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Play Reviews

Janice Card
Harold R. Oaks
Lisa Kirkwood
Christine Smith

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Zolotow fans and others will enjoy her poetic book on the four seasons starting with "Summer Is..." The soft pastel pictures by Bornstein add to the quiet, reflective mood of sights, sounds, tastes and smells all year round. She describes the interests and activities loved by children—going barefoot, cider and honey, sled and skates, pussy willows and mud on your shoes—to list only a few.

The "noun + is ..." format grouped by topics like seasons works much better than a lot of "noun + is" statements at random.

A group of first graders responded with interest to the winter and spring parts (if they don't understand or like our poetry selections, we immediately see their disinterest on their faces).--Lillian Heil.

**Plays**


This version of *Tom Sawyer* starts out with a snappy scene, Jeff Thatcher is alone on stage doing battle with an imaginary foe. Tom enters and watches him—sizing up the new boy—then greets him with the challenge: "I 'low I kin lick you!" Jeff counters with: "I'd like to see you try it!" They circle each other and goad one another on until no more can be said and it is time to put their bragging to a test. Tom triumphs over Jeff in their fight, but Jeff's sister, Becky, conquers Tom without throwing any punches. She simply steals his heart.

Nine short scenes follow. Some are as lively as the first and some are not, but basically this is a creditable script of the classic novel. The lyrics are not impressive and the music was not included with the script. Neither could be too offensive because the songs seem to be quite short. The musical numbers could be eliminated without damaging the play. There are at least eight scene changes, but each location could be represented by simple portable scenery.

Junior high school students should enjoy participating in this play and presenting it to their peers or elementary school children.--Janice Card.

Based on Clarence Jordan's "Cotton Patch Version of Matthew and John," this musical is set in current Georgia with a cast of recognizable characters. The plot sometimes follows the Biblical text, but often reinterprets events and language for modern audiences. The country-folk approach brings new meaning and the songs lend themselves to the non-realistic style of the fast paced work. I found the play interesting and entertaining, but it may be jarring in its non-conventional approach. The play requires a strong, musical cast to make this exuberant country western hoedown work.—Harold R. Oaks.


*The Padrone* is a musical drama based on the novel, *Phil the Fiddler* by Horatio Alger, Jr. Set in New York City, 1882, it tells the story of a young Italian immigrant, Filippo, who must give his guardian, The Padrone, two dollars a day or receive a vicious beating. Filippo, a musician, earns the money by playing his fiddle in the streets, begging for coins from wealthy passers-by. In an attempt to escape the brutality of his Padrone, the boy runs away to New Jersey and pursues his "American" dream: acquisition of wealth and position. Though pursued by Padrone he is assisted by a number of kind people (all representing different nationalities) and eventually is adopted by a wealthy couple, Dr. and Mrs. Masters.

Though the play is informative and successful in portraying the sociological conditions during the industrial revolution, the playwright vacillates between several conflicting themes. The result is a heavy and awkward script overloaded with confusing characters. Great proficiency in a variety of accents (Italian, German, Jewish, Irish) as well as considerable musical skill is required, rendering this musical virtually impossible to properly produce on an amateur level. Professional companies might consider this script and find it successful and appropriate for junior high and high school students.—Lisa Kirkwood.


This excellent play on the life of a slave who learned not only to read and write, but excelled her teachers in the use of language, should be of special interest to teachers. From a prologue depicting her being kidnapped from her mother at the age of eight to her presentation to nobility at the age of twenty, the play moves with style and skill. Production requires a competent performing
group, but the play could be read in English or Social Studies classes for accurate historical perspective. Bibliography for further reading is included. --Harold R. Oaks.

Quinn, Don. *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe.* (dramatized from story by C.S. Lewis). The Dramatic Publishing Co. Royalty: First performance $35.00, second performance $25.00, each subsequent $20.00.

This script is not a dramatized version of C.S. Lewis' story, but rather a hit-and-miss cutting of his novel interspersed with dialogue changes by Mr. Quinn. The plot by Lewis was literally gutted. Aslan becomes a rather secondary character who only appears at the end to help save the day. His sacrificial death and rebirth are completely left out, but other extraneous elements like Father Christmas' deliverance of the dagger and magic potion to the children are left in with no relevance to the play's cut version of the original story.

The script left the children intact and they are developed nicely. Once they reach Narnia, however, the pace becomes so fast that "the end" has come before anything really happens. It appears that the playwright grew tired in the middle of the play and decided to just have a final battle scene and end it. He might have done better to attempt an original plot rather than ruin this classic for so many. --Christine Smith.

Rodale, J.I. *The Lost Glockenspiel.* Mrs. J.I. Rodale. 75¢ per copy. Royalty free for all schools, but permission must be requested. 8p.

This skit is a Christmas story about three brothers--tall, short, and fat. The fat brother finds that his glockenspiel is missing. This upsets him so much, he can't cook for his brothers. Because they want to eat, the brothers set out to find the missing glockenspiel. In the piggery they find it. The brothers and the rooster accuse the pig of stealing it to keep from being eaten on Christmas. It is soon discovered that the goose stole the glockenspiel and the brothers have cooked goose for Christmas dinner.

The script is very short--ten minutes performance time at most. The main point seems to be: Which animal will they kill and eat for Christmas dinner? The characters are dull and there is too much narration. --Robyn Bishop.


This dramatization of a published diary given the same title is about a sixteen-year-old girl named Alice who is trying to find herself. Her journey takes her away from her family into the drug culture and leads her across the country as a runaway.
There is a very poignant scene when Alice is deciding whether or not to go home while her parents are missing her and wondering how they could have helped her more effectively. Alice returns home and changes her lifestyle and friends. She is very near success when an old "friend" gives her drugged candy. The resulting bad trip necessitates her spending two months in a mental hospital. She returns home and just when it appears to be a happy ending, she has a recurring trip and accidentally overdoses on sleeping pills to escape her misery.

The script is fast moving with assorted one liners to brighten up the dark side and give the audience a relief. Sensitive direction along with honest performances could make this script live and powerfully affect young audiences. This would be an excellent play for community or college theatres. Possibly high schools and junior highs would enjoy producing it because the message is so vital, but a director should carefully consider his resources for casting.--Christine Smith.

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