



## Children's Book and Media Review

---

Volume 22 | Issue 1

Article 6

---

2001

### Play Reviews

Allison G. Belnap

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cbmr>

---

#### BYU ScholarsArchive Citation

Belnap, Allison G. (2001) "Play Reviews," *Children's Book and Media Review*. Vol. 22 : Iss. 1 , Article 6.  
Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cbmr/vol22/iss1/6>

This Play Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in Children's Book and Media Review by an authorized editor of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact [scholarsarchive@byu.edu](mailto:scholarsarchive@byu.edu), [ellen\\_amatangelo@byu.edu](mailto:ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu).

---

## Play Reviews

---

Jennings, Coleman A. *Theatre for Young Audiences: 20 Great Plays for Children*. St. Martin's Press, 1998. ISBN 0-312-18194-9. \$35.00. 604 pp.

A 6+ Reviewed by Allison G. Belnap

With *Theatre for Young Audiences: 20 Great Plays for Children*, Jennings has created a collection of plays ranging from theatre for young audience classics such as *Arkansaw Bear*, to modern adaptations like *Secret Garden*, to new creative works written specifically for multi-generational theatre like *The Yellow Boat*. Each play in the anthology includes a brief biographical statement about the author and an author-written statement addressing what he/she finds rewarding about writing and working in theatre for young audiences.

Additionally, the book includes a forward in the form of a transcribed conversation between Maurice Sendak and James Still—two very experienced and well-respected children's authors and playwrights. Informational and intriguing, it is followed by an exceptional introduction in which Jennings discusses the difficulties in choosing manuscripts for this collection, as well as some basic guidelines for identifying good scripts when reading and producing theatre for children and families. Though a few scripts in the book are weak, this is an excellent resource for educators, students, and professional practitioners and serves as an outstanding introduction to dramatic literature for youth and families.

Reviews of each of the plays in the collection follow.

Asher, Sandra Fenichel. *The Wise Men of Chelm*. 23 pp.

A

*The Wise Men of Chelm* is a light-hearted rendering of a classic Yiddish folktale. During the creation of the earth, God gave a sack of wise souls to one angel and a sack of foolish souls to another angel. The idea was to distribute equally the foolish and wise souls across the face of the earth. The angel carrying the foolish souls, however, tripped and spilled them all into Chelm. One day, the townspeople of Chelm trade all their valuables for a cow that supposedly produces gold coins. When they discover the cow doesn't even give milk, they send a young man out to reclaim their belongings. The man is found, but he says he sold the town valuables. As a replacement, he offers the boy two large bags of feathers. The boy becomes distressed when he finds it impossible to travel back to the village with the feathers. Since the wind is blowing towards Chelm, he dumps the feathers, trusting that the wind will carry them to the right location. After waiting for the feathers for many days, leaving the village and seeking the feathers across the countryside, the people of Chelm decide the feathers are a sign that they too should scatter themselves on the wind and mix with the general population of the world.

This play is a humorous look at humanity through the lens of the Yiddish folk story. Asher carefully includes an explanation of the play that states it is not anti-Semitic, but rather a testament to the fact that "the Jewish people and their stories, no matter the odds, survive and press on." The play takes place in several locales that can be managed with simple set piece and property changes. The cast consists of eight-plus males and two-plus females to be played by as few as six players—four men and two women.

----

Carlisle, Barbara. *The Crane Wife*. 21 pp.

A

Carlisle has successfully shaped a traditional tale into a stirring theatrical experience in *The Crane Wife*. After Kokuro, a poor peasant living in a small Japanese province, heals an injured snow crane, a beautiful woman knocks at Kokuro's door, stating that she has come to be his wife if he will accept her. Kokuro does, and the two embark on an impoverished but happy life. When their food runs out, the wife states that she will weave a cloth for Kokuro to sell if he promises never to look at her while she weaves and if she only has to do it this once. The wife weaves a magnificent cloth that earns 50 *ryo* at market, but the weaving has left her drawn and tired. Kokuro quickly spends the money and is forced to ask his wife to weave a second cloth. She is even more spent after this weaving, but the cloth sells for enough to ensure their security for years. Kokuro cannot turn down a neighbor's request to sell one more cloth for 2000 *ryo* to a wealthy Samurai. The wife weaves constantly for six days. Anxious, Kokuro loses patience and looks behind the screen. There he finds a weak and bloody crane plucking her own feathers and weaving them into the most beautiful cloth anyone has ever seen. The wife is really the crane that Kokuro helped months ago. Because he has seen her in this dishonorable state, she must leave him and return to her crane flock. Kokuro has the beautiful cloth worth many riches, but he has lost the most valuable thing in his life—his loving wife.

In our modern materialistic society, the message of *The Crane Wife* is particularly significant. Too often we find that we have sacrificed that which is of most worth for material wealth that is of little lasting value. Carlisle borrows freely from traditional Japanese conventions in her retelling of this folk story. She specifies that the Samurai should be based on the Kabuki character. The play also includes a narrator, a chorus of dancers, a "Village Chorus," and a "Signer" who communicates the story in American Sign Language. Carlisle specifies that one or several actors could perform the narration and that the narrators and villagers should be allowed to determine how they will perform their respective roles. Music and dance play an integral part in the script, and movement will likely be highly stylized. Staging

is open, with simple indications of Kokuro's home, the village, and areas for musicians, dancers, narrators, and other chorus members. The script calls for the use of masks and puppets—most particularly a large crane puppet that several dancers and the Crane Wife will manipulate. The casting for the play is open, with narrators, villagers, and dancers as desired, as well as four set characters—Crane Wife, Kokuro, Neighbor, and Samurai.

----

Gollobin, Laurie Brooks. *Selkie*. 22 pp.

\*

In *Selkie*, Gollobin successfully incorporates the folklore and dialects of the Orkney Islands north of Scotland with a beautiful tale of acceptance, love, and self-worth. The play opens as Duncan, a "crofter," sees three selkies come on shore, shed their seal-like skins, and dance in the moonlight. According to legend, if the skin of a selkie is captured, the selkie is obliged to serve the captor until the skin is returned or until the woman can find the skin and escape. Duncan manages to steal one of the selkie skins and marries his captive, calling her Margaret and condemning her to a life on the land. Soon the couple has a daughter, Ellen. Being a child of the land and sea, Ellen is different in many ways from other island youngsters. Physically, she is troubled with webbed hands, a target of much ridicule from her peers. Ellen feels as if there is no place on land where she really fits in, but she is time and again lured to the ocean by her mother's selkie family. Eventually, Ellen discovers her mother's skin and the truth about her own heritage. When she gives her mother the skin and Margaret returns to the sea, Ellen faces the difficult choice of staying where she feels unwanted and outcast or venturing into the mysterious world of her mother's previous life. Finally, Ellen is able to discover the beauty within her and the happiness derived from family and friends who see beyond physical differences into the heart.

*Selkie* is a beautiful story with a protagonist who faces and overcomes problems with self-esteem, self-respect, and confidence- difficulties

faced by many children and adolescents in every part of the world. The play calls for a relatively simple set with some special effects to create the illusion of the sea and period costume. The cast is seven characters—three men and four women.

----

Harris, Aurand. *The Arkansaw Bear*. 20 pp.

\*

This classic play for children is a touching exploration of life, death, and heritage. Tish, a young girl whose grandfather is dying, runs away from home because she can't understand why her grandfather has to die. She goes to a favorite tree, where she meets The World's Greatest Dancing Bear. Soon Tish discovers that the bear is also dying. Bear attempts to hide from the Ringmaster, who represents death, but he is discovered. With Tish's help, Bear convinces the Ringmaster to let him stay until midnight. When midnight comes, Bear wishes on a star to again delay death; he wants someone who will learn his dances and carry on his traditions. After wishing again on the star, Little Bear arrives on the scene, eventually learns Bear's dances, and agrees to follow in Bear's footsteps. Tish realizes that death comes to everyone, and even though it is sad for those left behind, those we love continue to live in us.

This frequently performed play has proven itself an effective catalyst for discussion as well as an artistically sound piece. The technical aspects of the play are relatively simple, but call for special attention to music and sound cues as well as a swing that lowers the wishing star onto the stage. The play includes six characters and three recorded voices.

----

Hines, Kim. *Home on the Mornin' Train*. 26 pp.

B

Hines juxtaposes runaway slaves in 1839 with Jewish children running from the Nazis in 1939. The play has the potential to be a powerful mosaic representing the struggles of humankind

to achieve freedom and justice. Unfortunately, the play becomes somewhat trite early on in the story. *Home on the Mornin' Train* tells the story of three Jewish children being secretly transported out of Germany to the safety of Sweden during World War II. En route, one child brings out a book about four runaway slaves seeking freedom from their oppressive owners in the Deep South and begins reading it to the other children. Initially, the similar imagery of two very separate groups of oppressed people struggling for the common goal of autonomy seems potent, but the play soon loses its initial impact as the narrative quickly deteriorates into an exchange of a few passages from the book followed by the Jewish children drawing the obvious similarities to their own predicament.

The cast for this play consists of eight women and eight men and includes several African Americans. The settings of the play consist mainly of an Alabama plantation, a German farm, and various locations along the slaves' escape route, including a safe house on the Underground Railway and a boat to take the slaves upriver.

----

Kauffman, John. *According to Coyote*. 8 pp.

A

In *According to Coyote*, Kauffman effectively merges several traditional coyote stories to create a complete picture of the Native American mythological figure. The play spotlights Coyote's many adventures. In one, he is chased and killed by Rock, but Fox brings him back to life. Coyote's adventures continue as he tries to acquire a new and more powerful name, steals fire from the skookums on a mountaintop, is tricked by a clever rabbit, and botches a chance to bring his wife back from the dead. Finally, Coyote slays a fearsome monster by cutting out his heart. From the monster's body parts, Coyote creates the Sioux, Blackfeet, Cayuse, Blood, Cree, Nez Percé, and other Native American tribes.

*According to Coyote* is an energetic, one-actor show that relates traditional Native

American folklore in a modern storytelling style. It includes several Native American songs and demands a vigorous performer who can communicate the material effectively. The playwright specifies that the set should be simple but dramatic; lights, music, and sound are integral to accentuate mood changes and intensify the dramatic moments of the play.

----

Kraus, Joanna Halpert. *The Ice Wolf*. 20 pp.

## B

*The Ice Wolf* tells the story of Anatou, an Eskimo girl born with pale skin and blond hair. A long famine accompanies Anatou's arrival and childhood. When her parents leave to find food and fail to return, the village turns on Anatou, informing her that they know her curse caused the entire village to starve. Anatou leaves and ventures into the forbidden forest, seeking the Wood God to change her into a wolf. He does, and Anatou lives happily until the arrival of spring awakens forgotten feelings and memories about her past. She returns to the village as a wolf, and all of her former feelings of abandonment and loneliness return. Anatou decides to take vengeance on the people who banished her. She begins killing hunters after she is struck by a hunter's arrow. Eventually she is killed by one of the men from the village. After she receives her mortal wound, she returns to her shape, and the villagers realize they are responsible for her death. As the villagers regret their treatment of the girl, one hunter ruminates, "We all killed her. But when? Today or long ago?"

Though this is a fair adaptation of a traditional tale, it soon becomes heavy-handed with its message of acceptance. The play could be staged simply with several set pieces as well as light and script changes to indicate the various settings in the course of the play. The cast consists of four female and male characters, as well as five roles to be played by actors of either gender.

----

Leonard, Jr., Jim, adapted from the novel by Barry L6pez. *Crow & Weasel*. 34 pp.

## A

This adaptation of the book by Barry L6pez utilizes music, movement, and visual design to create the world of this sacred Native American myth. Though Leonard specifies that the actors not be required to be Native Americans and should in fact reflect diverse colors of our country, there are also specific instructions relating to the sacred nature of the stories. In the play, Mountain Lion has a dream that Crow and Weasel travel north to a foreign land with strange people. He awakens and tells the village of the dream. Soon the young boys embark on a long and treacherous journey. During the trip, the companions gain a deep reverence for the earth, her seasons, and her undeniable power. Ultimately, the pair find that through tolerance and mutual respect they can learn about people different from themselves and that they can take this knowledge with them, thereby enriching their lives and the lives of those around them.

This play requires a good deal of knowledge about Native American culture, tradition, and sacred practice. After Crow and Weasel reach their destination, the Inuit people speak all their lines in their native language for which there is an English translation, but not always a pronunciation guide. Though the set and lighting design should be flexible, it could require several visual effects, including the creation of a forest, the icy northern region, and the northern lights. Leonard instructs that the costume design be based on traditional Native American clothing, as represented in the book on which the adaptation is based. The cast consists of twenty-eight-plus characters to be played by seven actors—four men and three women.

----

Loomer, Lisa. *Boc6n!* 20 pp.

## A

Miguel, a young Latino boy, lives in a Central American village under strict military rule. His quiet life with his parent is disrupted



one day when some soldiers come and take his parents away. Miguel escapes his parents' fate, but he loses his voice because of the traumatic encounter. A friend of the family encourages Miguel to make his way to the Border of Lights and the City of Angels (Los Angeles) where he can tell his story in an effort to get others to help rid the village of the oppressive militia. Along the way, Miguel runs into La Llorana, a legendary figure who helps Miguel find his voice and make his way to the Border of Lights. As he crosses the border, a border patrol officer captures Miguel. Miguel is taken before a judge, who insists that he return to his village. Nevertheless, Miguel has found his voice and will continue to tell his story regardless of the judge's decision.

Loomer weaves a dreamlike fantasy into a theatrical collage incorporating music, dance, movement, masks, and design—resulting in a unique multifaceted cultural experience. Loomer specifies that the set, props, and costumes not be necessarily realistic and gives rather detailed descriptions of various technical and interpretive aspects of the production. The play incorporates many Spanish phrases and words, as well as music and dances inspired by Latino culture. There are several technical elements including special lighting, prerecorded voices, music, and masks for La Llorana and other characters in the forest. The sixteen characters in the play are to be portrayed by six actors—three women and three men.

----

Mast, Edward, adapted from the novel by Rudyard Kipling. *Jungalbook*. 36 pp.

A

*Jungalbook* is a modern adaptation of Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book*. Through his distinctive use of setting, costume design, and his own "jungaltalk," Mast effectively accentuates the nuances of trust, betrayal, and love that underscore the story of Mowgli, the boy raised in the jungle by wolves under the watchful eye of the bear, Ballo, and the panther, Baheer. When he eventually faces Sherakhan the tiger, Mowgli must decide if he will follow the

law of the jungle and meet his fate with little defense against the powerful cat or if he will use the tools of man and literally ban himself from his childhood home forever.

Rather than succumb to the temptation of setting the story in a jungle complete with trees, vines, and overgrown plants, Mast sets his story on a modern jungle gym. The actors are dressed in children's clothing, with only slight indications—"maybe a claw or two"—of the animal they are portraying. The fourteen characters can be played by as few as eight actors.

----

Miller, Kathryn Schultz. *A Thousand Paper Cranes*. 13 pp.

B+

*A Thousand Cranes* is based on the true story of a twelve-year-old girl living in Hiroshima, Japan in 1955. In a brief narration, Sadako, the girl, introduces herself and retells the events of the day the bomb fell on her hometown. One day Sadako becomes dizzy as she is running with her friend Kenji and falls twice. Her parents take her to the hospital, where they learn she has leukemia caused by the radiation from the atom bomb dropped ten years earlier. In the hospital, Kenji reminds Sadako of an old belief that if a sick person folds one thousand paper cranes, that person can have granted a wish to live. Sadako starts folding right away, but her deceased grandmother comes and takes her spirit to the next world before Sadako can finish her task. In a narrated epilogue, one of the actors explains that Sadako's classmates completed the thousand cranes and that school children still fold and deliver paper cranes to her monument in the Hiroshima Peace Park.

The brevity of this script leaves little room for character development or relationship exploration, but it is an efficient retelling of a touching story, with the added weight of its factual nature. It seems particularly useful for children studying World War II or the Hiroshima incident. Staging can be relatively open, but Miller does specify the use of large,

Japanese-style fans and some masks. The play is to be performed by three actors—two women and one man.

----

Palmer, Greg. *The Falcon*. 22 pp.

B+

In *The Falcon*, Palmer successfully weaves two worlds into one. The play opens in 1850 as a family in the Georgian Republic celebrates the engagement of their daughter, Anna, to Tevdore. Most of the family is celebrating, but Anna seems somewhat ambivalent about the whole affair. A storyteller arrives begging bread, and the family invites him in. For a gift to the "happy" couple, he proclaims that he will tell a tale. As he narrates the traditional Russian tale of *The Falcon*, the family members assume the roles of the characters in the story. Anna becomes the beautiful young daughter who asks only that her father bring her the feather of Fenist, the falcon. The father acquires the feather from a mysterious stranger and brings it home in an enchanted box. Once she is alone, Anna opens the box, drops the feather to the ground, and Tevdore, now playing Fenist, magically appears. The two fall deeply in love. A trap is set for Fenist, and Anna must embark on a long and difficult journey to find and rescue him. The story ends as Anna finds Fenist in the upper room of the Tsarevna's castle, and the two decide to escape. The family laments the vague ending of the story as each takes his/her leave of the storyteller, leaving Anna and the stranger alone. The play ends with Anna questioning whether she is making the right decision in marrying Tevdore, and the teller informing her that the moment to decide has come.

*The Falcon* is generally a well-written script and effectively uses storytelling techniques to create the traditional tale on stage. The overall theme of the play is just as ambiguous as the story's end, but seems to suggest that just as Anna is having second thoughts about her decision to marry Tevdore, we each should carefully examine the choices we make in life. Palmer seems to have added sections of dialogue for increased levity rather than character or plot

development, but the story does not drag and is still enjoyable. The set can be quite simple, as it represents only the Georgian farmhouse and various locations in Anna's imagination.

----

Rabin, Arnold. *The Man-Child*. 28 pp.

A

*The Man-Child* is a touching portrait of a Jewish family and the events surrounding a thirteen-year-old boy's Bar Mitzvah—the ceremony celebrating his spiritual and literal coming of age. The atmosphere is one of excitement and happiness as the family and close friends look forward to Allen's Bar Mitzvah. During a private moment, Miriam (Allen's mother) gives Allen a gold ring that his father (who died several years ago) had intended to give to his son on this special day. Allen, proud to wear his father's ring, shows it to a friend, but the friend doubts the authenticity of the ring. Following his friend's advice, Allen bites the ring to test whether or not it is genuine. The ring bends, and Allen is left to explain the ruined ring to his mother. Rather than tell her the truth, he decides to lie. Miriam is not deceived, however, and she expresses her disappointment. Eventually, Allen tells the truth.

This is a moving tale of a boy who learns the meaning of moral responsibility and has the courage to be accountable for his actions. It is a wonderful example of the crucial moments in a child's life when he takes the first steps toward adulthood. The play includes nine characters, which could be played by eight actors—four men and four women. It calls for a unit set with few technical effects.

----

Robinette, Joseph, adapted from the novel by E.B. White. *Charlotte's Web*. 35 pp.

A-

Robinette's *Charlotte's Web* is a charming adaptation of the classic E.B. White children's story in which Charlotte, the intelligent spider,

manages to save Wilbur, the pig, by spinning words in her web. This adaptation successfully translates the classic tale to the stage. Sets may be complicated, as several locales are represented, but with some ingenuity could be simply designed. The play includes twenty-two-plus characters, to be played by nine to twenty actors, four-plus men and five-plus women.

----

Saar, David. *The Yellow Boat*. 40 pp.

\*

In *The Yellow Boat*, Saar utilizes many unique theatrical and cinematic conventions to tell the story of Benjamin, a hemophiliac who contracts AIDS from an infected blood transfusion. The story begins before Benjamin is born and follows him through his childhood. Benjamin's parents sing him to sleep with a lullaby about three boats. Benjamin claims for himself the yellow boat carrying love. In the song, all three boats sail out to sea. The other boats return, but Benjamin's yellow boat sails up to the sun. Benjamin loves to draw, and he skillfully surrounds himself with worlds and happenings created from his vivid imagination. This world of happiness is rudely interrupted first as the parents find their son is a hemophiliac, and again when Benjamin is diagnosed with AIDS, the result of a blood transfusion. Benjamin sinks into depression, and fails to continue his drawing. In the hospital, a specialist named Joy befriends Benjamin and helps him and his parents learn about the things that are happening to him as the often-emotionless doctors try to save his life. Eventually, they can do nothing to keep the boy alive and Mother, Father, and Joy help Benjamin launch the Yellow Boat for one final trip as the boy's body dies.

*The Yellow Boat* is a poignant tale of family, love, struggle, and death. Saar chooses to use fluid time and space, as well as a high level of symbolism, to help the audience become enveloped in this stunning theatrical piece. Colored scarves represent drawings and events, including Benjamin's blood transfusions. Through this convention, the audience realizes

that Benjamin is receiving an infected transfusion long before the family knows anything is wrong. The play calls for three set actors—Benjamin, Mother, and Father—and an ensemble of four other actors—two males and two females—who will play the other fifteen or so characters. The set is an open space that will represent several locales, including home, school, and the hospital.

----

Sendak, Maurice. *Really Rosie*. 22 pp.

A-

With wonderful authenticity, Sendak creates in *Really Rosie* the make-believe world of a young urban girl who wants to be a movie star. Throughout the play, Sendak's straightforward dialogue mixes with eclectic song lyrics to tell the story of a day with Rosie and her friends. Rosie leads her friends through a complex session of make-believe in which they create characters and situations for various films they will produce. In the end, Rosie "sees" and talks with the producer, finalizing plans to make the movie they have created, and her friends leave for their respective homes.

This play may seem confusing initially until you realize that what you are reading is dialogue from a child at play. Sendak has successfully tapped into a make-believe world created and monitored by an extraordinarily imaginative girl. Sendak indicates that the set should be representative of a Brooklyn street, complete with row houses and front stoops. There are nine characters in the play, six children and three adults.

----

Sterling, Pamela, adapted from the novel by Frances Hodgson Burnett. *The Secret Garden*. 39 pp.

\*

Sterling's adaptation of *The Secret Garden* successfully captures and communicates the magical journey of a young girl with little more



than a piece of earth where she makes things grow. Mary Lenox, an orphaned girl sent to live with her uncle, eventually finds purpose and happiness through friendship and through nurturing a secret garden.

This version of the story lends itself well to theater. Some may feel that sets and costumes for the play would be extensive, but the story is a "story theatre" style. The play takes place in England and requires the use of British dialects, including Yorkshire dialects for the servants. There are eight characters in the play and one robin redbreast puppet. Parts could be doubled if necessary.

----

Still, James. *Hush: An Interview with America*. 33 pp.

B+

In *Hush: An Interview with America*, Still presents a play-world full of symbolism and incongruities. Maggie Parks, almost twelve, and her father Frank live alone in a small house in the town of Hush, Kansas. One night, as Frank is watching his favorite news show, Jana Roberts, the star reporter, begins speaking with him and then crawls out of the television screen into his living room. She seems despondent and says she is looking for a story. After meeting Maggie and watching her dance outside, looking up at a tree, Jana is convinced that Maggie sees angels. Frank informs the journalist that she is mistaken; Maggie can't see anything because she is blind. This detail only adds to the drama of the story, and Jana runs with it. Soon people from all over come to see Maggie and her angels. But Maggie, losing touch with the special connection she had with the "something" in her backyard, leaves, trying to get back the peace she had before. After being alone and scared, Maggie returns home to her father. She finally finds that the special "something" was not outside her reach at all, but was in fact something inside of her—a young woman who is finally starting to emerge.

This multifarious tale mixes clips of newscasts, interviews, conversations, and the strange sub-plot of an escaped lion in with the main action of the play. Though the play has a

clear through line, most of the action is distinctly non-realistic, at times even absurd. *Hush* deals with several themes on various levels. It is open to interpretation and will likely mean different things, depending on audience age and circumstance. There are fifteen-plus characters, which could be played by five or more women and six or more men, perhaps fewer with careful staging. Technically, the script is fairly detailed and requires some special effects, but should be suitable for upper-division schools and community theatres.

----

Swortzell, Lowell. *The Mischief Makers*. 30 pp.

A-

Swortzell combines traditional tales from African, European, and Native American cultures to portray three time-honored tricksters who compete for the title of "Greatest Trickster in the World." The play opens with Raven, Anansi the Spider, and Reynard the Fox sharing a totem pole, arguing over who is the greatest trickster. Anansi suggests that they solve the argument by each choosing his favorite, most cunning experience and retelling it to the others. Raven and Reynard agree, and the three proceed to each tell a story exemplifying their wit and craftiness. Each claims that his/her story proves he/she is the "foremost troublemaker of the world." In the end, they turn to the audience for a vote, each animal encouraging audience members to vote for him/her. This results in total chaos, which the god of the skies must end by speaking from the heavens and directing the characters that they are all the best and should go on in their individual parts of the world to spread mischief and merriment.

Swortzell successfully integrates these three characters in a kind of tapestry of storytelling. Each has a turn to be the star of his/her own story, while the other two characters perform the supporting roles in the tale. The quick changes in point of view and character seem to require somewhat agile performers, but could be presented by less experienced actors given enough time for rehearsal. The play, written in story theatre style, calls for few complicated

special effects. The cast includes three characters and one off-stage voice, all of which may be performed by men or women.

----

Zeder, Suzan. *Wiley and the Hairy Man*. 24 pp.

A

*Wiley and the Hairy Man* retells a folk story in which a child protagonist overcomes his fears by developing courage and cleverness. Wiley, a young boy living with his mammy, is afraid of the mysterious Hairy Man. Through the course of the play, we learn that the Hairy Man killed Wiley's father and is now out to get the boy. Fortunately, Mammy is a skilled conjurer and has been able to protect her son to this point. The time has come, however, where the boy must defend himself. Wiley must defeat the monster by tricking him three times. Wiley meets the monster in the swamp and tricks him twice. After Mammy's plan to trick the Hairy Man a third time backfires on her, Wiley must rely upon his own resources to defeat the Hairy Man, free his dog and Mammy from the monster's spells, and banish the Hairy Man from their lives forever.

Zeder has successfully created a modern-day fairy tale, reinforcing for her young audience that they have the power within them to affect their lives for the better and helping them know that by utilizing their resources, things will be all right in the end. The play has a cast of four characters and a chorus of at least four additional actors. With flexible staging, the various locales (Mammy's house and the swamp), as well as set pieces are created by the chorus with minimal additional set pieces or properties.

◆ ◆ ◆ ◆