Play Reviews


The play takes place in Trolltown, where a wicked Troll extorts money from the local citizenry to protect them from the "threat" of the One-Eyed Slithering Zanies, from Zanie Mountan, who he proports are evil creatures. The Troll's scheme is upset, however, by the arrival of two strangers. The first is Boult, an adventurer, who is skeptical of the Troll's protection. The second stranger is a young boy named Jack, a peasant from the seaside who has an old one-eyed stuffed elephant, and, who is full of energy, imagination, and curiosity. They are befriended by Dana, a young townsfolk. Jack has a map that leads to two treasures. A telescope and a book of knowledge, both dangerous to the Trolls standing in town. With the help of Boult and Dana, Jack turns the tables on the Troll and frees the town from his tyranny.

I found this play to be very enjoyable. The setting and lighting can be simple or elaborate as facilities permit. The play was written for children to be acted by adults or young people, although I feel all ages would enjoy it.--Darwin Seed


This adaptation of a Russian fairy-tale tells the story of Andrei, a young archer, who is sent by the King to find fresh game in the middle of winter. Instead he finds an enchantingly beautiful wife who has magic powers. The King desires to have her for his own and plots to get rid of Andrei by sending him on three seemingly impossible quests. He completes these with the help of his wife and her invisible servant Brother Nobody. Andrei becomes King and all is well.

The play is quite short (about 45 minutes) and well-written with many possibilities for creative staging including the use of puppets. My big problem with the show is the music. There are six songs (far too many for the length of the play) and all are very contemporary in style. The music in no way enhances, but rather detracts from the poetic, fairy-tale flow of the story and there is certainly nothing Russian about the music.

I feel this show has good potential for production and would be enjoyed by children and adults but only if the music is cut and/or replaced by something more traditional.--Jan Mulligan


One of many adaptations of Pinocchio available, Eugene Jackson's plot covers the traditional episodes. Pinocchio comes to life through the magic of the blue fairy, he is tricked by the fox and the cat (Foxio Futtucini and Catsio...
Cavatini) and sold first to Professor Zucchini's puppet show, and then to Uncle Linguini who takes Pinocchio to Dizzyland where he will be transformed into a donkey. Pinocchio escapes, rescues Geppetto from the whale and because of his heroic efforts is transformed into a real boy.

Although the traditional storyline is preserved, I found many elements of the script offensive. Particularly Catsio Cavatini's speech impediment. The impediment alone would very likely make children with a similar problem self-conscious, but it is made fun of constantly in Catsio's conversations with Foxio. There is quite a bit of violence (i.e. they use Punch and Judy as the puppet show), and although virtue is eventually rewarded I am afraid the message is clouded by the other undesirable activities that may seem funny to children.

I did not have the music to review, but the lyrics were trite and sometimes lengthy and I question the necessity of them. I cannot recommend this play being produced without cuts and changes. I would definitely proceed with caution.--Jan Mulligan


*The Ballad of Gopher Gap* is a corny, fast moving melodrama with every plot twist and character you can dream up. There is the sly villain with a fake mine, the sickningly sweet hero who recites horrible poetry, the gullible 'Easterners' who have come to make a million dollars, the airhead heroine, and even a long lost child. The Fight scenes are choreographed as well as the chase scene. And the puns are coming so fast you almost don't have time to groan.

This melodrama is a lot of fun and could be performed equally well by children as well as adults, and would be enjoyed by all ages.--Erin Caldwell