

BIRDSONGS

- singing for survival

Words and music

By

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2022

CAST:

Kaka

Tui

Tara-iti (fairy tern)

Kuaka (godwit)

Rat

Cat

Possum

Stoat

Shark

Queen Bee

Sergeant Bee

Gannets

Little blue penguins

Kiwis (Dad and son. In suitable hats)

Ruru (morepork)

Various birds who make comments.

Kapahaka group

Any other kids who want to join in.

Setting is lakeside Rototoa on South Head, Kaipara district, North Island, Aotearoa.

Rototoa is seen in the background behind the main performance area. There are trees on either side of the lake, behind and up into which, the birds can fly for protection when they need to. There are three recycling bins (Reduce – Reuse – Recycle) on the far left and a cliff, the gannet colony, above. There are a group of mangroves and a shelly beach on the far right.

All birds and kids are on stage as the lights come up. Pests are snoozing behind the recycling bins. Grey-faced petrel is half way up the cliff poking its head out of the burrow. Flocks of shore birds are across the front of the stage. Forest birds are in the trees. The migrant and wader birds are near the mangroves. School children and all around the outside and in groups around the hall. Kaka, kuaka, tara-iti, and tui are centre stage.

KAKA, KUAKA, TARA-ITI AND TUI:

Whoa – has anybody figured it out?
 How to live without taking more than you give
 What can you say, there's got to be a better way.

BIRDS:

'Cos we're dying here in the biosphere.

KIDS:

Could this be enough to show you that
 Somebody's there, somebody's there,
 Could this be enough to show you that
 Somebody cares, somebody cares for you

KAKA, KUAKA, TARA-ITI AND TUI:

Whoa – people got to make a new plan
 Here and now. They're running out of time
 WOW, we're cutting it fine.
 Ear to the ground, I think I hear a sound

BIRDS:

What is that sound?

KAKA, KUAKA, TARA-ITI AND TUI:

It's the boys and girls – they want to save the world.

KIDS:

We're the boys and girls who want to change the world
 Change the world, change the world (4 times)

KIDS:

Could this be enough to show you that
 Somebody's there, somebody's there,
 Could this be enough to show you that
 Somebody cares, somebody cares for you

KAKA, KUAKA, TARA-ITI AND TUI:

Whoa – has anybody figured it out?

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SCENE 1

- TARA-ITI: Kaka, k aka, has anybody figured what out?
- KAKA: Tara-iti, these are difficult times. Nearly everyone's got *something* scary happening to them.
- TARA-ITI: (*innocently*) Do we? What should I be worried about then?
- KAKA: (*impatiently*) Do you live in fairyland, lady? For heaven's sake, there's hardly any of you left! 60 maybe. In the *world*.
- TARA-ITI: (*confused*) Really? I only know the ones I know.
- KAKA: (*kindly*) But there could be more of you, you see. There *used* to be more of you. If things change there'll be more of you again.
- TARA-ITI: So, kaka, what's your problem then?
- KAKA: (*anxiously*) My problem is that there are so many problems. It's been getting me down. But being a bird of action, I've decided to *take* some. Action, that is.
- TARA-ITI: You must be really brave. I'm not very brave but I'm very co-operative. I'll definitely help even though there aren't very many of me.
- KAKA: Thank you. We need every helper we can get. Are you ready? This is my action plan. First, we set up a conference of all the birds to make a list of the issues we need help with. We have to know what we're asking help for, don't we?
- TUI: (*jumping down from a tree*) If we're going to have a conference we'll have to send out invitations. We can help with that. We know absolutely everybody. We're all over BirdFace.
- KAKA: Thank you, Tui. Kuaka will be home today. They're wise, being such world travellers. They'll want to help for sure. Let's all meet at Rototoa in the morning. Can you get the invitations out by then?
- TUI: Sure I can. There'll be the gannets, the penguins, the grey-faced petrel, all the different terns, the bittern, pied stilts, oyster catchers, kereru, ...I'll try not to forget anyone. I'll be off then. That's a lot of ground to cover. The kiwi at Puhoi, they'll want to come too.
- KAKA: Rototoa. Sunrise. We'll see you back there.
- TARA-ITI: (*excitedly*) Ooh ooh, I've thought of an issue! We seabirds can't see the fish we're fishing for anymore. The water's not clear enough. Sometimes, I don't even get any breakfast.

- KAKA: Oh yes. I see. That's because there's so much silt in the water since all the trees got cut down. It's even worse after rain. I've seen it myself.
- TARA-ITI: But that's silly. Too much salt? But it's *supposed* to be salty.
- KAKA: (*patiently*) No. Not salt. *Silt*. That's washed down soil.
- TARA-ITI: Ooooooh...no wonder it's so brown. I wonder what the sharks think? You can't catch what you can't see. I'll fly over a great white and ask him.
- KAKA: That's very helpful. Tara-iti, you're braver than you think. Don't fly too close though. Those jaws can jump.

Lights go down and the creatures all move to the sides of the stage. A spotlight comes up on centre stage where the Elvis impersonator shark is posing for a photo. All the surrounding creatures are oohing and aaahing and very excited to see this star performer.

Intro VEGAS FOOL begins.

All:

da da da dah daa, da da da dah daa, Daaaaah,
da da da dah daa, da da da dah daa, Daaaaah

SHARK:

I was running my act around a cruise liner
Somewhere in the ocean off South China
One of the crowd, until a talent scout
Spotted my potential and singled me out. Now I'm a
 Vegas fool in a plastic pool
 And everybody thinks that I'm cool, so cool
 Gnashing my teeth to make you shake with fear
 A- ha A- ha A- how did I end up here?

Tired of the glamour and I can't fake it
Total adulation, well I can't take it.

All the documentaries clearly say
 Predators are better when they're chasing prey. But I'm a
 Vegas fool in a plastic pool
 And everybody thinks that I'm cool, so cool
 Gnashing my teeth to make you shake with fear
 A ha A ha A how did I end up here?

I'm going back to the reef, back to the cruel sea
 I've been neglecting my true responsibility
 The hierarchies have gotten out of whack.

ALL: Get back, get back Jo Jo, gotta get back.
 KAKA: *(Very loudly)* Get back, Jo Jo!
 SHARK: Cos I'm a Vegas fool in a plastic pool
 ALL: Cos he's a Vegas Fool.
 SHARK: And everybody thinks that I'm cool,
 ALL: So cool.
 SHARK: Gnashing my teeth to make you shake with fear
 ALL: Shake with fear.
 SHARK: A ha A ha A how did I end up here?
 ALL: How did he? how did he?
 SHARK: A ha A ha A how did I end up here? How did I?
 How did I end up here?
 ALL: da da da dah daa, da da da dah daa, DAAAADH!

Wild applause from cast and audience. Many comments. What a star./ I'm a total fan./ He scares me to death but ...That's true glamour, man.

SHARK: *(bowing)* Thank you very much, Thank you very much.

(He starts to take off all his sequined outfit piece by piece as he is talking.)

It's great to be back in the Kaipara. I'm sad to see the water so muddy
 but...*(gestures with hands out as if to say too bad.)* My granny remembered

the water being clear when she was young. She and her whanau were run out of here by the timber ships. I don't see any of those anymore so that's something. But that was then and this is now. And now I'm determined to live up to my responsibilities as a predator. Humans can help too. Trees are what's needed. And many of them. So folks, this is my final show I'm taking off this fancy outfit, a symbol of my foolish past and I'm going to dive right back into my new life scaring everything.

With a final bow and wave, he dives out into the audience and swims off to wild applause. He exits out that way.

SCENE 2

The birds all fight over his outfit. Somebody holds up his jacket and yells.

SHAG: *(triumphantly)* This is going on TRADEBIRD tonight.

TUI: Vegas to Helensville. What a leap! What a *hero!!* I'm really scared but I just don't care.

Lights go down. Lights come up again as everyone is looking up into the sky.

Kuaka fly in up the aisles looking totally bedraggled and exhausted.

TERN: Here they come. Right on time. One more amazing journey completed.

Everyone cheers and applauds.

BITTERN: Oh oh, way too much fuss. What a racket. I'm going back to the reeds. *(Goes off to hide in the reeds.)*

SHAG: They look totally beat up. They must have hit a headwind.

KERERU: They're just starving. It's an amazing journey they've made. I can't make it across town without a feed. Someone give them a karaka berry.

ALL: NOOOOOOOOOOOO!

STILT: They need a breakfast of champions. Give them worms, worms, and more worms. Come on we can help with that.

(Stilts go down to the mangroves and collect worms for the kuaka. They bring back a few worms (old socks).

TUI: Kuaka, welcome back. How was the trip this year?

KUAKA: *(panting)* The skies were rather quiet this year actually. Give us a worm and I'll give you the full flydown. Why don't you all close your eyes and imagine you're on the flight with us? That's a lovely worm. Give me another. Mmmm.

Seabirds bring worms and share them around. Kuaka take turns singing and eating.

Everyone closes their eyes and imagines.

Intro to HOME TO THE ISLANDS begins.

KUAKA:

The wind was getting colder so we flustered up our feathers

The weather was ideal with a tailwind.

It's seven days of flying while your fat is slowly frying

And you wonder will you ever see the land again

ALL: Where are we now?

KUAKA: Hear the whisper of the water

Aurora borealis on the right wing

ALL: Where are we now?

KUAKA: We are crossing the equator

Heading to another summer

Down down down to the islands

ALL: Kuaka coming home to the islands

KUAKA: Feel the breeze blowing around your head

To cool you down, to cool you down

Your wings are slicing the starry sky

You're on a high, high, high...

KUAKA: You follow the beat of something deeper than you feel

You're wheeling over water like a laser beam

You follow the beat although your wings are getting weaker

And you're longing for a meal of a juicy worm.

ALL: Where are we now?

Hear the whisper of the water

Aurora borealis on your right wing

Where are we now?

We are crossing the equator

Heading to another summer

Down down down to the islands

Kuaka coming home to the islands

Down down down to the islands

Kuaka coming home to the islands

They all start dropping off to sleep, the forest birds in the trees and the shore birds standing on one leg.

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SCENE 3

TUI: *(to kuaka)* Kuaka, before you go to sleep...you're invited to Rototoa in the morning. We're holding a Conference to set an agenda.

KUAKA: *(sleepily)* What's a gender?

KAKA: It's a kind of list that you make when you want to talk about issues that you're got and you want to ask others for help and what you're willing to help others with.

KUAKA: Why not? We'll be bored sitting around anyway. But first...*(as she falls asleep with a sock worm hanging out of her mouth.)*

Everyone settles down and goes to sleep except ruru who flies around looking for mice under the audience as the lights go down.

They are muttering and talking to themselves.

THREE RURU: Night is coming on and we're going to find some mice.

Going to chew into pieces and it's going to be so nice.

Lights come up and a spotlight is trained on a Rototoa image on the backdrop. Everyone is waking up as a Maori welcome is sung by the Kapahaka group.

SCENE 4

- KAKA: Greetings to you all and thank you to Rototoa for hosting us this morning.
- TUI: As secretary I wish to report that the invitations were well received and many of you have made the trip here to help set our agenda. I think we all agree that number one on our agenda must be PESTS!
- BIRDS: Oh yes yes yes. / Far too many of us are getting eaten./ And our eggs./ I don't even want to *think* about that. /I feel so helpless.
- KUAKA: We must rally the humans. I've noticed they've started to notice our predicament. We must all hold on and try not to die until they get our whole island pest-free.
- GANNET: I've seen many helpers lately. Running over the cliffs and scrambling about in the bush.
- PENGUIN: Yes, I've seen them too, gannet. Especially those guys with the tails...I *think* those are humans...
- GANNET: If I was a pest I'd be petrified.

*Crash as the bins tip over. The birds scatter and the pests jump out and take centre stage.
Rat is dragging a bunch of baby rats on strings.*

- CAT: Hey, what's on the strings?
- RAT: These are my babies. Aren't they cute?
- STOAT: Nice. Can I have a couple?
- RAT: Sure. Plenty more where they came from.
- CAT: But, guys, guys, if we're going to survive, we must not eat each other.
- STOAT: Good point. Ooh but it's tempting...
- POSSUM: Hey rat...why are they on strings?

Intro to POISON.

The birds are all very scared and try to hide.

- RAT & STOAT: You say you're gonna do away with me
But I know better

You say you never get a thing for free
But I know better

ALL PESTS: Yeah, we all gotta eat -
A bit of give and take
So I'm a little destructive. Give me a break!

ALL PESTS: I'm not dead yet. Gonna run for your money.
And live life - tail in the air.
I'm not dead yet. Gonna run for your money.
Put your money where my mouth is -
I don't care!

CAT & POSSUM: You say you're gonna do away with me
But I know better
You say you never get a thing for free
But I know better

ALL PESTS: So I'm a little destructive. It's not a mistake -
I was born this! Now, give me a break!!
You give me poison - give it for free
But you're never gonna take
the freedom out of me
Freedom - given for free
You're never gonna take
The poison out of meeee!
'Cause I'm alive, gonna run for your money
Put your money where my mouth is
I will survive.

We're not dead yet. Gonna run for your money
And live life - tail in the air
We're not dead yet

BIRDS: They're not dead yet!

PESTS: Gonna run for your money.

BIRDS: They're not dead yet!

PESTS: Put your money where my mouth is

BIRDS: NOT DEAD! NOT DEAD! AAAAAHHHH -

PESTS: Put your money where my mouth is -
I DON'T CARE!

Pests exit through the audience hissing and growling and being really annoying.

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SCENE 5

KAKA: *(shouting after them)* Well, you *should* care because they're coming for you, you creeps.

CAT: *(back at the birds)* Dream on, you dumb birds.

RAT: Yeah, we're smarter than we look.

STOAT: Except for the possums.

POSSUM: I like fruit. Feijoas...oooh...yum yum yum-o.

TUI: *(defensively)* I promise I so did *not* invite them.

KAKA: Pests are everywhere. They just keep coming. Without any invitation at all. They are SO RUDE! But let's get back to our agenda.

TUI: Number 2 on the agenda is that bees are being attacked by deadly viruses.

The bees fly in through the audience with a lot of buzzing and no stinging.

QUEEN BEE: Good morning everyone. We all know the dangers of weed sprays these days. But we are now facing a new danger. We are being invaded by parasites who bring viruses that cripple our wings! We love being bees. It's a sweet life but we are being overwhelmed by these deadly attacks. We have no weapons to fight this vicious foe. Our only hope is help from the humans.

TUI: Maybe there's a child out there now who will grow up to discover a way to save you. We hope it is not too late. Stay sweet, friends. We salute you.

*Birds make supportive comment. Honey rules. Keep on humming. Bee BRAVE!
The bees go wild with their buzzing.*

QUEEN BEE: Wasp attack we can deal with. We have a wasp piracy unit in training right now. We are not pushovers. Beware pirates, because we *will fight back*.

The bee defence unit steps forward and displays its training.

SERGEANT BEE: Reporting for duty, Maam. I need a volunteer please.

One rough old bee steps forward.

SERGEANT BEE: OK. You're the fake wasp. *(Gives him the fake wasp hat.)* Unit, on my signal...*(counts down on his bee fingers then brings down his bee arm in a GO gesture)*

Six bees jump on the fake wasp.

KUAKA: Oh My God, that's brutal.

SARGEANT BEE: We call on the warrior spirit of Rototoa to support us as we defend our hives. Thank you.

There is a lot of buzzing as the intro to THE SONG ABOUT HONEY begins.

QUEEN BEE:

Tides go out and tides come in
Every story has a sting
Worlds are dying - worlds are born
Skies are dark before the dawn

ALL: And this is the sweetest song anyone ever heard
Worthy of moonlight and the singing of birds
It's a song about flowers and flowering trees
It's a song about honey and the humming of bees

QUEEN BEE: Hear our story. Here's the sting.
Parasites and crippled wings.
So sweet, so sad to be a bee
When honey's just a memory

ALL: And this is the sweetest song anyone ever heard
Worthy of moonlight and the singing of birds
It's a song about flowers and flowering trees
It's a song about honey and the humming of bees

Hmmmmmm
Hmmmmmm
Hmmmmmm
Hmmmmmm

And this is the sweetest song anyone ever heard
Worthy of moonlight and the singing of birds
It's a song about flowers and flowering trees
It's a song about honey and the humming of bees

H – h - honey bees
H – h - honey bees
H – h - honey bees
H – h - honey bees

The bees all buzz off through the audience and out that way.

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SCENE 6

- TARA-ITI: Crippled wing virus! That's just straight up evil.
- KAKA: But first, thank you, bees, for attending our conference. The warrior spirit isn't always about fighting. You need warrior spirit just to hold on and not give up.
- TUI: Item #3. Small creatures that nobody sees much also need help. For example, the Muriwai geckos. They can't be here today obviously because we would probably eat them before they even said anything but still, they important and like tara-iti, there's hardly any of them left in the world.
- KAKA: 212, I heard. They are only just holding on. They're brave though. Res-pect.
- TARA-ITI: And we're only 60. We'd better try harder.
- GANNET: Oh yes, we've been watching them from our clifftop. Life is such a struggle for those little guys. If it's not being run over by reckless drivers, it's being eaten by cats, or stomped on by deer. That's true peril. It makes you feel bad when we are so well looked after just because we are a popular tourist attraction.
- BLUE PENGUIN: That's true but isn't that a good thing? I feel it's also important to point out the good things going on, isn't it? But in comparison to those poor little geckos, we do live a cushy life. Thankfully.

Much grateful agreement among the birds in general.

Intro to THE COOL SONG.

- GANNETS: We're cool. We're hot.
It's something that we've all got.
We're safe. We're home.
Nobody's ever going to ruin our beautiful life.
Buses full of people come to visit us here
As long as they come the right time of year

SCENE 7

- KAKA: Ok, Ok, chill out everyone. There's obviously no problem there. We've come to Item # 4. The kiwi. Aaaah...where are the kiwi? Anyone seen the kiwi?
(shrugs and muttering of no etc)
- TUI: I promise I *did* tell them. It's a long way to come. Can we wait just a while?
- KAKA: Why not? And while were waiting would anyone like to sing a song or...
- TARA-ITI: You haven't sung a song yet, Kaka, come on give a tune.
- KAKA: Are you kidding? With a voice like mine?
- TUI: What about the bittern? Yeah, let's hear a bit of booming.
- BITTERN: Well, ok, but the rest of you need to be quiet or I'll go home to the reeds again.
- TUI: Beaks closed everyone. Right, we're listening. Give us a tune.
- BITTERN: *(Booms a bunch of booms.) ba – boom, ba – boom, ba - boom*
- KAKA: To tell the truth, he's sounds no better than me.
- TUI: A bit tuneless but quite impressive, don't you think?
- KUAKA: Hey! Here they come. Get out of the way, they can't see too good in daylight.
- KAKA: Welcome, kiwi. You must be tired.
- KIWI: We're more than tired. We walked the whole way. But our issue is important so we did it. The trappers have helped us and the tree planters but...and there's a big but to our situation and it's not just the one I'm wearing. *(ha ha ha – lots of laughs as he waggles his big butt)*. Listen to our song. I'm too tired to tell you the whole story twice.

Intro to KIWI SONG.

- KIWI: You say to me, GO son, go get a new life
Get yourself some territory and find yourself a wife.
I'm keen to be a species back from the brink but, Dad,
These days, that's harder than you think.
We've got a housing crisis – bad news flash –
A growing population and a shortage of bush

We're talking – housing crisis – here's where it's at –
 Damn it, Pops, we're running out of habitat.

ALL: They're running out, they're running out

KIWI: It used to be predators, wild and domestic,
 Now are bushy areas will need to be elastic.
 I like to be positive, I want to play our part but
 Where's a kiwi meant to go to make a new start?
 We've got a housing crisis – bad news flash –
 We've got a growing population and a shortage of bush
 We're talking – housing crisis – here's where it's at –
 Damn it, Pops, we're running out of habitat.

ALL: They're running out, they're running out

ALL: How fast, how fast, can a forest grow?
 I'd like to know, I'd really like to know.
 It's not a good look. What would you think
 If your national bird headed back to the brink?

KIWI: I need 100 acres to forage and roam
 If I am to set up a new family home.
 Wanna dig for a worm in the dark under trees
 Without glittering eyes watching me as I feed.
 Manuka, kanuka, hutu, and flax
 Thank you for trying to cover our backs.

ALL: We've got a - housing crisis – bad news flash –
 We've got a growing population and a shortage of bush
 We're talking – housing crisis – here's where it's at –
 Damn it, Pops, we're running out of habitat.

In a great big beautiful k-o-owhai tree.
Near a school...with no pests ...and no PETS!

We all need a place to make a nest,
To raise our kids and to get the proper rest,
In the north or the south, the east or in the west.
Waimauku's the best... for us anyway.

All kinds of people across the land, kaitiakitanga hand in hand,
Are caring for the birds, the water and the bush
And the land and the sea – it's real family!
and the fish.

KAPAHAKA CHANT (4X):
Aotearoa
Kaitiakitanga
Kei tatau te rite
Iho hoki manawa

ALL:
And now, life goes on and on
We're singing it together, it's a family song,
Bringing out the music as we travel along today,
come what may.

(CHORUS AND CHANT SUNG TOGETHER)

Aotearoa
Kaitiakitanga
Kei tatau te rite
Iho hoki manawa

For life goes on and on - we're singing it together, it's a family song
bringing out the music as we travel along our way.

Life goes on and on - we're singing it together, it's a family song,
bringing out the music as we travel along today,
come what may

For life goes on and on - we're singing it together, it's a family song
bringing out the music as we travel along our way.

We all care for
Ao - tea - ro - a
One heart with the land.

Everyone applauds and goes back to their original positions for the finale.

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SCENE 9

KAKA: Thankyou everyone for attending our first ever Rototoa Conference of the Birds. Thank you for singing so well. And it's great to end with a happy ending. I now feel the warrior spirit of our beautiful lake beating in my own bird heart. Farewell and carry on helping out and trying your best to survive.

TUI: Let's make it to 2050. *(makes a salute)* And we salute the humans who help us especially the kids because they'll be able to help us for longer.

KUAKA: And may we have many more happy returns to Kaipara in the future.

TARA-ITI: Though we are all different species, we are glad to know that there are kids who care. And that at least today, we're all singing the same song.

Intro to SOMEBODY CARES FINALE.

KAKA, KUAKA, TARA-ITI AND TUI:

Whoa – has anybody figured it out?
How to live without taking more than you give
What can you say, there's got to be a better way.
'Cos we're dying here in the biosphere.

KIDS:

Could this be enough to show you that
Somebody's there, somebody's there,
Could this be enough to show you that
Somebody cares, somebody cares for you

CREATURES:

Whoa – people got to make a new plan
Here and now. They're running out of time
WOW, we're cutting it fine.
Ear to the ground, I think I hear a sound

BIRDS:

What is that sound?

KAKA, KUAKA, TARA-ITI AND TUI:

It's the boys and girls – they want to save the world.

KIDS:

We're the boys and girls who want to change the world
Change the world, change the world (4 times)

KAKA, KUAKA, TARA-ITI AND TUI:

Whoa – has anybody figured it out?
How to live without taking more than you give
What can you say, there's got to be a better way,
'Cos we're dying here in the biosphere.

KIDS:

Could this be enough to show you that
Somebody's there, somebody's there,
Could this be enough to show you that
Somebody cares, somebody cares for you

KAKA, KUAKA, TARA-ITI AND TUI:

Whoa – people got to make a new plan
Here and now. They're running out of time
WOW, they're cutting it fine.
Ear to the ground, I think I hear a sound (What is that sound?)
It's the boys and girls – they want to change the world.

ALL:

Could this be enough to show you that
Somebody's there, somebody's there,
Could this be enough to show you that
Somebody cares, somebody cares for you

(sung over)

KIDS: We're the boys and girls who want to change the world.
We want to change the world.

We're the boys and girls who want to change the world.

We're the boys and girls who want to change the world.
We want to change the world.

We're the boys and girls who want to change the world.

We're the boys and girls who want to change the world.
We want to change the world.

We're the boys and girls who want to change the world.

KAKA, KUAKA, TARA-ITI AND TUI:

Whoa – has anybody figured it out?

THE END