AN AMERICAN EDUCATION

Written by

Alex Gregory & Peter Huyck

Story by

Alex Gregory & Peter Huyck and Jack Whitehall and Ben Cavey

Based on "Bad Education" (UK)

Created by Jack Whitehall

November 26, 2013

©2013, ABC Studios. All rights reserved. This material is the exclusive property of ABC Studios and is intended solely for the use of its personnel. Distribution to unauthorized persons or reproduction, in whole or in part, without the written consent of ABC Studios is strictly prohibited.

COLD OPEN

FADE IN:

EXT. SCHOOL YARD - MORNING

Youthful English teacher ALFIE WICKERS enters Gerald R. Ford High School's yard, wearing a hoodie and a backpack, shielding his eyes from the San Diego sunshine. He navigates his way through STUDENTS, as they all file into school. He is shoved and pushed aside, like another student.

INT. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Alfie walks down the almost empty hall. The bell rings, he breaks into a run, then veers suddenly into the boys' bathroom, where he vomits into a wastebasket. He pops up, and sees a JANITOR holding a fresh plastic bag. Alfie sees he's puked into a bagless wastebasket and grins sheepishly.

ALFIE
Sorry. Wild night last night.

JANITOR
You some sort of foreign exchange student?

ALFIE
No. I'm a teacher.

INT. ALFIE'S CLASSROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Alfie's head is on his desk. On the blackboard behind him is scrawled: "AP Hangover" in kid's writing with an arrow pointing to Alfie. Some of the kids are asleep on desks as well, playing with iPhones, etc. Hard-assed vice principal RITA GOMEZ bursts into the class without knocking.

GOMEZ
Mr. Wickers!

ALFIE
(snapping awake)
And that is how quiet Anne Frank and her family had to be, day in day out, as the Nazis came stomping in...
(re: her shoes)
(MORE)

ALFIE (CONT'D)
...in their black leather Ann Taylor boots... yes, Vice Principal Gomez?

She starts distributing print-outs.

GOMEZ
Starting next week, fifth period will no longer be a free period. It will now be a mandatory test prep class.

Amidst the groans, one student, RODNEY (socially challenged, a bit overweight), tentatively raises his hand.

RODNEY
Um, I'm sorry, Ms. Gomez, but what about music class? Fifth period is when I take music... sorry. Never mind. Whatever.

GOMEZ
Due to budget constraints, we will no longer be offering music instruction.

ALFIE
And we're offering up practice test detention instead? Who's the poor bastard stuck doing...
(off her smirk)
Oh, come on. I adamantly refuse. Unless there's extra pay. Is there?

GOMEZ
Wickers, my dad used to have a saying about weak people like you: "All fart and no crap." Well, when Rita Gomez farts, she follows through.

ALFIE
You must spend a fortune on underwear.

Gomez exits. Alfie puts his head back down on the desk.

END COLD OPEN

ACT ONE

INT. ALFIE'S CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS

Alfie ponders his fate with his students: Rodney, ARIEL (white trashy), LISA (Asian posh girl), LANCE (contrarian, openly gay), JIMMY (African American, in a wheelchair) and CARLOS (Latino, Jimmy's inseparable companion).

ALFIE
Look, Rodney, if it's any consolation, music instruction is a complete waste of time. If anything, you should learn how to DJ. The top DJ's make a hundred million dollars a year playing other people's music. They make more money than real musicians.

RODNEY
(hiding his hurt)
It's fine. Whatever. I'm not, like, upset or something.

LANCE
You should be, losing a free period to this testing insanity. Grooming us to be mindless drones in the service industry job swamp. *

CARLOS
You going to be teaching spells and quidditch?

ALFIE
Carlos, I'm not sure how to make this any clearer: Hogwarts is not a real school in England, and if it were, I would not be employed there, as I don't speak Latin.

ARIEL
Well, I think you're pretty magical. If you're teaching test prep, I could use some help with math. Mr. Clayton says 25 won't go into 16.
(winks)
We could prove him wrong.

ALFIE
Sorry, Ariel, that's college level math.

JIMMY
(to Rodney)
What are you playing timpani drums for, anyway? You want to be in a marching band, with one of them feathered hats like you're some sort of nutcracker?

The class laughs at Rodney's expense.

RODNEY
Yeah, well, our school doesn't have a marching band. So, like, it's impossible for me to be in one.

LISA
It's super weird that you would spend a free period playing that drum instead of doing... literally anything else. Or nothing.

ALFIE
Maybe Rodney should be devoting his free period to sneaking cigarettes out behind the bleachers?

LISA
Well, where else are we supposed to smoke? And meet boys who smoke?

INT. HALLWAY - LATER

Rodney stays behind to talk to Alfie.

RODNEY
It started as my ace in the hole for a college scholarship. A million people play violin -- no one plays timpani. But now... I've actually started to like it. So of course they're taking it away.

ALFIE
The fact you're gaming the system means you're going to be just fine. Could you get your mum to marry a Native American?

RODNEY
I can't even get her to remember my lunch money.
(Alfie reaches for wallet)
It's okay. I'll just eat condiments. I've done it before.

ALFIE
Oh, you're paying me back. Your allowance is probably more than my salary.

RODNEY
(taking the money)
Thanks. I'll get you back tomorrow. I promise.

Rodney trudges away. Alfie looks at him, concerned.

ALFIE
Consider the DJ thing!

INT. SARAH'S CLASS - A LITTLE LATER

Oddball history teacher JEFF GELMAN is at a blackboard covered in a paranoid scrawl, illustrating the Kennedy assassination. The words WAR MACHINE, WALL STREET, VIETNAM, IRAQ, and MASS MEDIA are all underlined and interconnected.

GELMAN
Is it a <u>coincidence</u> that this coup d'etat happened in the home state of the man who benefitted the most from Kennedy's assassination? Is it a <u>coincidence</u> that Lyndon Johnson's backers were Kellogg, Brown, and Root, who later became <u>Halliburton</u>? Questions!

Reveal he is in a chemistry lab. The students are all in goggles and holding beakers.

LISA
Aren't you on academic suspension?

GELMAN
Questioning authority! I LOVE it!

Earnest, book-smart chemistry teacher SARAH McINTYRE enters in a lab coat with safety goggles on her head.

SARAH
How's that silver nitrate coming, people?
(Gelman dives under desk)
Gelman, what are you doing?

GELMAN
God, I thought you were Gomez. Sorry, I was pacing the halls, thought I smelled chemicals--

SARAH
It's chemistry class. We're making test tube mirrors, I was in the bathroom. Besides, you're not supposed to be in a classroom.

GELMAN
(to the class)
Think for yourselves, or they'll think for you.
(to Sarah)
Exeunt Gelman!

INT. TEACHERS'S LOUNGE - A LITTLE LATER

Alfie is raiding the fridge. Sarah approaches.

ALFIE
Care for a yogurt? They're not mine, so if you want one, you have to eat it quickly.

She grabs a homemade juice. They sit at a table.

SARAH
Thanks, but I'm on a cayenne grapefruit juice cleanse. Three more days to go. I'll either be toxin-free or on life support. I thought you didn't like yogurt?

ALFIE
I don't, but someone ate my string cheese, so, you know. Payback.

Gelman approaches and sits.

GELMAN
Sarah, so sorry about this morning. I've been jonesing to teach so bad. Academic suspension is like purgatory of the mind.

SARAH
That's what you get for celebrating black history month by coming in as Malcolm X in blackface.

ALFIE
The suit and the reddish wig were all right, but you lost people with the face paint and the Quran.

GELMAN
By the time I get back in front of a blackboard, it'll all be iPads and holograms. And by blackboard, I mean chalkboard. Sorry, I'm just being very cautious. Is that my yogurt?

ALFIE
This? I brought it from home.

GELMAN
Good, mine were all expired.

Alfie quietly puts the yogurt down and slides it away.

ALFIE
Can you believe this music program shutdown? Kids losing their music? Me losing a free period? It's madness.

SARAH
This is why Phil signed up for the Peace Corp. America has given up on its teachers. He feels he can have more of an impact in The Gambia than here.

ALFIE
So it's <u>The</u> Gambia now? Not just any old Gambia anymore, it's <u>The</u> Gambia. Aren't we a posh little West African republic? Call me 'The Alfie.' I mean, really.
(Sarah tears up)
Sorry. I didn't know you had such strong feelings about the "The" of it all. The Gambia it is.

SARAH
It's not that. Phil got the call. He's leaving on Friday for Africa. Getting his malaria shots today.

ALFIE
(trying not to smile)
Phil's finally out of the picture?! I mean good for The Gambia, but bad for you. Hope he stays forever. I mean, with the good he could do.

SARAH
I know it's crazy to be jealous of a Third World country with a human trafficking problem, I'm just going to miss him. But that's why I love him. Lots of people talk the talk about doing good in the world, but Phil... Phil takes action.

GELMAN
I hope you guys can make it work long-D. There's always Skype. I did that with a girl in the Philippines for a year. It wasn't until I got the high-def camera that I saw the Adam's apple.

Gelman gets up and crosses to the fridge.

ALFIE
(wheels turning)
Apropos of nothing, maybe we should do something about the music program...

SARAH
Like what? Sounds like the school board's made up its mind.

ALFIE
(standing)
Well, I've made up my mind too. It's time to do something.

SARAH
Alfie, I've never seen you so worked up.

ALFIE
I'm a man of action myself. And I think it's time you and I took action over this music program. Let's bring our passion for action together and see what happens. Passion, action, together. You and I. Action. Lots of it.

He starts off.

SARAH
Where are you going?

ALFIE
The bathroom. Apparently I'm on an expired yogurt cleanse and it's starting to take effect.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - A LITTLE LATER

Alfie pounds his hand on the desk of principal EUGENE BOOKER, an eccentric, super-fit African American 1st Gulf War vet, who is not at his desk -- he's walking on a treadmill.

ALFIE
Principal Booker, we must save the music program!

BOOKER
(dismounts treadmill)
Alfie, what's gotten into you? You sound agitated. Are you feeling all right? You look sickly, even for a Brit. I can see cholesterol deposits in your eye capillaries.

He leans in close to Alfie, fixing him with a long uncomfortable stare.

ALFIE
Is this a staring contest? If so, I already lost, as I'm a compulsive blinker. I do it every few seconds or so. About the music program--

BOOKER
Gomez did an end run around me with the school board. I'm boxed in. I can't go to them and say, "our scores suck, but chillax, they're learning clarinet." She's got a point. We gotta keep up with the Red Chinese.

ALFIE
The Chinese aren't diving out of factory windows because they're happy! Trust me, Britain used to be just like the US is now, obsessed with our status as the top military and economic power.
(MORE)

ALFIE (CONT'D)
Well, now we're number four, and it's fine. Granted, our main export is Piers Morgan. Thanks for taking him off our hands, by the way. *

BOOKER
I'm not an administrator at heart, Wickers, I'm an innovator. Remember my idea for reverse ESL classes? We'd do class in Spanish so the kids could see what it's like for all the immigrant kids? *

ALFIE
Whatever happened with that?

BOOKER
None of our teachers speak Spanish. Hell, Señor Martinez is conversational at best. Here's the thing: we just don't have the money for music.

ALFIE
Unless... we came up with it ourselves?

BOOKER
I like where you're going. Let's do some squats and think on it. Get the blood circulating.

ALFIE
I just ate. Expired yogurt. *

BOOKER
Squats! Down and up!

ALFIE
(squatting)
We could put on a fund-raiser. Raise money. Raise awareness. People claim to love awareness. I'm going to stop squatting now. *

BOOKER
That's a genius idea! Grass roots!

ALFIE
Exactly! Community action! Sarah and I, fighting side-by-side. * *

BOOKER
For the kids!

ALFIE
Who? Right! Of course, the kids!

INT. ALFIE'S CLASSROOM - LATER

Alfie sits on the edge of his desk, fiddling with a Smart Board Facebook page with Huckleberry Finn's picture.

ARIEL
How come you never accept my friend requests? I've tried poking you. You ever think about poking me?

ALFIE
Anything you need to tell me Ariel, you can say here. With witnesses.

LISA
If you're trying to make English cool, Huckleberry Finn wouldn't have a Facebook page. He'd do tumblr or instagram.

JIMMY
What about the N-word? Are we supposed to use the N-word?

ALFIE
We shall not be as liberal with the N-word as Mr. Twain. Look, do you want creative English assignments -- or more analogy quizzes, so we can keep up with the Chinese?

LISA
Don't look at me. My parents put all their money into private school for my nerd brother because he's a dude. They think I'm busting my ass, think again. I'm going to be an Asian Kardashian.

ALFIE
Fine. Table this and help me figure out a fund-raiser to save the music program.

RODNEY
Just don't make us participate in some lame talent show.

ALFIE
Brilliant! A talent show. Maybe throw in an auction? Done. Ten points to Gryffindor.

CARLOS
I knew it!

RODNEY
Wait. I wasn't using reverse psychology. I really don't want to do a talent show.

ALFIE
You could all get up and do one of those inspiring musical numbers like in *Glee*. Kids love to sing these days, don't you? Burst into song whenever you feel an emotion?

ALL
Not really/no/kind of embarrassing.

ALFIE *
Well, too bad. You're putting on a * talent show, whether you like it or not. Lance, you'll organize the *a cappella* performance.

LANCE
Great, make the gay student organize a sing-along. Why don't we have Jimmy tap dance or Lisa do a math demonstration--

ALFIE
Or a demolition derby, am I right?
(off her glare)
I'm just riffing on horribly inaccurate stereotypes.

LANCE
I'm just saying, why do gay people get stuck with all the worst genres of Western Culture? How did we end up with musical theater and *a cappella*? You know what gay people should co-opt? Formula One racing. It's thin European guys racing expensive convertibles. Sold.

ALFIE
Look, who's going to come to a fund-raiser to save a free period?
(MORE)

ALFIE (CONT'D)
But if we save the music program...
(no response)
Then we can't have mandatory school-wide testing, and ergo....
(nothing)
The free period stays.

ALL
Totally!/of course/free period/why didn't you say so/let's do it!

CARLOS
Jimmy and I kick ass at guitar. We could shred up on stage.

ALFIE
Guitar. Fantastic. And we'll have our own John Bonham on drums.

RODNEY
No... not me. Timpani's not a solo instrument. I can't just go out there by myself.

JIMMY
Why not? You've had a lot of practice beating your skin.

The class laughs.

ALFIE
All right. Enough.

LISA
That's going to be so hilarious. I can't wait to tweet that video.

ARIEL
The Little Bummer Boy!

Upset, Rodney gets up and dashes toward the door.

RODNEY
Thanks, Mr. Wickers. Thanks a lot.
(exiting)
I'd rather do test prep!

ALFIE
It's a little late for that!

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO *

INT. MUSIC ROOM - LATER

Janitors are packing up the instruments. Gelman and Sarah watch, saddened. Gelman holds a guitar and plays a soulful flamenco flourish.

SARAH
That is amazing. I'm so impressed with anyone who can play music.

GELMAN
That's one upside to academic suspension. I've had like five hours a day to hone my chops.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS/INTERCUT

Alfie is eavesdropping.

INT. MUSIC ROOM - CONTINUOUS

SARAH
Phil took just two things to The Gambia: a duffel bag and his guitar. That's how we met. I saw him playing in a coffee shop, and that was it. We followed Phish for a year. Learned way too many uses for hemp. *

GELMAN
Oh my God, I'm a huge Phish fan! Check out my tattoo. *

He pulls up his shirt to reveal the word "FISH" *

GELMAN (CONT'D) *
I was blackout drunk, so the tattoo guy thought I was misspelling it. *

Alfie enters.

ALFIE
(to the janitors)
Stop what you're doing! We are having a fund-raising charity auction-slash-talent show to save the music program!
(they ignore him)
(MORE)

ALFIE (CONT'D)
Union rules. I get it.
Solidarity, comrades!

SARAH
A talent show - that's brilliant!
Was that your idea?

ALFIE
Naturally. I thought what better
way to show how important music is
to these kids. And to me.

GELMAN
You're musical? Since when.

ALFIE
Oh, you know, I knocked about for a
few years at a London
conservatory. Part of my past,
but still very much a part of me.

SARAH
I had no idea. That's a whole new
side of you I never knew about.

ALFIE
Not to boast, but the word
'virtuoso' was bandied about. Not
by me. By those in the know.

GELMAN
Can I get in on this talent show?
I could emcee, I've got fifteen
minutes of comic gold.

ALFIE
No F-bombs, no sexual areas, no
race humor, no props.

GELMAN
Three to four minutes.

Gomez enters.

GOMEZ
Booker told me about the fund-
raiser. You think this is cute,
don't you? Be the big hero saving
the music program while the
school's scores stink up the
restroom? Don't think you're
screwing me over with this half-
assed bake sale or whatever it is.
You're screwing the school.
(MORE)

GOMEZ (CONT'D)
My school. The kids can do music in their free time.

SARAH
Come on, didn't you see that TED talk on education, how we're failing our children with this obsession with testing at the expense of the arts? You saw the TED talk, right Alfie?

ALFIE
What's not to love about a bear doing bong hits?

GELMAN
The TED talks. On the internet.

GOMEZ
The thing you use to steal movies and watch porn.
(Gelman guffaws)
Don't you have a corner to be sitting in, Walking Dead?

SARAH
Are we done, Rita? We'd like to get back to saving the music program, if you don't mind. Alfie was just telling us about his years at a conservatory.

GOMEZ
You?! You read and play music? Really. What instrument?

Alfie desperately scans the room.

ALFIE
What instrument? What instrument... indeed... you ask... What do we have... and what don't we have... I play... the harp.

SARAH
How magical -- and surprising! I have such a thing for stringed instruments. Your fingers must be so strong. I would love, love, love to hear you play the harp.

ALFIE
And I would love, love, love to play it for you, but, alas, we don't have one.

GOMEZ
Funny, the one instrument you claim to play is the one we don't have.

ALFIE
And my old axe is still in London, I'm afraid. With my gran. She's ailing. A bit much to ask of her to mail it. God, I miss it so. Staying up all hours, plucking her.
(bizzare plucking motion)
The harp, mind you, not my gran.

GOMEZ
(flawless technique)
Isn't a harp played like this?

ALFIE
Yeah. If you were playing just one. I was a bit of a showman. Two-harp Alfie, they called me.

GOMEZ
Well, Wickers, you need my approval to use school facilities, and your request is denied. Test prep begins on Monday.

Rita exits.

GELMAN
(shivers)
Every time she leaves the room it takes a minute for my testicles to descend.

SARAH
How are we going to put on a fund-raiser without Gomez' permission?

ALFIE
You leave that to me. Stringed instruments aren't the only things I can play...

INT. GOMEZ' OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Gomez is doing paperwork. She hears a throat clear, and looks up to see Alfie doing his best seductive pose in her doorway. Unbuttoning a few buttons on his shirt, he plays sexy Barry White music on his iPhone.

ALFIE
Lovely Rita... teacher maid.

GOMEZ
Vice Principal Gomez to you, Wickers.

ALFIE
(slaps wrist)
My bad. And what is your... vice? Mine are all NFSW.

GOMEZ
It's NSFW. What do you want?

ALFIE
Oh, just thought, a pity to stop the music program before you and I have even had a chance to dance.

He seductively dances/hip thrusts his way towards her desk.

GOMEZ
Wickers, our school is underfunded as it is. We need state money to keep class size down, and the only way we're going to get it is to raise our scores. End of story.

ALFIE
Fascinating. Is this where you keep all your sexy forms, like the one for permission of the use school of school facilities?
(drops pen)
Clumsy me...

He bends over to pick it up, grunts under the strain, and sticks his protruding boxers in her view.

GOMEZ
You know, this inane attempt at seduction made me realize something. The school board has no idea what an idiot you really are. Booker loves you for God knows what reason, so you're shielded...
(MORE)

GOMEZ (CONT'D)
but if they were to see you in your incompetent glory, I could finally have you out of here for good.
(signing papers)
So you go ahead, Wickers. You have my approval. You go put on a show.

ALFIE
(taking paper)
And I didn't even have to have sex with you. Check. Mate.

EXT. ALFIE'S STREET - MORNING, THAT FRIDAY

Alfie gets into his car, a hatchback, and starts driving. He passes Rodney, who's standing at the end of his driveway with a giant wheeled timpani drum. Alfie pulls over.

RODNEY
Can you give me a ride today? My mom had to go to some meeting and she forgot I had the drum.

ALFIE
I can give you a ride. Will I? Depends. Are you going to play at the talent show? I need you. Desperately. All hands on deck.

Alfie gets out and helps Rodney load the drum into his hatchback.

RODNEY
Please don't make me do this. I don't like attention. It's never good. It's never, 'hey look at that cool thing Rodney did' or 'hey girls, look how hot Rodney looks today.' It's always a disaster. I just want to fly under the radar for the next three years and get out of high school alive.

They climb into the car.

ALFIE
(laying it on thick)
You know, this whole talent show fund-raiser... I did it... for <u>you</u>.

RODNEY
(genuinely touched)
Really?

ALFIE
Yes. And I promise you, nothing is stronger catnip to women than a man who isn't afraid to look the fool. Not that you will. I promise.

RODNEY
Okay. I'll do it. And if you wouldn't mind...

ALFIE
Yes, Rodney. I'll drop you off a block away.

MONTAGE

-- Alfie and Sarah posting "Talent Show" flyers. Sarah tapes up a flyer and turns to see Alfie who's taped his nose to his forehead. She laughs.

-- Alfie and Sarah hosting auditions in the gym. A line of kids wait their turn. Gelman, wearing a headset, acts as stage manager, as Alfie and Sarah sit behind a table, watching a group of boys and girls wearing matching outfits do a clumsy but attitude-heavy dance routine. Alfie fights laughing, Sarah hits him, then fights laughing herself. When the group ends on a freeze, Alfie and Sarah both give big phony smiles and thumbs-up.

-- Alfie and Sarah hang a TALENT SHOW TONIGHT banner. Alfie tries to hold Sarah up in the air, but is staggering. Gelman walks over to try to help hold her and Alfie pulls her away possessively, ripping down the banner.

INT. AUDITORIUM - THAT NIGHT

Booker and Alfie watch people file in. It's a packed house. Four humorless SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS approach.

BOOKER
I don't know what you said to Rita Gomez this time, but she invited the school board power-players. Your ass is in the cross-hairs, son. Get ready to glad-hand and ass-kiss.
(to the board members)
Regina! Jim! Carlos! Ming! This is the go-getter educator that spearheaded this wonderful event, Alfie Wickers.

ALFIE
It's going to be quite the concert, *
full of laughter, song, and dance --
hope you brought your cigarette
lighters and panties to toss.

SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER
Why would we have lighters?
There's no smoking on school
grounds.

ALFIE
Panties then?

ON STAGE

Gelman holds the mike, wearing a piano key tie.

GELMAN
And the father says, this is the
last time I fly with a Mexican
pilot!
(crickets, murmurs)
Oh, come on. The joke was on the
father. Lighten up. I dated a
Mexican girl, OK? She might have
been Venezuelan. Wow, dead room.
Moving on, our first auction of the
night, our own Alfie Wickers will
join you for a... bike ride!

Alfie rides a bicycle on stage.

GELMAN (CONT'D)
Start the bidding at ten dollars.
Any takers?

ARIEL (O.S.)
Ten dollars!

Offstage, Ariel waves at Alfie, who tries to wave her off.

GELMAN
Ten dollars, do I hear fifteen?

ARIEL'S MOM (O.S.)
Twenty dollars!

ARIEL
Mom!
(to Gelman)
Forty!

GELMAN
Folks, we've got ourselves a bidding war! Do I hear fiddy?

ALFIE
Anyone? Anyone else? Please? Even a teacher? Sarah?

ARIEL'S MOM sits next to ARIEL'S DAD, the mousiest man ever.

ARIEL'S MOM
Sixty! And I want him in bike shorts!

BACKSTAGE

Alfie and Sarah watch a JAZZ COMBO perform some very mediocre jazz -- a sour saxophone note makes everyone cringe. Rodney is silently practicing his drumming. Ariel sits next to him. *

RODNEY *
Congrats on winning Mr. Wickers. *

ARIEL *
What does it matter? He's way into Ms. McIntyre. I mean, it's so inappropriate. They work together. That's why he put on this whole stupid talent show. *

RODNEY *
What do you mean? I thought... *

ARIEL *
He did it for us? Please. Her do-gooder Peace Corp boyfriend just shipped out to Africa, and he's trying to smooth in. *

Rodney's face falls. Alfie runs by. *

ALFIE
Keep limber, you're up soon! *
Jimmy, Carlos! We're losing the crowd. You lads really need to kick this thing up a few notches.

Jimmy and Carlos roll a TV on a cart and a Wii system over.

CARLOS
Let's do this, Low Ridah.

SARAH
Where are your instruments?

JIMMY
Right here, pretty lady.

Jimmy pulls a Guitar Hero guitar from his wheelchair.

ALFIE
Oh, no, no, no. You said you could play! For real!

CARLOS
And we can. For real. We're the Lannisters of Guitar Hero.

ON STAGE

Carlos and Jimmy shred their faux-tars to the epic Guitar Hero version of "Devil Went Down to Georgia" as the baffled audience stares on. Board members share concerned looks.

BACKSTAGE

Booker is upbraiding Alfie in front of Sarah as the dance troupe from the auditions does their routine. One BOY trips and falls, but bounces up triumphantly.

BOOKER
What the hell is this, Wickers? We need to win hearts and minds. We need Prince-at-the-Super-Bowl good! This isn't even Justin Guarini at a water park good! This is how you do me? Come on, man! Come on!

ALFIE
Fear not. We have a timpani genius waiting in the wings.

Rodney approaches.

RODNEY
Alf-- Mr. Wickers, I'm not going on.

ALFIE
Et tu, Rodney.

RODNEY
I know why you did this whole thing. You were going to let me go out there and humiliate myself! You didn't do this for the students, or for music, or for <u>me</u>.

Alfie looks at Sarah and Booker, and then back at Rodney. This is Alfie's big mentor moment.

ALFIE
Wow, where did that come from? *
Look, that's the stage fright *
talking. If I didn't do this for *
you, whom on Earth did I do it for? *

Rodney looks at Sarah, but is suddenly interrupted by... *

GOMEZ (O.S.) *
Good news!

Alfie, Rodney, and Sarah turn to see Gomez standing next to a large object covered by a black sheet.

GOMEZ (CONT'D)
I made some calls, pulled some strings, so to speak, and have I got a surprise for you...

As Gomez pulls away the sheet, Alfie's smile turns to a death mask of utter horror. Sarah gasps.

SARAH
How wonderful!

ALFIE
Oh... Good... God...

It's a giant gold-colored harp. Alfie gawks helplessly.

GOMEZ
I'm sure the school would love to hear you play. I know I would.

SARAH
It's gorgeous. I can't wait to hear what you can do with it.

ALFIE
Me either...

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. AUDITORIUM - MOMENTS LATER

After the dance troupe bounds offstage, the only sound we hear is the squeaking of the harp's wheels, as Alfie sheepishly wheels the massive instrument on stage.

ALFIE
'Evening. So. Been a while, so, apologies if I'm a bit rusty... might need a tuning...
(plucks a string)
Bit flat...
(cracks knuckles)
Must limber up...

GELMAN
Freebird!

ALFIE
Hilarious.
(sees Sarah offstage)
But what isn't hilarious is the thought of our children being deprived of the gift of music--

GOMEZ (O.S.)
Play it already!

ALFIE
Right. Yes. So, the piece I'm about to play might be a bit over most people's heads. It's an atonal composition by the obscure Austrian composer Hans Gruber.

BACKSTAGE

Alfie's students look on, concerned.

LANCE
Who plays the harp? That's hilarious.

RODNEY
He doesn't know how. He told Ms. McIntyre he could play to impress her. *

CARLOS
Are we supposed to do something?

JIMMY
(pulls out phone)
Yeah. Get this gold on YouTube.

LANCE
Just so you know, if this doesn't work, we're all going to lose a free period and have to take that crappy test prep course.

LISA
Maybe we could do an a cappella performance. Like Glee.

ARIEL *
Without rehearsal?

LANCE
And what song?

CARLOS *
What about Ghetto Symphony?

LISA *
What, like, from last year?

ARIEL *
Classic Britney?

LANCE
Retro, but not retro enough.

ON STAGE

ALFIE
It's got some unusual time changes and avant-garde phrasing, so while it may not sound classically musical, I assure you it is quite cutting edge. In Wee-enna.

Alfie clears his throat and begins to vamp the worst, most pretentious atonal harp music the world has ever heard.

BACKSTAGE

CARLOS
Beyonce, bitches. Everybody likes Beyonce.

LANCE
I don't.

LISA
Why not?

LANCE
Because everyone likes her.

ARIEL *
Guys we've got to agree on
something. He's dying out there.

Rodney looks at Gomez, doubled over with laughter, then sees * Alfie, shamed and helpless -- a familiar feeling. Rodney * grabs his sticks. *

RODNEY
Screw it. I'm going in.

Rodney pushes his timpani drum on stage to polite applause. *

ALFIE
(sotto)
You don't have to do this.

Rodney looks out at the crowd, up at Alfie, and then starts hammering away at his drum -- he's not bad, but as Alfie tries to fake a jam, the cacophony is even worse.

ALFIE (CONT'D)
Shall we wrap this up?

Rodney nods, plays a crescendo, Alfie plays a flourish, and they stop. They both bow to a vague smattering of applause.

ALFIE (CONT'D)
Hans... Gruber...

EXT. SCHOOL YARD - LATER

The parents and students are all exiting. A few parents have cornered Booker and members of the board, gesturing angrily. Alfie, looking shaken, exits with Sarah and the kids.

ALFIE
So. That fell a bit short of
expectations.

SARAH
Still, aren't you glad we tried?

ALFIE
You weren't the one playing harp.

SARAH
You can't play a note of music. *

ALFIE
You're only betraying your own cultural ignorance right now.

SARAH
Hans Gruber is the villain in *Die Hard*. I saw it with you. *

ALFIE
Amazing that the writer of *Die Hard* named a character after an obscure Austrian composer. Must be a fellow fan.

ON LISA, RODNEY, ARIEL, AND LANCE

LISA *
That music you and Mr. Wickers * played sucked ass, but it's cool you got out there.

LANCE
That took major balls.

RODNEY
(touched)
Thanks, guys.

ARIEL *
No sweat. Mañana.

Rodney sees Alfie and walks over to him. *

ON GELMAN, JIMMY AND CARLOS

GELMAN
Hey. You give lessons?

JIMMY
We do. But they're not cheap.

ON ALFIE, SARAH, and RODNEY

RODNEY *
Um, I know I was kind of a pain *
about playing in the show, but, *
um... I'm glad we did. I don't *
know if we saved the music program, *
but... thanks. *

ALFIE *
No, Rodney. Thank you. Really. *
Your lunch money debt is wiped *
clean. *

RODNEY *
By the way, can I have a ride home?
My mom had a date, so she had to
leave early.

ALFIE
Of course. Don't forget your drum.

Rodney runs off.

ALFIE (CONT'D)
It's not exactly teaching in
Africa, is it. But if all we did
was convince one kid that it's all
right to bang his drum in public, I
guess that's a win.

SARAH
I say that anyone willing to
humiliate himself for the greater
good is a very special teacher.

ALFIE
Special as in 'amazing' or as in
'cognitively challenged?'

SARAH
What do you think?

ALFIE
Bit of both?

As they share a sweet moment, Gomez wheels the harp by.

GOMEZ
Best two hundred bucks I ever
spent.

INT. ALFIE'S CLASSROOM - MONDAY MORNING

The class watches Alfie's fiasco on YouTube on the Smart Board. The video is entitled: "Deaf Man Plays Harp."

ALFIE
Laugh all you want.
(they laugh, mock)
Right. Enough.
(MORE)

ALFIE (CONT'D)
(more laughing)
Now you're just being rude.

Eugene Booker and Rita Gomez enter and instantly the class silences. The Smart Board is turned off in a flash.

GOMEZ
Wickers, Friday night was a catastrophe. A Fukushima-scale disaster. You needed to raise fifteen thousand, you raised seven hundred and fifty.

BOOKER
But the good news is, the performances were so painful for the parents to watch, that they cornered the board members and long story short, there will be a school music program thanks to you.
(tepid response)
And no test tutoring.

ALFIE
And a free period!

The class cheers! Gomez storms out. Booker smiles at Alfie and follows her out.

INT. MUSIC ROOM - AFTERNOON, A WEEK LATER

A MUSIC TEACHER stands, holding a baton.

MUSIC TEACHER
Ready? And begin...

There's a thunder of bass -- the kids all have turntables and headphones. Alfie and Sarah stand in the doorway.

ALFIE
Now this is music.

END OF ACT THREE

TAG

EXT. SAN DIEGO STREET - WEEKEND DAY

Ariel and her mom ride bikes in bike shorts. They're yelling at Alfie to pedal faster, as they stick their butts out, to his discomfort. Reveal Alfie is on a tandem bike with Ariel's dad on the back.

END OF SHOW