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Play Reviews

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PLAY REVIEWS


Michael Brill has taken the characters of Commedia dell’arte and has written them into a delightful play called Bamboozled. Harlequin enlists the help of Brighella, and other townspeople, to trick Pantalone and get his money, to help Leandro and Columbine get married and to gain his freedom. In the end, after some clever deception, Pantalone realizes that he has been "bamboozled."

This play, done in Commedia dell’arte style, can be both fun and challenging for high school students as well as adults. Careful attention should be paid to casting, as well as to blocking, in order to make the actors, the gags and the ending believable. The lighting, setting, costumes and props are simple. Sound effects are made on the side of the stage by the actor who plays Prologue. Ages eight through adult would find this play amusing and should be "bamboozled" by the ending.--Dianne Breinholt

Fendrich, Shubert. *Family Ties.* Pioneer Drama Service,

This script creates your standard "warm but human" TV family whose life is complicated by the visit of two "still" hippie friends of the older Keatons, a computer-brainchild friend of Alex, a nerd-but-nice-guy friend of pretty Mallory, and Mrs. Ogden, a conservative older woman who keeps wanting to add Victorian trim to the modern house that Mrs. Keaton is designing for her.

Humor comes through confusion and misunderstanding as the hippies involve the Keaton’s daughter in a demonstration, the computer friend backs out of Alex’s corporate plans for being a teenage billionaire and Mallory chooses the nerd over the local star quarterback for her homecoming date.

The entire play takes place in the Keaton’s living room and the humor is typical of TV. The gags are pretty much expected but you still smile and maybe chuckle. There are a variety of characters though their dialogue is predictable. The music is generally monotonous and seems to detract from the flow of the storyline. The best piece, musically, is "He’s Nobody Special Except To Me."

This script is suitable for junior high and smaller high school programs. Unless you just want to give your students some musical experience, I wouldn’t bother with the music.--Christine Smith

A modern adaptation of Mark Twain's classic story, the play begins with Hank Morgan in the school auditorium as he prepares himself to play the role of King Arthur in the school play. Hercules, the stage manager, and Hank have a disagreement. As a fight begins, Hank is knocked unconscious and suddenly finds himself in the court of King Arthur in the year 528. After several silly escapes with knights and ladies-in-waiting, miracles performed with telephones and transistor radios and an eclipse of the sun, Sir Boss (Hank) is flashed back to the present with Merlin's magic spell.

The script begins well and contains some funny scenes; however, there is so much story in 37 pages that the end of the play seems trite and full of gimmick.

Junior high students and some high school students may enjoy performing this. The play would appeal to audiences of the same age and older elementary school children. The play would be a good choice for church groups.--Robyn Bishop

Newell, Martha. *The Frog Prince*. New Plays Inc. $3.50 @ copy.

Prince Mosnoff and Olaf, his captain of the guard, are in the forest searching for the snake witch who has been turning people into animals and then eating them. Their plan is to destroy her, but while Olaf looks through a book of magic for a spell that will kill her, the snake witch catches the prince and turns him into a frog. Olaf discovers that loud whistling will do away with the snake witch, but all he can manage is a weak whistle which knocks her out temporarily and saves Mosnoff from becoming a meal.

From the book of magic, the prince and Olaf learn that the only antidote for the witch's spell is for a princess to kiss the prince of her own free will. Even if there were a princess handy, would she choose to kiss a man-sized frog?

While the prince and Olaf are battling the snake witch and her spell, Princess Tavia is being led into the forest by her lady-in-waiting, Nannycoo, who is helping her escape an undesirable marriage. The royal parties meet and romp in and out with occasional visits from the snake witch. Finally, the enemy is destroyed, the frog kissed and the prince and princess are united.

Martha Newell's musical play is silly, but is intended to be. The silly characters doing silly things are all for the sake of entertainment. The script provides action, humor, suspense and some audience participation. The lyrics are not impressive and the dialogue is not brilliant, but the play could be fun to do for elementary school audiences.--Janice Card