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Play Reviews

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The Sandman's Eyes is a very good book. The dialogue is believable, often clever or funny. There are no wasted words. And so important in a mystery, the suspense carries right to the end. As the book begins, the eighteen-year-old narrator Michael Thorne (Mickey) has just returned emotionally to his grandfather's house in a small town after two years in a hospital/school for emotionally disturbed boys. Soon we learn that he was sent there after an inconclusive murder trial. Mickey is sure of his own innocence but few other characters are. This suspicion on every side convinces Mickey that he must find the real murderer himself. He has the help of a big city investigative reporter who convinces Mickey that he believes in his innocence and wants to write the true story.

There are more mysteries to solve than a murder. Mickey doesn't know who or where his parents are. Both puzzles are solved by the end of the book. Readers will be able to identify with Mickey's search for identity because his observations are so true to life, his struggles so poignant.

Just one small reservation: Mickey seems young for eighteen. His cloistered upbringing, painful shyness, and institutionalization could reasonably be responsible for this, however, and his lack of experience should make it easier for the younger teen to identify with him.--Lovisa Lyman.


In ancient Pompeii, fourteen-year-old Enecus Cano must choose his life's profession. He wants to be an apprentice to a physician more than anything else, but his parents, as owners of a thermopolium (sausage stand), don't have the money necessary to support this dream. Along comes Locadio, a physician newly retired from Legionary medicine, who is settling into a private practice. He overhears Enecus discussing his dream with his best friend Salvius, and decides to take Enecus on.

Enecus learns the field of medicine by watching and doing, and the reader learns the rudiments of early Roman medicine--the diagnostic procedures, the language and the customs of the time. As the story unfolds, the ultimate trial of Enecus' skill becomes apparent--Vesuvius is ready to erupt, but no one has left Pompeii.

Some characters lack depth and are occasionally bland. Enecus' best friend, Salvius, appears only when conversation is needed, and when Enecus needs a body to work on. Enecus' parents are not well characterized, and when Enecus' father appears to have been lost in the eruption, the reader doesn't feel Enecus' grief. To the younger audience, however, this will be a good introduction to the world of ancient Rome.

Though the writing sometimes becomes overly wordy, and the language seems rather stilted for a fourteen-year-old, the younger reader will be caught up in Enecus' struggle to learn medicine. When Vesuvius does erupt, it becomes apparent that Enecus is the only one able to aid all the injured. Locadio's Apprentice is an interesting look at the world of medicine and ancient Rome.--Jan Addy.

Play Reviews

Pearson, Carol Lynn. I Believe in Make Believe. Music by JAC Redford. Anchorage Press Inc. Royalty: Request Info from publisher. $3.00 Script, $30.00 Score.

I Believe in Make Believe is a palatable presentation of five sketches based on the Brothers Grimm's fairy tales.

The opening song extolls the exciting, enchanting, wonderful world of make believe, leading one to believe that a magical tour of fantasy land is pending. But these high expectations are not met, for the ensuing play does not measure up to its own criteria. It is, in actuality, a rather ordinary review of standard fairy tales presented in the simple, unpretentious style of creative dramatics.

On these terms the play is clever, fast moving, and well constructed. Though not particularly original, it is a good selection for groups with interest in producing the old, endearing stories of The Bremen Town Musicians, The Princess Who Would Not Laugh, and others. Because it requires only simple costume accessories and a few hand props, it may be attractive for those on a shoestring budget.

The conclusion is a bit didactic in its admonition to youngsters to remember "make believe." The closing lyrics remind us again of the magical, fantastical world we never saw portrayed, but it still remains a pleasant piece of theatre with all the charm with which Ms. Pearson writes. Its diverse humor makes it enjoyable to all ages, but it is best suited for young children.--Lisa Kirkwood.

Liesl, the little match girl, lives in a village in a German speaking country. Her father, driven by hunger and illness, forces her to spend Christmas Eve in the streets selling matches to buy food. While she is there she meets with evil and good personified by five young men from the village. She remains honest and humane even when she is treated poorly by others. Her matches aren't able to warm her body in the bitterness of winter, but their glow represents the bright and beautiful things she has in her mind--both dreams and memories.

In this version of the classic tale, the playwright has brought together the bad and good just like we have in real life. He allows the match girl to die at the end, but he keeps it all very upbeat. The audience sees that Liesl is happy to be warm and loved again as she joins her deceased grandmother and leaves all but her pleasant memories of life behind her.

The Little Match Girl was first presented in December 1982, by the Children's Theatre Festival, a professional project of the University of Houston Department of Drama.

"Pleasant" is the word to best describe this musical. It can be staged with wonderful special effects or very simply. There are five songs, an overture and finale. The music is pleasant to listen to and works nicely into the play without interrupting its flow. God is acknowledged and presented through song ("God Is") as a joyful friend of children.

Although Liesl was played by an adult when the musical was first performed, the character would be more believable and sympathetic if the role was filled by a child (10-12 years old).

Although not a perfect gem, The Little Match Girl musical could offer a bright and pleasant entertainment for family audiences this Christmas Season.--Janice Card.


The play takes place in the Apple Kingdom where apples are the steady diet. A pair of young twins, Blossom and Jonathan, start a rumor that an applephoon is heading this way and will destroy all the apples. Chaos takes over as the rumor spreads and as everyone picks and hordes the apples. As a result of picking and carrying the apples, no one can bend their elbows. King Core sentences Jonathan and Blossom to the dungeon to sort apple seeds for the rest of their lives if a way to make the elbows bend isn't found. Without bending their elbows they cannot feed themselves and will starve to death. After a tug o' war, hypnotism, and a machine failure, Blossom and Jonathan discover that it is possible to feed each other. When they do this their elbows bend.

Even though this musical is for children, I feel it is also good for adults. The concept of "too much selfishness and not enough love" is universal. The script is cleverly written with plenty of "apple" puns, although some are forced. It is a good length for children. (1 hour to 1 hour and 15 minutes.) The setting is simple and lighting general. I feel that 5th-graders on up to adults could perform this play well. It's a delight for children of all ages.--Dianne Breinholt.


Addict is a "get tough" play about drug addiction in adolescents and young adults. It gives a very grave and sometimes gruesome picture of how youths become involved in drugs and what happens to the less fortunate addicts.

There are ten different characters, each with their own story on how they got involved in drugs. Some of the characters become involved through peer pressure, some by trying to please parents and teachers, others just for the thrill, etc. All die by the end of their story and the autopsy reports are read at the end of the play.

This is not a play for young children. These are not nice stories and there is not one happy ending. Addict is trying to get to kids before drugs get to them. It is a timely and important subject and I applaud Jerome McDonough for using his skills as a playwright to address the matter. I would like to have seen the play written with real cases, real people, and real results, though. I think the impact would have been greater had the play been taken from existing files. The characters were, just that--characters--and it would take very skilled actors and a skilled and sensitive director to pull this play off without appearing melodramatic. It would be easy to oversate the situations where they could become laughable. For this reason I suggest that high school students not perform this play.

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McDonough, Jerome. **Addict.** I.E. Clark Inc., 1985. 27p. $25/performance. 7-12

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I also feel that death is too easy for a consequence. Teenagers are not always as fearful of death as they are of becoming physically or mentally handicapped. McDonough could have shown some of the characters ending up in mental institutions, prisons, or even in a wheelchair, along with showing that some do die.

Jerome McDonough asks in the notes that drug counselors be present and listings of drug centers be printed on the program. He did not intend this play as entertainment, but for information. It is such an important subject needing this kind of attention that I would hate to see it overdone and lose the intended impact. --Erin Caldwell.

The Children's Book Review is written by people interested in children's literature. Their monthly discussions of books produced a new idea for the 1985-86 issues of the Children's Book Review. We want to share our favorite books with you so each issue will feature a list of ten favorite books. The first one represents the choices of Janet Francis, the cataloger for the juvenile collection at the Harold B. Lee Library.

**TEN FAVORITES**

Janet Francis


Sent back from India to escape fever, Sara Crewe becomes the school drudge when the money stops, with only dreams and her Indian Gentleman's monkey to console her.


Will, the last of the Old Ones, must find the six signs that will allow good to triumph over gathering evil.


A heavenly artist creates hilarious creatures on his way to making a Lion.


The animals teach the natives to follow a trail and freeways are born.


A young woman barely survives the ordeal of growing up the headmaster's daughter in an English boy's school.


In the ruins of war-torn London, four young people discover an alternate kingdom.


An intriguing interweaving of societies on an English moor where giants prove to be human and ecology takes on new meaning.