



2003

Gulliver's Travels in the Land of Lilliput

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Nelsen, Mindy M. (2003) "Gulliver's Travels in the Land of Lilliput," *Children's Book and Media Review*: Vol. 24 : Iss. 3 , Article 19.

Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cbmr/vol24/iss3/19>

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Dyville, Jack. *Gulliver's Travels in the Land of Lilliput*. I. E. Clark Publications, 2000. ISBN 0886804868. Contact publisher regarding price. 39 pp.

Reviewer: Mindy Nelsen

Reading Level: Primary; Intermediate;

Rating: Dependable;

Genre: Fantasy Plays; Adventure Plays; Fairy Tales;

Subject: Drama--Reviews; Classical literature--Juvenile drama; Discovery--Juvenile drama;

Theme: Compromise brings peace and love in any difficult situation, and the tongue is better than the sword.

Production Requirements: Some specific props; sound and lighting special effects necessary; three costume changes for several members of the cast. Musical numbers to be played by Gulliver or someone off stage.

Acts: 2

Run Time: 50-60 minutes

Characters: 24, 4 of the women's roles could be doubled.

Cast: 12 F, 12 M. It is suggested that Gulliver be an adult and know how to play the guitar or piano.

Time Period: A long time ago.

This play is based on a brief excerpt of Jonathan Swift's novel of the same name and put into the form of a light musical with Gulliver singing the majority of the songs and other characters having the option of joining in. Lone traveler Gulliver washes up unconscious onto the shore of a kingdom of tiny people. He is not their big problem, but rather the solution to it. The kingdom is in a state of anticipation for the upcoming "wedding of the century" which will join the kingdoms of Lilliput and Blefescu with the marriage of Princess Glory and Prince David. But the two feuding kings can't come to terms about the minute details of the ceremony, especially about which country's national anthem will accompany the nuptials. They call the wedding off and King Little hopes to use Gulliver as his weapon of mass destruction to combat the thugs of the kingdom of Blefescu. Instead though, Gulliver comes up with a combination of the two songs that pleases everyone for the time being and he sails off once again to encounter more adventures.

This story is a fairly accurate adaptation of Jonathan Swift's tale and full of lessons on the importance of talking and trying to work things out. Peace is a major motivating factor in this production. The characters tend to be one-dimensional and predictable, but at the same time, they are much too overly complicated for their perspective purposes. Primary examples of this can be found in the secondary characters of the ladies-in-waiting whose sole responsibilities are to ridicule the king with vaguely witty complaints about how he rules and his personality and the king's henchmen who bumble around and are actually referred to as the three stooges. They detract from the progression of the plot and theme. Real time in the play seems to move unimaginably slow as the citizens are able to perform massive feats like dragging the giant Gulliver down to the castle, all bound up and then completely rebuilding his wrecked ship, preparing for a wedding and getting adequate sleep all in the few hours of one night. The musical numbers are a fun addition, but they inhibit the natural story from flowing out by having awkward transitions into Gulliver's songs attempting to tell some forgotten piece of the story. Instead of adding a magical quality to the story, they seem disjointed and stop the action mechanically as though it's time for the characters to sing in that moment and then move on to something else. The production could be simplified as far as production requirements are concerned and the set could be suggestive instead of detailed and complicated.