1984

Play Reviews

Janice Card

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Otto the Official sets himself up as dictator of a town and the citizens think and do exactly what he tells them without question. Otto claims he is always right—and he does not ask for anyone else's opinion. Since he runs the town, it's called Ottoville. Its official color is orange because it begins with the letter "O" and it is the color of Otto's hair. All the houses, trees and grass are painted orange. Only orange clothes may be worn by the citizens. To be sure no other color interferes with the orangeness of Ottoville, everyone who lives there must wear orange-colored glasses.

Otto has made Ottoville monotonously monochromatic. None of the inhabitants are happy with life as it is, but no one has the courage to rebel against Otto until the outsider, Edward Johnson, wanders into town. He is an artist and sees immediately that some drastic changes need to be made. He cleverly helps the citizens of Ottoville free themselves from Otto's demands and he even helps Otto see how foolish he has been.

The script is good, but not great. With only six characters, very little action called for in the script, and a totally orange stage, this play could be rather hum-drum. But if the prospective directors are creative and will read the production notes at the end of the script, they will find some good ideas for successful staging suggested by director Elisabeth Green Barker.

Because this play shows an example of a dictatorship, it could lead into the study of different types of government. Whether it is used to promote learning or merely to entertain, **OPQRS, ETC.** should appeal to audiences age ten and up.—Janice Card.


The famous Russian fairy tale on which this play is based has been produced on stage in Russia. This is the first English play version to be written, and it could easily become as popular here as it is in the Soviet Union.

Ivan is a boy who becomes a man by accepting difficult assignments and learning from them. The Tsar makes demands on him that seem
impossible, but as in most epic tales, our hero has someone to help him along the way. Ivan's friend and traveling companion is the wise little Humpback Horse. Together they share unique and magical adventures.

The story moves swiftly and the audience "flies" with Ivan and his friend to the moon and to the sea. They meet the beautiful Lady of the Moon, mother of the Tsar-Maid, and the Marvelous Monster Whale who carries a village of a million people on his back and tail.

The dialogue is natural. With wit and charm characters are conveyed and maintained. Although costumes should represent the elegance and folk quality found in Russia during the reign of the Tsars, the set does not have to be elaborate. Platforms, steps and ramps are suggested to help show changes in location since Ivan and the Little Humpback Horse travel extensively throughout the play. There is plenty of magic to excite the imagination, and action enough to keep everyone in the audience attentive.--Janice Card.