

# Introduction to "Twelve Children"

(Dessa Rose)

(REV. 2/1/05)

Lyrics by Lynn Ahrens  
Music by Stephen Flaherty

DESSA ROSE: I'm your mammy. Dessa Rose. I'm your real mammy. And you had a Daddy named

**SAFETY**

Musical notation for the first system, measures 1-4. The music is in 4/4 time and features a piano accompaniment with a melody in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The dynamic marking is *mp*. Measure 1 starts with a *ped.* (pedal) marking. The melody consists of eighth notes with slurs. Measure 2 has a vertical line indicating a section change. Measures 3 and 4 continue the melody.

Kaine.

You had aunts and uncles.

You got all the family you ever going to need, even if you never meet them.

Musical notation for the second system, measures 5-8. The piano accompaniment continues with a steady bass line. The melody in the right hand consists of quarter notes with slurs. Measure 5 has a circled note with an arrow pointing to the text "Kaine." above it.

A long, strong line of 'em.

And no white person going to name you a slave.

Musical notation for the third system, measures 9-12. The piano accompaniment continues with a steady bass line. The melody in the right hand consists of quarter notes with slurs. Measure 9 has a circled note. Measure 12 ends with a final chord.

Your Daddy wouldn't allow that.

I will teach you the names of your kin, just like my Mammy taught me.  
My Mammy, now she is your Grandmammy.

**VAMP**

Musical notation for measures 13-16. Measures 13-14 are piano accompaniment. Measures 15-16 are vocal lines with piano accompaniment. A 'VAMP' box is above measure 15.

Her name is Rose.

**DESSA ROSE:**

Musical notation for measures 17-20. Measure 17 is piano accompaniment. Measure 18 is vocal line with piano accompaniment. Measure 19 is vocal line with piano accompaniment. Measure 20 is vocal line with piano accompaniment.

Rose.....

A

V.S.

# Twelve Children

(Dessa-Rose, Ensemble)

(REV. 1/22/05)

Lyrics by Lynn Ahrens  
Music by Stephen Flaherty

DESSA ROSE:

1 2 3

flo-wer so red it al - most look black. They named her that when she was a girl.

4 5 6

Smooth and black like pe - tals I

7 8 9

s'pose. And they teased her cause she worked 'round the dai -

10 ry. Said her kiss was as tang - y as clab - ber.

13 These things on - ly her child - ren knows.

16 Mam - my gave birth to twelve child - ren! Twelve that come in - to this world

19 still li - vin'. The first one a boy named Lit - tle Joe.

22 23 24 25

Named for the mas - ter. Se - cond one died — with - out — no name. —

*mp* *mf*

26 27 28

White folks said — it was all — the same, — but Mam - my called — her Min -

*mp*

29 30 31 32

ta. — For re - mem - brance. Seth her first child — who lived to

*p* *mp*

*Red.* *Red. sim.*

33 34 35

work the field. — Mar - y and Bess, then Jess and A - mos.

36 37 38

All of them gone— in a week one Eas - ter. Tra - ded for some

39 40 41

mules. But then come— Jeet - er, the laugh - in' one!

*poco rit.* *colla voce* *(In Tempo)*

42 43 44

Jee - ter, he run. Mam-my told— me so.— May-be he's— li - vin'. Ne -

*mf* *Red.*

45 46 47

ver will know.— But Jee - ter give— her hope.—

48 *Freely* (spoken:) 49 50 *A Bit Slower* 51 (sung:)

Cea-sar died at the end of a rope. She

*sub p* (In Tempo)

52 (Tempo I) 53 54

lost lit - tle Jef - frey to the sting of a bee. — They sold Car-rie Mae. — Her

*mf*

55 56 57

last was me. — I'm her on - ly ba - by whose name she chose: —

*cresc.*

58 59 60 61

"Des - sa" for "des - cen - dant" of a wo - man named Rose! — Lit - tle

*mf rit.*

*Slower*

(DESSA:)

62 63 64

Joe, Min - ta, Seth, A - mos, Ma - ry, Jess, Bess, Jee - ter, Cea - sar, Jef - frey, Car - rie Mae — and —

65 66 67

Des - sa Rose. — Our names is Joe, Min - ta, Seth, A - mos, Ma - ry, Jess, Bess, Jee - ter,

*poco a poco cresc.*

68 69 70

Cea - sar, Jef - frey, Car - rie Mae and — Des - sa Rose, — my — own selve.

*molto cresc.* *poco accel.* *f*

71 72 73

That make — twelve. *p* Some

*p*



74 *Delibertate* (With quiet intensity and rising anger)

75 76

sold a-way. — Some passed a-way. — Some — run. — Twelve child-ren brought from her bo-dy, all —

*slow Delibertate*

77 78 79

gone but — one. — *mf* I tell these names the way my Mam - my — told these names lest her poor

*mf*

80 81 82

child - ren pass from li - vin' — mem - 'ry.

83 84 85 (Tempo I)

*p* Mmm... — Mmm... — *mp* And you, lit - tle girl, — you fol -

*p* *mp*

86 87 88

low in line. Your Mam - my holds you safe as she can.

89 90 91

One fine day we'll count you the same. Daugh-ter, my

DESSA ROSE (*spoken*):  
I made a promise to your  
daddy and your Grandmammy  
Rose. When we get north...

92 (DESSA:) 93 (DESSA:) 94 95

daugh-ter, you'll have your name.

African drums

rit. rit.

END OF ACT 1