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SF PERUSALS

OH MY, NELLIE BLY

Book by Nick Stimson

Music and Lyrics by
Annemarie Lewis Thomas

SAMUEL FRENCH

samuelfrench.co.uk

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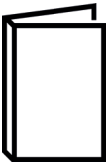
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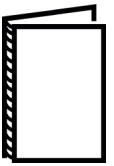
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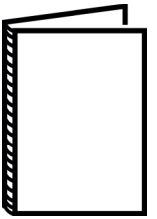
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ABOUT THE COMPOSER AND LYRICIST



Annemarie Lewis Thomas

Annemarie Lewis Thomas is a composer, lyricist and an accomplished musical director and arranger.

Full-length musicals include: in collaboration with Phil Willmott, Annemarie wrote the music to *Around the World in Eighty Days*, *Uncle Ebenezer* and *The Wolf Boys*. In collaboration with Gerry Flanagan, Annemarie wrote the music and lyrics to *Great Expectations* and *Fool's Gold*. Other shows with Nick Stimson include *The Sunshine Gang*, *The Ballad of Kitty Jay*, *Just the Ticket*, *Celebs Anon* and *The Venus Factor*.

In collaboration with Daniel O'Brien she has written the original songs for seven pantomimes, three of which were commissioned for the Theatre Royal, Bury St Edmunds.

As the MD for the award-winning Steam Industry, Annemarie worked on all of the critically acclaimed BAC Christmas musicals. Other credits include: *Rent* (Olympia Theatre, Dublin), *Annie* (UK No 1 Tour), UK premieres *Victor/Victoria*, *Reefer Madness* (Bridewell), *Naked Boys Singing* (Madam Jojo's), *Martin Charnin's 9 and a Half Quid Revue 9* (the King's Head).

In 2009 Annemarie opened The MTA (The Musical Theatre Academy), running the UK's first accelerated learning programme for performers. It was named as the School of the Year in The Stage 100 Awards in 2012 and 2017.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Nick Stimson

Nick Stimson is a freelance playwright, theatre director and poet. He is also Associate Director of the Theatre Royal, Plymouth. Productions include: writer of *A Winter's Tale* (with the composer Howard Goodall) at The Sage, Gateshead and the Yvonne Arnaud Theatre, Guildford and Landor Theatre, London (winner of Best Off West musical at the Offies 2014); *Sailors and Sweethearts*, a play about the artist Beryl Cook, at the Drum Theatre, Plymouth; writer and director of *NHS The Musical* (with music by Jimmy Jewell) at the Drum Theatre, Plymouth and the The Venue, Leicester Square, London; writer of *Hello Mister Capello* for the Palace Theatre, Watford; co-writer of *Promised Land* (written with Anthony Clavane) for Red Ladder Theatre, the Carriage Works, Leeds; writer of *Who Ate All the Pies?* (with music by Jimmy Jewell) at the Tristan Bates Theatre, London; writer of *The Venus Factor* and *The Sunshine Gang* (with music and lyrics by Annemarie Lewis Thomas) for the MTA at the Bridewell Theatre, London; writer and director of *Korczak* (with music by Chris Williams) at Theatre Royal, Plymouth, YMTUK at The Rose Theatre, London and Bialystok Opera Poland (international tour); writer and director of *The Day We Played Brazil* (with music by Chris Williams) for the Northcott Theatre, Exeter; writer of *Inventing Utopia* a play about Dorothy and Leonard Elmhirst, for production at Dartington; co-writer (with Anthony Clavane) of *Leeds Lads* for Red Ladder Theatre at the Carriage Works, Leeds.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Oh My, Nellie Bly is the often comic and sometimes tragic story of the adventures of the USA's first female journalist. Nellie became internationally renowned for her daring and outrageous journalistic stunts. She got herself committed to New York's infamous insane asylum on Blackwell's Island in order to expose the cruelties of the regime. She made a solo journey around the world to better the eighty days taken in Jules Verne's famous novel. A complex and driven character, she sacrificed personal happiness and love to be first to the story.

The framework of the musical is Nellie's spectacular 1889 solo journey around the world. Nellie is accompanied on her journey by the Gibson Girl, a figment of Nellie's imagination brought to life through Nellie's deep-seated loneliness and insecurity. (The Gibson Girl was a contemporary cartoon character epitomising the go-ahead super-confident ideal of the American womanhood.) In France Nellie meets Jules Verne and his beautiful wife Honorine. On a steamer going from Italy to Egypt Nellie turns down three proposals of marriage. In Hong Kong Nellie shocks the refined ladies of the British Empire when she learns she has a rival, another female journalist, also attempting a solo journey around the world.

When Nellie reaches China on Christmas Day 1889 she loses her self-belief. The Gibson Girl takes Nellie back to the Insane Asylum where Nellie relives the terrible experiences she endured there.

Confident once again, Nellie returns to her journey and the trip around the world in just seventy-two days. At the moment of her greatest triumph she turns to share her victory with the Gibson Girl, but the Gibson Girl has vanished.

Nick Stimson & Annemarie Lewis Thomas

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Annemarie would like to dedicate this show to Angie, Adrian & Alfie, and to the amazing woman that taught her that anything was possible if you wanted to do it – her mum.

Nick would like to dedicate this show to the up and coming stars of the future: Joe, Charlie, Otis, Eddie, Arlo and Wilbur.

The MTA & Mental Health.

The MTA is a multi-award winning musical theatre college, recognised as being one of the most forward-thinking drama colleges in the UK when it comes to mental health. In 2016, it initiated the industry-wide #time4change Mental Health Charter. Whilst this piece acknowledges the difference made by Nellie Bly by highlighting the mistreatment that was taking place in the Blackwell Island Asylum, we also recognise that society as a whole still has a long way to go to see mental illness in the same way as we see physical illness.

A percentage of all royalties from this show will go directly to The MTA's Student Hardship Fund.



FIRST PERFORMANCE INFO

Oh My, Nellie Bly was commissioned by The MTA. It's first production was on 12 September 2018 at the Bridewell Theatre, London. The original cast were all first years on The MTA's two-year Musical Theatre Diploma.

Amber Whitehouse – Honorine / Mrs Murray-McMurray
Andrea Mizzen – Guard / Miss Blower-Blower-Fitzroy
Eleanor Lewis – Gibson Girl
Ella Rusbridger – Mrs Anstruther / Inmate / Leper
Emma Maywood – Catherine / Miss Selhurst-Winner
Georgina-mae Hall – Elizabeth Bisland / Lady Ponsonby-Breedlove-Godalming
Joséphine Castadot – Anna (Inmate) / Miss Jones
Jacob Swann – Jules Verne / Curzon / Thomas/ Giovanni / Captain Smith / Dr Kinier
Laura Gómez Gracia – Interpreter / Aileen (Inmate)
Mara Nunes – Miss Needham / Miss McCarten
Maria Karélina – Tillie Maynard
Rafaela Seipião – Sarah (Inmate) / Leper / 1st American Woman
Rosie Riley-Best – Miss Fordham-Buller / Leper / 2nd American Woman
Samantha Hedley – Miss Grupe
Sarah Hjort – Mary Hughes (Inmate) / Leper / Miss Whickerton-Snickerton
Tatiana Chater Davies – Nellie Bly
Ursula Earley – Mrs Cochran

CHARACTERS

16+ Female 1–8 Male (Doubling possible)

WOMEN

NELLIE BLY – Tomboyish, confident, perky and highly ambitious young woman. Underlying deep-rooted fear of failure.

THE GIBSON GIRL – A popular cartoon character created by Charles Dana Gibson from *Scribner's Magazine*. The epitome of the modern American young woman of the late nineteenth century. Great self-belief and in charge of her own destiny.

CATHERINE COCHRAN – **NELLIE**'s younger sister. Tomboyish and happy-go-lucky but lacks **NELLIE**'s driving ambition.

MRS COCHRAN – **NELLIE** and **CATHERINE**'s widowed mother. Conservative and old-fashioned.

HONORINE VERNE – The French wife of the novelist **JULES VERNE**. Lives in her husband's shadow. Elegant, sensitive and intelligent.

INTERPRETER – Cold and haughty. Doing her job.

MRS ANSTRUTHER – Wife of an official in British Hong Kong.

MISS FORDHAM-BULLER – Wife of an official in British Hong Kong.

MRS MCURRAY-MCMURRAY – Wife of an official in British Hong Kong.

MRS BLOWER-BLOWER-FITZROY – Wife of an official in British Hong Kong.

MRS PONSONBY-BREEDLOVE-GODALMING – Wife of a General in British Hong Kong.

MISS WHICKERTON-SNICKERTON – Wife of an official in British Hong Kong.

MISS FELICITY SELHURST-WINNER – Wife of an official in British Hong Kong

ELIZABETH BISLAND – **NELLIE**'s rival in the great race around the world. A young journalist. More conservative than **NELLIE**. Not enjoying her solo trip around the world.

MISS GRUPE – Cruel, crude and violent nurse in the insane asylum.

TILLIE MAYNARD – An inmate in the insane asylum. Lost, confused and frightened.

MARY HUGHES – An inmate in the insane asylum. Pines for her children.

MISS MCCARTEN – A flirtatious and uncaring nurse in the insane asylum.

SARAH – A violent inmate in the insane asylum.

ANNA – An inmate in the insane asylum. Convinced her mother is coming to rescue her.

CLARA – An inmate in the insane asylum who believes she is damned for all eternity.

AILEEN – A violent and self-harming inmate in the insane asylum. Obsessed with the Devil.

MISS ADELE NEEDHAM – A confident and flirtatious young American woman travelling on the RMS *Oceanic*. Her sights set on the handsome **CAPTAIN SMITH**.

MEN

JULES VERNE – World-renowned French novelist. Writer of *Around the World in Eighty Days*. Older man.

HON. WYDHAM CURZON – A young English aristocrat and complete cad. Suave, calculating, arrogant.

THOMAS KETTLE – An Englishman from Birmingham looking for a wife. Defeated by life. Has a permanent cold.

GIOVANNI APOLLONI – The personification of the Italian lover. Outrageous, romantic, full of grand gestures.

RAILWAY PORTER – On New York station.

SAILOR – Takes boat to Blackwell's Island.

DR KINIER – A doctor in the insane asylum. Lacks courage and integrity.

CAPTAIN SMITH – The handsome and upright captain of RMS *Oceanic*. Falls in love with **NELLIE**.

CHORUSES

CHORUS OF AMERICAN WOMEN – Great supporters of **NELLIE BLY** who love **NELLIE**'s pioneering spirit.

WOMEN PASSENGERS ON MV *VICTORIA* – A collection of British, French and Italian women. Most of them are young women

desperately in search of a husband. Some maiden aunts and widowed mothers.

BRITISH WOMEN IN HONG KONG – The women of the British Empire. Compulsive tea drinkers. Overwhelmingly pleasant, kind, charming and deeply snobbish. Including…

MRS BLATCHFORD-BLAND

MISS DORKING-SNEEZBY

MRS DREADNOUGHT-CUMMING

MISS JONES

A SERVING GIRL

ONLOOKERS AT THE DOCKSIDE – Vicarious thrill seekers.

FEMALE INMATES IN THE INSANE ASYLUM – Some are insane, some are not. Life's casualties. Some see visions, some are dangerous and some are pitiful.

LEPERS – Chinese lepers banished from their homes and communities.

ACT ONE

Prologue

November 1889. **NELLIE BLY***'s modest apartment in New York.* **NELLIE** *is a tomboyish, confident, perky, self-assured, practical and highly ambitious young woman of twenty-five. She is packing her single bag as she prepares to set off on her solo trip around the world and beat the fictitious eighty days of* **JULES VERNE***'s hero Phileas Fogg.*

NO. 1: "SEVENTY-FIVE DAYS (OR LESS)"

NELLIE

ONE IDEA, THAT'S ALL IT TAKES A JOURNALISTIC COUP
THEY THINK A WOMAN'S BOUND TO FAIL
WELL MISTER, I'LL SHOW YOU!
IF YOU WANT TO DO IT, YOU CAN DO IT
THE QUESTION IS, DO YOU WANT TO DO IT?
MY ANSWER ALWAYS IS "YES"
IT'S THE SECRET TO MY SUCCESS

SO SEV'NTY-FIVE DAYS I PROMISED THEM
SEV'NTY-FIVE DAYS – OR LESS
WHAT WAS I THINKING IN THAT MOMENT?
NO WONDER MY EDITOR SAID YES
I, NELLIE BLY, WOULD RACE ROUND THE WORLD
IN SEV'NTY-FIVE DAYS, OR LESS

SO HERE I AM, IT'S TIME TO PACK
ONE BAG IS KEY
FOR AFTER ALL THE ONLY THING THAT I NEED IS ME
BUT I'LL TAKE A COAT, THIS TOUGH TWO-PIECE WAS
DESIGNED TO LAST THE TRIP

A CAP, THREE VEILS, MY SLIPPERS, REST MY FEET WHILST ON THE SHIP

A SMALL INK STAND, PAPER, PENCILS, PENS, SOME NEEDLES AND SOME THREAD
I'VE GOT TO BE PREPARED EN ROUTE, I NEED TO THINK AHEAD

A DRESSING GOWN, A BLAZER, EXTRA UNDERWEAR, SOME SOAP.
A FLASK, A CUP, SOME MONEY WITH THESE THINGS TO HAND I'LL COPE

BUT WAIT THERE'S ONE THING MISSING, THINK! THE CLIMATE I WILL FACE
I NEED TO TAKE MY COLD CREAM, AN ESSENTIAL ON THIS RACE
IF I'M GOING TO GET AROUND THE WORLD IN SEV'NTY-FIVE DAYS, OR LESS

As **NELLIE** *struggles to force the large jar of cold cream into her bag a* **CHORUS OF AMERICAN WOMEN** *appear. They are great supporters of* **NELLIE.** *The* **AMERICAN WOMEN** *can see and hear* **NELLIE** *but she is completely unaware of them.*

WOMEN

OH MY, OH MY, NELLIE BLY
THE ALL-AMERICAN WOMAN
ALWAYS SEEKING OUT THE TRUTH TO GET HER STORY
LEADING THE WAY, TO FEMININE GLORY
OH MY, OH MY NELLIE BLY
HEROINE OF THE USA
AHEAD OF HER DAY, WHILE WE WATCH AND PRAY FOR HER
THREE CHEERS FOR NELLIE BLY

SOLOIST 1
WE LIVE THROUGH HER
VICARIOUSLY

WOMEN
AH

SOLOIST 2
AS SHE EXPLORES
PRECARIOUSLY

WOMEN
AH

SOLOISTS 1 and **2**
THE WORLD WE YEARN TO

WOMEN
AH

WOMEN and **SOLOISTS**
SEE

WOMEN
SHE'S JUST SO BRAVE
SHE KNOWS NO FEAR
A TRUE AMERICAN PIONEER
OH MY, NELLIE BLY

NELLIE
NELLIE BLY SO FEARLESS YET BENEATH THE PEN VENEER
LIZZIE I AM HEARING NOW HER DOUBTS ARE ALL TOO CLEAR
IS THIS CHALLENGE JUST TOO BIG FOR ME?
A WOMAN ON HER OWN?

SHOULD I SEEK A MALE COMPANION?
DO I NEED A CHAPERONE?
HOW DO I WALK AWAY WHEN THE ADVENTURE'S BEEN DECLARED?
I'M TRAPPED BY MY AMBITION
IT'S IRRELEVANT I'M SCARED

JUST CLOSE THE BAG AND SHUT THE DOOR, AND PRAY THAT I'LL RETURN
GOODBYE TO DOUBT
HELLO TO FOGG
IT'S TIME TO CHALLENGE MONSIEUR VERNE

Sound effects: Ship's horn blows.

1ST AMERICAN WOMAN Thursday November 14th, 1889.

2ND AMERICAN WOMAN Thirty seconds after 9:40 pm.

NELLIE *takes out her notebook and writes.*

NELLIE *(speaking as she writes)* It's only a matter of 28,000 miles, and seventy-five days and four hours until I shall be back in New York again! *(beat)* What's there to worry about?

NELLIE *picks up her bag and exits.*

WOMEN

OH MY NELLIE, OH MY NELLIE BLY
WITH OUR HOPES AND DREAMS
WE BID YOU GOODBYE
UNCLE SAM HAS NOW BEEN MATCHED
AN ALL-AMERICAN GAL DESPATCHED
EXCITEMENT RISING HERE AT THE DOCK AS NELLIE RACES
AGAINST THE CLOCK

ONE FINAL WAVE, SHE'S OFF
GOD BLESS
WE'LL SEE YOU HERE IN SEV'NTY-FIVE DAYS
SEV'NTY-FIVE DAYS
OR LESS

Prologue segues to Scene One.

Scene One

Sound effects: Howling storm at sea.

The middle of the night, 15 November 1889. **NELLIE***'s cabin on the MV* Augusta *crossing the Atlantic Ocean. A fierce storm is raging.* **NELLIE** *is desperately seasick and lies groaning with her head in a bowl as the ship pitches and rolls.*

***NO. 2:* "*NEW WOMAN*"**

NELLIE

OH... OH...
OH... OH...

WHEN WORKING OUT MY VARIABLES
I MISSED OUT EBB AND FLOW
I'M ONLY ON DAY TWO AND THE SEA MAKES ME WANT TO,
GONNA THROW UP

NELLIE and **WOMEN**

OH...
OH...

NELLIE	**WOMEN**
I'D WORKED OUT THE LOGISTICS	AH
ONE BAG, ONE ME, BOTH TICK	AH
I FAILED TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT	AH
THAT I GOT TRAVEL SICK	AH
OH NO	NO, NO, NO, NO, NO, NO, NO

NELLIE

IF I FACE EIGHT DAYS OF TORTURE
PLEASE GOD END MY LIFE TONIGHT
THE NAUSEA'S OVERWHELMING, WAVES WITHIN,

NELLIE	**WOMEN**
OUTSIDE PLIGHT	AH, AH

The **GIBSON GIRL** *dances into the cabin. She is supremely confident, wealthy and beautiful. She is the epitome of the contemporary idea of American femininity. A convention throughout is that only* **NELLIE** *can see, speak to or hear the* **GIBSON GIRL.**

GIBSON GIRL Don't mind me. You go right ahead, Nellie.

NELLIE *vomits. The* **GIBSON GIRL** *inspects the cabin and* **NELLIE***'s belongings.*

NELLIE What are you doing...in my cabin? Who the hell...are you?

GIBSON GIRL Who the hell am I? Nellie, honey, you know very well who I am. I'm the girl every young American woman would like to be. *(beat)* Poor, deluded souls. They can only dream. *(opening* **NELLIE***'s bag)* Goodness, Nellie Bly! Is this all the wardrobe you've brought with you for a solo trip around the world? What if you're invited to a tennis party in gay Paree or a fancy dress ball in Shanghai? What if you were to meet an eligible English lord or a smouldering Russian prince? You'll have nothing whatsoever to wear!

NELLIE I'm aiming to get round the world in seventy-five days. I won't have time for tennis parties or fancy dress balls let alone English lords or smouldering Russian princes... *(groans)* Who the hell are you?

GIBSON GIRL

I'M THE AMERICAN DREAM
NEW WOMAN
CUTE AND FUNNY AND SMART
GIRLS ADORE ME, THE MEN IMPLORE ME
(AND THAT'S JUST FOR A START)

YES I'M THE ENVY OF ALL
NEW WOMAN
INDEPENDENT AND FREE

IN PROPORTION, APPROACH WITH CAUTION
MY ONE AGENDA IS ME

OUT FOR BIKE RIDES IN CENTRAL PARK
SPORTY, YOUNG AND FIT

I SWIM, PLAY GOLF, PLAY TENNIS TOO
SEE THE CONFIDENCE I EMIT
LET'S DANCE

NELLIE

OH...
PLEASE...
STOP...

GIBSON GIRL

WE HAVE IT ALL IN EIGHTEEN EIGHTY-NINE
AN INDEPENDENT LIFE IS MINE
I CAN DO WHAT I WANT
I CAN SAY WHAT I THINK

OH MY DEAR NELLIE, GET BACK TO THE SINK

NELLIE	**WOMEN**
THIS ISN'T THE WAY THAT I THOUGHT THE TRIP WOULD GO	OH WAY, OH GO
I'M ONLY ON DAY TWO AND THE SEA JUST MAKES ME THROW	OH TWO, SEA, THROW
UP	UP
OH...	OH...

GIBSON GIRL

I'M HERE TO SUPPORT
TO GIVE YOU A CHEER
JUDGING BY YOUR CURRENT STATE YOU NEED IT, DEAR

NELLIE **WOMEN**
WHAT I FAILED TO REALISE OH, SICK, OH
WAS I GOT TRAVEL SICK

OH NO

GIBSON GIRL

I'VE HEARD YOUR TRAUMA BUT I'M DONE, DEAR
LIGHTEN UP, WE'VE JUST BEGUN HERE
IT'S THE AGE WHERE WE CAN HAVE IT ALL
AND TOGETHER WE COULD HAVE A BALL

BOTH

EIGHTEEN EIGHTY-NINE, NEW WOMEN
ARE WE

NELLIE

BLEUGH...

NELLIE *(astounded)* You're the Gibson Girl...

GIBSON GIRL You got it! I'm the Gibson Girl. The ideal of the thoroughly irresistible modern American woman. The whole world simply adores me...and who can blame them!

The ship pitches and rolls. **NELLIE** *groans.*

Mal de mer, honey. Eat a cold chicken salad and drink two glasses of pink champagne. Never fails!

NELLIE But you're not a real person... The Gibson Girl is a cartoon character in *Scribner's Magazine.*

GIBSON GIRL I beg your pardon?

NELLIE You're fictitious...made up...a caricature created by Charles Dana Gibson...his vision of the perfect modern American girl.

GIBSON GIRL I know. Aren't I something else!

NELLIE *(to herself)* I'm hallucinating you. This damned seasickness is making me hallucinate. If I close my eyes and count to ten this mirage will have disappeared. *(closes*

her eyes and puts her hands over her ears) One, two, three, four...

GIBSON GIRL No peeking.

NELLIE ...Five, six, seven, eight, nine...

NELLIE *opens her eyes. The* **GIBSON GIRL** *is still there.* **NELLIE** *groans.*

GIBSON GIRL Alternatively break two raw eggs into a glass of cognac, add five drops of Angostura bitters and a good dash of cayenne sauce. Kill or cure.

NELLIE *retches.*

NELLIE You're not real. Go away.

GIBSON GIRL Nellie, you're a fine one to talk about people not being real. Your real name isn't Nellie Bly! And now here you are bouncing about in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean trying to better Mr Jules Verne's entirely fictitious character Phileas Fogg and his eighty-day journey around the globe. *(She looks around the cabin)* Not the most auspicious of beginnings to your great adventure, is it?

NELLIE Why am I hallucinating you?

The ship pitches. **NELLIE** *groans.*

GIBSON GIRL My best guess, Nellie, is because you need me.

NELLIE Fiddlesticks!

GIBSON GIRL You might appear super-confident and fearless but we all know that's only superficial, don't we?

NELLIE Do we?

GIBSON GIRL America's first and foremost female journalist. Intrepid reporter for the *New York World*. *(beat)* The girl who's afraid of nothing and nobody!

NELLIE That's me.

GIBSON GIRL No. That's who you'd like to be.

NELLIE I don't need you!

GIBSON GIRL The girl who'll do anything and go anywhere for a story. Even getting herself committed to an insane asylum for the sake of a scoop.

NELLIE *Ten Days in a Mad House* ...I wrote that book after I got myself locked up in that terrible place in order to expose its cruelties... Thousands of people read my book...tens of thousands. It caused a grand jury investigation. Because of my pioneering journalism, conditions in mental asylums improved! My greatest stunt. Until now that is. *(beat)* When I have gone around the world in seventy-five days or less I'll record all my experiences in another best-selling book! *(The* **GIBSON GIRL** *applauds* **NELLIE***.)* Go away! I don't need anyone to hold my hand!

GIBSON GIRL Tell the truth, Nellie. You're not quite what you appear to be.

NELLIE You know nothing about me.

GIBSON GIRL Oh, Nellie, don't you understand? I'm here to help you.

NELLIE When this ship stops plunging and my seasickness abates then you will disappear like the mist in the morning.

Ship pitches. **NELLIE** *groans.*

GIBSON GIRL You've been trying to become someone else ever since the day you were born Elizabeth Jane Cochrane in that little out-of-the-way nowhere place...what's its called again?

NELLIE Cochran's Mills!

GIBSON GIRL Back in '64.

NELLIE '66. I was born in 1866.

GIBSON GIRL Nellie...stop fibbing. We both know you were born in '64 and that makes you twenty-five years old, not twenty-three as you keep telling everyone.

The ship rolls and pitches. **NELLIE** *groans.*

Eat a concoction of ginger, tamarind and crème de menthe. Guaranteed to have you back on your feet in a matter of moments.

NELLIE *vomits. The* **GIBSON GIRL** *examines* **NELLIE***'s bag.*

Nellie? I'm sure that even the fictitious Mr. Fogg took more than one little bag with him.

NELLIE I'm a working woman! I'll go anywhere...do anything for a great story!

GIBSON GIRL I believe there are some very handsome and eligible young men on this ship.

NELLIE I don't care about handsome and eligible young men... all I care about is getting my story! *(beat)* Go away!

GIBSON GIRL Cochran's Mills, Pennsylvania, July 19th, 1871! Remember?

NO. 3: "YANKEE DOODLE DANDY" – A Cappella, sung by a child's voice offstage

CHILD *(offstage)*

YANKEE DOODLE WENT TO TOWN
A-RIDING ON A PONY
HE STUCK A FEATHER IN HIS HAT
AND CALLED IT MACARONI

GIBSON GIRL Recognise that voice?

NELLIE *(amazed and full of wonder)* Catherine?

GIBSON GIRL That's right, your dear little sister Catherine from way back when... Remember?

NELLIE *(frightened)* No...please no...

GIBSON GIRL Don't be such a baby, Nellie. There's some things you can't forget.

Scene One segues to Scene Two.

Scene Two

Flashback to **NELLIE***'s birthplace in* **COCHRAN***'s Mills, Pennsylvania, July 19th 1871.* **NELLIE** *is seven years old, her sister* **CATHERINE** *is six.* **CATHERINE** *comes marching in pretending to be a soldier and singing loudly as she beats a toy drum.*

CATHERINE

YANKEE DOODLE, KEEP IT UP
YANKEE DOODLE DANDY
MIND THE MUSIC AND THE STEP
AND WITH THE GIRLS BE HANDY!

Come on, Lizzie...join in...we're marchin' to Georgia!

GIBSON GIRL You heard your sister, Lizzie. Join in.

NELLIE I'm not Lizzie Cochran anymore. I'm Nellie Bly now...

CATHERINE Hurry up, Lizzie...

GIBSON GIRL Hurry up, Lizzie...

NELLIE *hesitates and then joins* **CATHERINE** *in her Marching Song.* **NELLIE** *becomes a seven-year-old again.*

CATHERINE and **NELLIE/LIZZIE**

FATHER AND I WENT DOWN TO CAMP
ALONG WITH CAPTAIN GOODING
AND THERE WE SAW THE MEN AND BOYS
AS THICK AS HASTY PUDDING

YANKEE DOODLE, KEEP IT UP
YANKEE DOODLE DANDY
MIND THE MUSIC AND THE STEP
AND WITH THE GIRLS BE HANDY!

The two **GIRLS** *shriek with laughter. Their mother,* **MARY JANE COCHRAN** *enters.* **MRS COCHRAN** *is deeply upset.*

NELLIE/LIZZIE Whatever's wrong, mother?

MRS COCHRAN You poor, innocent little mites.

CATHERINE Mother?

NELLIE/LIZZIE Why are you crying, Mother?

MRS COCHRAN *embraces her two daughters.*

MRS COCHRAN Your daddy's gone away.

CATHERINE Has he gone to Philadelphia, Mother? Will he bring me back a present?

NELLIE/LIZZIE *(to* **CATHERINE***)* No, he's gone to Pittsburg, silly.

MRS COCHRAN Your daddy's passed on. *(The* **CHILDREN** *do not understand).* He's gone to a better place. *(The* **CHILDREN** *still do not understand).* Your daddy has died, my darlings. Gone to live with the angels up in heaven above.

NO. 4: "AN ANGEL ON YOUR SHOULDER"

*(***CATHERINE** *sobs and hugs her mother who comforts, her)* I know, sweetheart, I know...

NELLIE *walks away to stand by herself. The heart-broken and sobbing* **AMERICAN WOMEN** *appear.* **NELLIE, CATHERINE** *and* **MRS COCHRAN** *do not see them.*

WOMEN

A FAMILY IN MOURNING
TEARS POOL UPON THE GROUND
THREE LIVES HAVE CHANGED FOR EVER
THE SENSE OF LOSS PROFOUND

HEAVEN GAINED AN ANGEL
BUT THREE HEARTS WERE TORN IN TWO
HOW BEST CAN WE SUPPORT THEM
THERE, SO MUCH THEY'LL NEEED TO DO

SOLOIST	**WOMEN**
THOSE TEARS WILL DRY, THE GRIEF WILL STAIN	AH
ONLY TIME AND SPACE CAN DIMINISH PAIN	DIMINISH PAIN

WOMEN

LORD PROTECT THESE CHILDREN
IN YOUR CARE THEY NEED TO STAY
GIVE THEM STRENGTH TO DEAL WITH ALL THE HURT
THEY FEEL TODAY

NELLIE/LIZZIE Don't cry, Mother. We'll be all right. When I'm older I'll get a job and earn all the money we need.

MRS COCHRAN Don't be thinking thoughts like that, child. *(opening her arms)* Come here.

NELLIE/LIZZIE I'll look after us all, Mother.

MRS COCHRAN Now is not the time for such thoughts, Lizzie.

NELLIE/LIZZIE I'll do it, Mother. *(beat)* Once I've made up my mind I always do what I say I will.

WOMEN

PRACTICALITIES INTRUDE
BUT BILLS WON'T WAIT FOR GRIEF
THE GIRLS ARE RIGHT TO MENTION IT
HEAR NELLIE'S SELF-BELIEF
A FAMILY IN TROUBLE
SHE KNOWS WHAT SHE MUST DO
LIZZIE'S SLOWLY FADING AS YOUNG NELLIE COMES IN VIEW

NELLIE

PAPA, PLEASE FORGIVE ME
FOR THIS PAIN IS ALL TOO RAW
I'LL MOURN YOUR PASSING LATER NOW MY STRENGTH
IS NEEDED MORE
TODAY YOUR DAUGHTER GREW UP
TO A WORLD TIL NOW UNKNOWN
A SOB FOREVER PRESENT
YET THE SILENT CRY'S MY OWN

WOMEN

OH MY, OH MY NELLIE BLY,
CHILD INTO WOMAN IN ONE DAY
TEARS OVER FLOW
BUT NO ROOM FOR HER TO SHOW HER PAIN
NO TEARS FOR NELLIE BLY

The **AMERICAN WOMEN** *disappear.*

Sound effects: The sound of a steam train coming to a hissing stop.

GIBSON GIRL Hate to interrupt such a tender family moment but the famous novelist Mr Jules Verne and his charming wife are waiting on the platform to greet you.

NELLIE What?

GIBSON GIRL We're in France, Nellie... Amiens... 23rd of November...nine days gone...

NELLIE I can't leave them...

GIBSON GIRL *(beat)* Not a moment to waste...schedule's tight.

MUSIC 4 *up.*

MRS COCHRAN

TRUE TO YOUR WORD THE DAY YOUR FATHER DIED
MY DARLING LIZZIE HAS ALWAYS TRIED
TO PROTECT THIS FAMILY

MRS COCHRAN and **CATHERINE**

BUT NOW WE SAY TO YOU
ON THIS JOURNEY
YOU BE CAREFUL TOO

CATHERINE

RISKS ARE MANY AND CAN'T BE IGNORED
BUT YOU AND AN EXTRA SPECIAL THING ON BOARD

MRS COCHRAN AND CATHERINE

YOU HAVE AN ANGEL ACTING AS YOUR GUIDE

PAPA WILL BE WITH YOU
HE WILL NEVER LEAVE YOUR SIDE

MRS COCHRAN *and* **CATHERINE** *fade back into* **NELLIE***'s past.*

NELLIE All I ever wanted was for you to be proud of me, Mother.

MRS COCHRAN and **CATHERINE**
YANKEE DOODLE, KEEP IT UP
YANKEE DOODLE DANDY
MIND THE MUSIC AND THE STEP
AND WITH THE GIRLS BE HANDY!

MRS COCHRAN *and* **CATHERINE** *are gone.* ***MUSIC 4*** *out.*

GIBSON GIRL Put on your best face, Nellie...here comes the great Jules Verne and his wife...

Scene segues to a platform on Amiens Railway Station, France.

Scene Three

NELLIE *is effusively welcomed by the limping sixty-one-year-old* **JULES VERNE** *and his wife,* **HONORINE.** *A cold and exact* **FEMALE INTERPRETER** *accompanies the* **VERNES.** *The* **AMERICAN WOMEN** *appear again and sing as the* **VERNES** *greet* **NELLIE.**

NO. 5: "UNCHARTERED WATERS"

WOMEN

THE TENSION'S STARTED NOW YOU'VE CROSSED THE SEA
UNCHARTERED WATERS
DIFFERENT SIGHTS YOU'LL SEE
WE MUST REMIND YOU THAT YOU'RE IN A RACE
TO SECURE YOUR GLORY YOU MUST KEEP APACE

WITH THAT IN MIND WE'RE QUITE ALARMED TO READ
YOU'VE GONE OFF-TRACK WHEN THERE WAS NOT A NEED
YOU MUST STAY FOCUSED IF YOU WANT TO WIN
WE NEED YOU TO SUCCEED – YOU ARE OUR HEROINE

SOLOIST 1

A WARNING TO YOUR EARS THAT YOU SHOULD NOT IGNORE
SOME TALES ABOUT THE FRENCH THAT WE WERE TOLD
BEFORE

WOMEN

NOW WE SHOULD STRESS THIS IS A RUMOUR
IT'S JUST WHAT WE'VE HEARD
THEY'RE ALL CORRUPT, YOU CAN'T TRUST THEM

SOLOIST 2

(WELL IN TRUTH THAT'S INFERRED)

SOLOIST 3

THEIR TASTES ARE STRANGE, ALL GARLIC AND SNAILS
I MEAN HOW DID THAT COME ABOUT

WOMEN

BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU'RE OFFERED
AND LEAVE IF IN ANY DOUBT

SOLOIST 4

OF COURSE THE MEN ARE CHARMING
THEY THINK ONLY OF ONE THING
BUT YOU ARE ON A MISSION

WOMEN

STAY IN FOCUS AND YOU'LL WIN

SOLOIST 5

THE WOMEN ARE NO BETTER, UNLIKE OUR GOOD HEARTS
AND TRUE

WOMEN

BUT THIS IS ALL HEARSAY
AND WE THOUGHT WE'D PASS TO YOU

The **AMERICAN WOMEN** *exit.*

JULES VERNE *(astonished. To his wife)* Est-ce possible que cet enfant voyage tout seul autour du monde? Mais, mon Dieu, c'est un bébé.

NELLIE I'm sorry... – I don't speak French.

INTERPRETER Monsieur Verne says... Is it possible that this child is travelling around the world alone? Why, she is a mere baby.

NELLIE Please assure Monsieur Verne that I am no baby. I am twenty-three years old.

GIBSON GIRL Oh, Nellie, do stop that fibbing.

NELLIE I'll thank you to stop interrupting.

INTERPRETER *(affronted)* How else am I supposed to do my job?

NELLIE No, not you...sorry...

JULES VERNE Vous pouvez m'appeler *Jules*, mademoiselle.

INTERPRETER You may address Monsieur Verne as Jules.

NELLIE It is a great honour to meet you, Jules.

JULES VERNE Puis-je présenter ma femme, Honorine.

INTERPRETER This is my wife, Honorine.

NELLIE Delighted to make your acquaintance.

HONORINE Moi aussi.

JULES VERNE A votre avis, il faut compter combien de jours pour votre tour du monde ?

INTERPRETER How many days do you think your journey round the world will take?

NELLIE Seventy-five. Perhaps less.

JULES VERNE *(amazed)* Soixante-quinze? Mais, c'est impossible!

The **INTERPRETER** *is about to translate when* **HONORINE** *politely interrupts her.*

HONORINE *(in accented but good British)* My husband believes that it is impossible to make such a journey in seventy-five days.

NELLIE So everyone keeps telling me.

JULES VERNE *(bowing. Kissing* **NELLIE***'s hand)* Enchanté, mademoiselle, et bonne chance.

JULES VERNE *and the* **INTERPRETER** *move away.*

HONORINE *(taking* **NELLIE***'s hand)* I read your book. *Ten Days In a Madhouse*. You are very brave.

NELLIE Or very stupid.

HONORINE I detect a special quality in you, Miss Bly. *(beat)* When I was a young woman of twenty-three...

GIBSON GIRL Twenty-five...she's twenty-five...

NELLIE Shut up!

HONORINE I beg your pardon?

NELLIE Not you… I'm so sorry, you were saying?

HONORINE I had dreams that never came true. If only I'd had the courage to travel around the world by myself…how different my life might have been.

Sound effects: A powerful steam train coming to a halt.

GIBSON GIRL No time to waste, Nellie… Don't miss your train to Brindisi.

NELLIE I must go… It was a great honour to meet you both… *(as she goes)* Au revoir!

HONORINE Au revoir, mon cher!

NELLIE *kisses* **HONORINE** *and hurries away. She pauses, takes out her notebook and begins to hurriedly write.*

NELLIE *(aloud as she writes)* Imagine a youthful face with a spotless complexion…

GIBSON GIRL Hurry!

NELLIE *(aloud as she writes even more hurriedly)* Add to this face pretty red lips, that open to disclose a row of lovely teeth, and large, bewitching black eyes, and you have but a picture of the beauty of Madame Verne… Coming…

NO. 6: "CALLING MR RIGHT" – Intro acts as scene change

NELLIE *and the* **GIBSON GIRL** *hurry off. Scene segues to the promenade deck of the MV* Victoria *crossing the Mediterranean en route from Italy to Egypt.*

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