My Mind" — which I will sing all by myself.

(*Singing*) If the girl in my mind walked into the room
I'd never have to find another friend.
Because the girl in my mind
Is hard to leave behind
She's the girl who knows
What she can or cannot show
To the lonely man in my mind.

Sam joins Micky with a clarinet to play, dressed very unattractively in a man's old suit and hat

Ladies and gentlemen, appearing live at the Crystal Ballroom for the first time, my daughter Samuella ...

Sam pointedly plays a phrase on the clarinet

... on the clarinet.

(*Singing*) If the man in my mind walked into the room
I'd never have to find another man
Oh what a day, what a moon
There'd be smiles to be smiled
Kisses to be kissed, hands to be held
Wishes to be wished
By the lonely woman in my mind
By the lonely woman in my mind.

Instrumental break, then duet section, again sung by Micky alone

But the love in my mind she can't find the door
He's never goin' to come, he's missing all the fun
She's turned away her face
He's packed his bags and run.
One day she'll find him, bring him back alive
She's the girl for me, the girl I need to find
For the lonely man in my mind
You're the lonely girl in my mind.

Micky bows. Applause

(*Speaking, at the microphone*) Thank you all very much, thank you! We are going to take a little break now — so this is your chance to sample some of the Trent and Mersey mineral waters to be purchased at the Crystal Ballroom bar. See you all later, alligators! (*To Sam*) I'm going for a little pee. Don't let them go away.

Micky disappears

Tommy approaches Sam at the stage side. He offers a cigarette

Tommy Ow at? ... Fag?
Sam No, ta ...
Tommy Yurra girl!
Sam Yeah. "Yurra boy!"
Tommy Only yer look ...
Sam You were the lad in the farmyard with the cheap shoes.
Tommy I like yer songs.

Sam Thanks a lot. You found Stoke, then? Big smoky place at the bottom of the hill.
Tommy 'Cept tha' plays like a lad an' all.
Sam I try my best ...
Tommy No, s'nice, unusual, lark. But thar need to dress different, that'd be a start.
Sam I beg your pardon?
Tommy Playin' stuff like that, they look like a man — so they sounds lark a man, s'all wrong, tha' should be rate glam but tha' still looks like tha' shovels shit for a living.
Sam I do shovel shit for a living!
Tommy They still pongs a bit an' all.
Sam What!
Tommy Tha' dunner sound like a farmer though. They looks an' sounds like some lez wi' a cob on.
Sam Good, well now we've got that clear ... (*She is going for a drink*)
Tommy Dunner be so sneeped ... S' jus a crack! Dunner go.
Sam Why should I stay?
Tommy I want to talk to yer.
Sam So far you've just insulted me. You're the rudest person I've ever met, I think you should bugger off and get lost again actually.
Tommy Tha's never very nice, fruma wench.
Sam I'm not a very nice "wench".
Tommy You look all right, under tha' suit an' jerkin, far as ah can tell.

Beat

Why dunner tha' sing?

Beat

Sam I don't. The song's a duet, but he insisted on playing it.
Tommy Ah's never 'eard it before.
Sam You won't have, it's new — he wrote it.
Tommy 'S grand.
Sam Yes it is.
Tommy 'S a grand song, but you conner do it justice wi' two. Tha' needs a fat sound, lark a big band, a guitar wou ——
Sam Do we? And are you a guitarist?
Tommy No, not ...
Sam Well then if this is just more uninvited criticism I ——
Tommy Look if tha'll just let me say ... I'm not just a guitarist, but thar'rad be a start, tha' know'st, t'make it bigger, bur ah can play

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