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Play Reviews

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Play Reviews


Dick Whittington heads for London to seek his fortune and on the way meets Pussycat who decides to accompany him. They come to the Fitzwarren house where Dick finds work. A sea captain comes to take things to trade and sell in Morania and Pussycat is invited to come along for the voyage and to get rid of the mice on board. In Morania, no one has heard of cats, but they are over-run by "vermin." When the Caliph of Morania sees how well Pussycat controls mice, he buys her for a fortune which is brought back to Dick.

The potential of this script is a light and lively musical entertainment for children. The show should be colorful and fast moving. The cast is fairly large and the characters are diverse. There is some audience participation—enough to make the children in the audience feel a part of things, but not so much that the continuity of the play is interrupted.

The song lyrics seem to fit in and carry the story along. The music is not included in the play book so its quality is unknown.

The plot lacks any vital conflict, but if the characters are strong enough a young audience should be interested in what happens to them. And the script calls for plenty of action, which holds attention.

This play might be a fun choice for sixth graders or junior high school students to present to elementary school children. Little if any scenery is required. Props and costumes would be sufficient in suggesting location.—Janice Card.


These dramatizations of Peter Cottontail stories are hinged together by blackouts. The predictable outcome of Peter's conflict with Granny Fox and Reddy Fox demands that one be a lover of the Burgess tales to enjoy the repetitious plot line.

Even cutting certain incidents would not strengthen the script. The play has eighteen animal and nature characters which can be double cast. Included in the animal group are Sammy Jay, Prickly Porky and Happy Jack Squirrel.

This script is most suitable for production within the classroom setting as an exercise in animal characterization. It could then be enjoyed by their peers and lower grades.—Christine Smith.
Lauck, Carol. **Heads and Tales.** Bakers Plays, 29 pages.

"Do you know there are some people who never use imagination? \[ ... \] Sad, but true \[ ... \] almost as sad as people not using smiles." So observes the eccentric professor who makes a grand entrance into ten year old J.J.'s dream to teach him how to employ his imagination (an encouraging female named Sophia) in the task of writing a story for a homework assignment.

There is much potential in this script for an innovative, energetic production for younger children. Its format is conducive to children on four sides (within participating proximity). There is story-telling and role-playing, word-creating ("thermadatalundulation") and defining, and a yellow pom-pom for T.J.'s right sneaker when he graduates (so that he'll remember to put his right foot forward). There are puns and mildly pleasant humor. And the characters, though one-dimensional, move around and talk enough to distract from their shallowness.

Two problems with the script are its "Was it only a dream?" premise, and the late-starting audience inclusion.

**Heads and Tales** misses the electric magic of a good fantasy as well as the captivating reality of life, but in the right hands could prove to be a very successful experience for younger audiences.—Robbin Olsen.


This musical has a fast paced script whose success will be determined by the skill and energy of the performers. The four cast members must sing, mime, and be able to use audience participation effectively.

The storyline follows nine-year-old Becky Watkins through several experiences that give her the confidence she needs to deliver her speech in elementary school. Her chief adviser and private tutor is her own house cat come to life. Other animals, people, and objects are created by the remaining cast members as needed.

The limited set requirements and small cast make this script a good consideration for touring. With talented cast members the show could be enjoyable for both the performers and the audience.—Christine Smith.


The National Theatre of the Deaf commissioned the adaptation of Gawain for performances in the Children's Arts Festival of
1977 at Kennedy Center. It was created as a play for all people, all ages.

Sir Gawain gives his word to find the Green Knight in one year and allow him to lop off his head. He sets out to keep the bargain and comes to the castle of Bercilak. There he is put to a test without his knowledge. He is successful in passing the test except for one flaw. When he finally faces the Green Knight's axe, he has learned much about pride, honor and life itself.

The tale is full of magic, excitement and romance. The play can be presented as simply or elaborately as desired.

Characters speak dialogue alternated with narrative. The language of the play is beautiful and keeps the flavor of a medieval poem-story.

Professional, amateur and school groups should add this quality effort to their collections, to be performed over and over again.—Janice Card.