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Beauty and the Beast

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Stuart, Ellen. *Beauty and the Beast*. New Plays for Children, 1964. ISBN NA. Contact publisher regarding price. 50 p.

Reviewer: Mark Bell

Reading Level: Preschool, Primary, Intermediate, Young adult

Rating: Significant shortcomings

Genre: Historical plays; Fantasy plays; Fairy tale plays;

Subject: Drama--Reviews; Fairy Tale--Juvenile drama; Love--Juvenile drama; Monsters--Juvenile drama;

Theme: Love requires sacrifice and overlooking flaws.

Production Requirements: A healthy amount of scene changes, as well as use of sound effects and props, are required. Elaborate period costumes and make-up for the Beast are also required.

Acts: 2

Run Time: 35–45 min

Characters: 10+

Cast: Adults and/or children could perform the roles adequately. 6+ male characters and 3+ female (6 and 3 of each for sure the extras of either depends on the number of servants the beast has).

Time Period: Up to interpretation as with most fairy tales; most likely anywhere from Tudor through Restoration.

The Count has invested a fortune in a ship and leaves his home to check on its fate. He discovers the ship is lost. As he returns home, the Count loses his way and discovers the Beast's castle. While there he eats and takes a rose from the garden, which the Beast equates to stealing (a hanging offense). Beauty agrees to take the Count's place and live at the castle of the Beast, who treats her exceptionally well. The Beast lets her return home to visit her family and when she returns he's nearly dead. She agrees to marry him; the curse that was on him is then broken, and they live happily ever after.

This version of *Beauty and the Beast* has both selling and detracting points. Unfortunately, any show dealing with this subject will be judged against the Disney film and stage show. Overall this play is decent. The characters are a little flat, and there is frequent repetition of lines as if the playwright hoped this would improve reception. Some inconsistencies exist in the plot, for example, a page and a half after the Beast threatens to hang Beauty's father, he tells her that all he wants in to make her happy. While making another happy is a noble goal, the Beast does so by throwing money at her, which may not be the message parents or teachers want to communicate to children in the audience. To its credit, this show does try to do some fairly brave things in the way it is staged. The Beast himself is on stage for the better part of the production, so his makeup needs to be convincing but quick to change at the end of the show. A page-boy/narrator/troubadour is supposed to strum and play the guitar and sing verse before each scene—an interesting device not usually found in children's plays.

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