



2003

### Merlin's Tale of Arthur's Magic Sword

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Engar, Keith. *Merlin's Tale of Arthur's Magic Sword*. The Anchorage Press, Inc., 1982. \$35.00 for first performance, \$32.50 for second, \$30.00 for each after. 56 pp.

Reviewer: Jennifer Eskelsen

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young adult;

Rating: Dependable

Genre: Fairy tales; Plays; Folklore; Occult Plays;

Subject: Drama--Reviews; Magic--Juvenile drama; Honor--Juvenile drama; Family--Juvenile drama;

Theme: Everybody is somebody.

Production Requirements: Open Stage. Simple costumes and props. Need for semblance of sword in a stone.

Acts: 1

Run Time: 90 min

Characters: 5F, 13M

Cast: 1 F child, 4 F adult, 2 M children, 11 M adult

Time Period: Sixth century Britain.

The King Pendragon is about to die and his knights wonder whom he will name king after his death. King Pendragon announces that his son has just been born and that when his son comes of age, he will be the new king. The King's daughters, as well as their husbands, are furious. When the girls try to find the baby, they discover that he has disappeared. Fourteen years later, two boys named Kay and Arthur are playing in their backyard. It is time for Kay to be knighted. After being knighted, Kay goes to London with his father for a tournament. King Pendragon's daughters are there planning some way to take over the kingdom since it has been left in the hands of King Leodogrance and the Archbishop of Canterbury until the rightful king should come forth. Merlin sends Arthur to the tournament. While there, Arthur sees a sword stuck in a stone. Realizing that Kay doesn't have a sword, he decides to try to take this one and give it to him. He pulls it out, not realizing the implication of what he had just done. One of King Pendragon's daughters sends her son to take it from him and kill Arthur; they fight over it. Hearing the commotion, the town comes to find out what has happened. The true story of who pulled out the sword is told and Arthur proves it was him by doing it again. King Pendragon's daughters realize that he is their brother and they and their husbands pledge allegiance to him.

Some of the characters in this play are catching and entertaining, specifically Merlin, and Marion, Kay and Arthur's little sister. They have so much spirit and energy that they keep the play going. King Pendragon's daughters and their husbands all seem to be one and the same. They all want the crown and they work together to get what they want; the problem is that none are unique, except perhaps Morgan, who has only some magic ability. Arthur doesn't have any special voice; he's a depressed little boy with parents who also sound depressed. The dialogue at times is very dull, but at a few key points it gets a little witty. For example, when, in the beginning, King Pendragon meets with those who have any right to claim his throne, they bicker back and forth, playing with words and each other's names. Otherwise, the pace seems very slow. There isn't a lot of action in the play except when Arthur is fighting for the sword, which doesn't happen until the very end. Most of this play addresses a younger audience, and the story loses its appeal during the periods where there isn't any energetic physical movement. The actual plot of the story was an interesting view of the fairly well-known legend. Very rarely do Arthur's sisters and their families get involved in renditions of the tale, which makes this play interesting to see, especially for someone who has heard several versions of this story. This play could be put on by a high school or community theater. It is appropriate for all ages; however, children under the age of 13 may not be able to pay attention for very long.