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Play Reviews

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Play Reviews

This adaptation of Hansel and Gretel grew out of five years of experimentation using creative dramatics to stimulate imagination and to subtly introduce young children to live theatre.

The play is centered around a family of six in a Comedia del Arte troupe. The actors perform in an arena setting with very few props. The show, written for children five through eight, requires advanced actors, one of whom is a mime. Because audience participation in the script sometimes determines the outcome of the story, the actors must be able to improvise well. High school students skilled in creative dramatics would find this challenging, rewarding, and fun.

One weakness in the script is that it spends too much time with the family in the beginning. The actual story needs to start sooner. This weakness, however, is slight and can be easily remedied.--Dianne Breinholt


The story takes place on the pier at Liberty Island, U.S.A. with Popeye running a ticket booth to sell tickets for the Statue of Liberty. Brutus and his mother, the Sea Hag, occupy a shop next door and overhear Popeye talking about a treasure in the statue. With the help of their puppet vulture, Bernard, they try several means of getting the treasure including kidnapping Olive, stealing Popeye's spinach, and stealing the hand and torch from the statue. Wimpey and a group of tourists further complicate things for both sides, but Popeye saves the day.

Eugene Jackson has brought the "Popeye" comic strip to life in a fun and delightful musical with just the right touch of patriotism. He has captured the flavor of the original comic strip with "sound effect" fights, dialect, Popeye versus Brutus, Wimpy's love for hamburgers, and Popeye's saving Olive Oil with the help of spinach. Wimpy's
songs, "I'll Gladly Pay" and "I Choose Mooching" are well written and funny. High school, advanced Jr. High, or community theatres would have a fun and challenging time producing this show. The chorus can be enlarged to include as many as desired. The challenge would be to make the "sound-effect" fights comical and not violent.--Dianne Breinholt


Seraph, Assistant Principal of Angel School, finds it necessary to chastize three wayward students--Cherry, Angelina, and Spir. The trio persist in making mischief and being rebels. The Principal (God Himself) speaks inaudibly to Seraph and instructs him to send the three reprobates to Earth to do penance. They must find a good reason to keep the world turning, otherwise--Earth and the three baddest angels will be finished forever. On Earth Cherry, Angelina, and Spir discover that people are selfish, greedy, pushy and basically unlovable. But when someone is really in need the people of Earth do rally and help, so there is hope for all.

The biggest problem with this script is its silly title. Actually, the material provides a large cast with a decent vehicle for presenting an up-beat Christmas message. It would appeal most to church groups because the plot presents a modern day nativity--a babe born in a car out in a blizzard on Christmas day. He and his parents are housed and cared for by strangers.

All fourteen plus cast members are on stage most of the time. Those who are not creating roles become part of a living cyclorama. From it characters come to life. Good blocking and timing will be necessary to make this short Christmas play clip along smoothly.--Janice Card


Based quite loosely on the fairytale "Jack and the Beanstalk," this musical play is full of action and fun for young audiences. Wog is supposed to be a mean giant, but he is actually a very likable young man of normal size, who hides behind a disguise. He is aided by his friends Barkley the dog, who is disguised as a lion--and Henrietta the
hen, who is disguised as a goose who lays golden eggs, which are actually gold-painted footballs.

Jack and his cousin, Polly, from Cowtown go up the beanstalk and discover Wog's secret. The three become friends. Several odd-balls from Cowtown (Mayor Z. Dotres, Miss Snootful, and Professor Hoodwink) make their way up the Beanstalk and add their two-cents worth of nonsense. There are numerous chases, mix-ups, and changes of heart that take place.

No music was sent so I will not comment on it, but the lyrics seem average or a little bit better. They are appropriate for the play. The plot is of little importance. Entertainment appears to be the main purpose of this play... and why not? Beanstalk! has little to sink your teeth into, but it is a fun romp in the ridiculous.--Janice Card