



2009

Mother Hicks

Rebeca Wallin

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Zeder, Susan. *Mother Hicks*. Anchorage Press, 1984. ISBN 0876022638. Contact publisher regarding price. 68 p.

Reviewer: Rebeca Wallin

Reading Level: Intermedite, Young adult

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Plays; Occult plays; Historical plays;

Subject: Depression era--Juvenile drama; Witches--Juvenile drama; Sign language--Juvenile drama; Drama--Reviews;

Theme: Don't judge those you don't know.

Production Requirements: Open stage with several suggested areas. Some set pieces and music.

Acts: 2

Run Time: 80-90 minutes

Characters: 8-9

Cast: 4-5 male, 4 female

Time Period: 1935

The play takes place in the small town of Ware, Illinois during the depression. The action centers around Tuc, a young deaf man who lives in the town; Girl, a 13 year old who was found as a baby in the town and whom the town has raised; and Mother Hicks, an old woman who lives alone on a hill. The town, looking for explanations to their problems, blames most negative occurrences on witches—namely Old Mother Hicks. When Girl is punished by her current guardian for going to the graveyard at night to spy on Mother Hicks, she decides to become a witch herself to get revenge. When she contracts pneumonia, Tuc secretly takes her to Mother Hicks to be healed. Girl learns more about herself, Tuc, and Mother Hicks while she recuperates there and develops a relationship with Mother Hicks. At the conclusion, Girl decides that she will stay with Mother Hicks for awhile.

This play successfully captures the feel of a depression-era, small town through language and issues explored. The characters are well developed and the audience will immediately sympathize with many of them. The dialogue alternates from light and fun to deep and powerful, keeping the audience engaged. The staging is especially interesting with regards to Tuc, who signs all of his lines which are spoken by a chorus of other cast members. The playwright emphasizes the importance of finding a deaf actor to play this part if at all possible to truly capture the emotion and poetry of the sign language. The themes of acceptance and differences are especially applicable to young audiences. Because some of the plot points have occult undertones, this play would not be suitable for very young audiences. Although this play is the first in a trilogy, it can stand alone.

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