2008

Jack and the Beanstalk in the Complete Plays of Charles Ludlam

Rebeca Wallin

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Reviewer: Rebeca Wallin
Reading Level: Preschool, Primary, Intermediate
Rating: Dependable
Genre: Adventure plays; Plays; Fantasy Plays;
Subject: Fairy tales; Children's play; Drama--Reviews;
Theme: Fear nothing when you are in the right.
Production Requirements: Extensive—several scene changes and special effects are required.
Acts: 1
Run Time: 30 minutes
Characters: 9+
Cast: 4 male, 5 female, various peasants
Time Period: Present day

This modern day version of *Jack and the Beanstalk* does not veer too far from the original fairytale. In this version, Jack lives with his mother in a tenement apartment. Jack must sell their pet cow for money—yes, they have a pet cow in the apartment. He sells the cow for soybeans. After the beans grow, Jack climbs the beanstalk and meets the giant. The giant has gained his wealth by stealing from workers during the Great Depression to build his castle. Jack discovers that his father was one of those workers and that the giant had killed Jack’s father. While escaping, Jack steals the magic harp and the golden goose. Then Jack goes home, chops down the beanstalk, and kills the giant.

The script is short and succinct with a run time of about 30 minutes. Some of the dialogue is clever and the jokes will entertain young children. The fact that it is set in modern times helps with some of the dialogue and jokes, but it is not a huge benefit or detriment to the script. The modern language and setting do not change the original story in a significant way. This play would be a good addition to a performance of collected fairy tales.

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