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Play Reviews

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It's hard to find someone who rises up against lullabies. The quiet, peaceful moments between parent and very young child are perhaps symbolized best by the soft and comforting tunes which are found in almost every land. Yolen has collected fifteen of her favorites in this volume, her son has arranged the tunes for piano and guitar, and Mikolaycak has rounded out the experience with peaceful illustrations. In addition, a few short lines give a brief history of each lullaby.

While the total book is pleasing and informative, it seems almost more appropriate for the home than the library. Reading the text and tunes invites participation. —James Jacobs

### Play Reviews


What does it mean to become REAL? The Velveteen Rabbit finds out from the Skin Horse and the boy who loves his fur off. The rabbit becomes the boy's constant companion and when the boy becomes seriously ill, the rabbit, having been contaminated, has to be discarded. This is the turning point in the story for the rabbit, because while in the garbage bin, he is made REAL by the nursery magic fairy.

This classic children's tale by Margery Williams has been adapted and updated to give it a modern flavor. The reason for this is not clear, but presumably it was to make it more appealing to today's audiences. In the process, however, the story has lost its original charm, having characters added and much of the content changed.

The play is short, with some interesting lyrics in the songs. It would probably be easily transportable for multiple performances. It has the potential of being very entertaining, and can employ as large or as small a cast as needed. This version, however, does not capture the magic of becoming REAL as portrayed by Margery Williams in her old-world style. —Meryl Perry

**Surface, Mary Hall. *Most Valuable Player*. The California Theatre Center, 1984.**

This is the story of Jackie Robinson, the first black man to play major-league baseball. The play tells of Jackie as a youth and his own drive and ambition to be the best athlete, but also his struggle to overcome prejudice as he grows up and is recruited into the major leagues by a white man who feels he must help the blacks break into professional sports.

This play not only shows the damage of prejudice, but also the triumph of what is morally right over narrow-mindedness and fear. Jackie is a good role model for children of all backgrounds to see that they can achieve their dreams regardless of the obstacles society places before them. —Erin Caldwell

**Thomas, Colin. *One Thousand Cranes*. Colin Thomas, 1983.**

Thomas has loosely combined *Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes*, the story of a girl who dies of leukemia caused by the atomic bomb, with a play about a Canadian kid who is afraid of, and opposed to, nuclear war. The script brings across the anti-bomb message simply but powerfully, using caricatures from *Star Wars* to fight the 'star wars.' The parallel stories are fine by themselves, but I would have liked to have had Buddy discover the story of Sadako and also find out about the monument.

Ninth-grade students through adults should perform this play well. Directors should pay careful attention to Japanese customs when producing this show. —Dianne Breinholt


The play starts at the end of the legendary race between the tortoise and the hare, with the hare demanding a rematch. Tortoise chooses an academic race and drags in two children, Margaret and
Harold, who have a report on Napoleon due in a week. Tortoise volunteers his help to Margaret, while Harold gets stuck with Hare. (Harold's name sounds too much like Hare, and we recommend that it be changed.) Well, of course, Margaret and Tortoise are right on schedule with their report; and, of course, Hare provokes Harold into irreversible procrastination. The play is predictable and procrastination is talked about, sung about, and philosophized about — to the point of lecturing.

The romantic feelings between Margaret and Harold are incongruent, if not simply ridiculous, for this age level. Second to fifth graders (who we feel this play is written for) will feel uncomfortable with such a display of feeling for persons of the opposite sex. A simple friendship could communicate the same concern for each other without becoming mushy.

The music is upbeat and fun to listen to, but all the songs except one sound similar to one another. This play has potential, but it needs refining and cutting to get the message across and still remain entertaining. —Erin Caldwell and Jan Mulligan


*Mother Hicks* is based on the folklore of the Depression years in small towns in the United States. Whenever anything bad happened that couldn't easily be explained, the townspeople blamed it on a supernatural force, and generally on an outcast that had been labeled a witch. A young deaf man takes a sick orphan girl to Mother Hicks, this town's outcast, to be healed. Mother Hicks takes the girl in and, through her knowledge of healing and simple common sense, cares for her. She also tells of the child's background. The townspeople find out where the girl is and are afraid for her soul, so they converge upon Mother Hicks's home, almost mob-like, to "save" the girl — with force, if necessary.

This play is destined to be a classic. It is well written and thought-provoking on multiple levels. It addresses many issues, such as prejudice, moral blindness, ostracism and integrity. The characters are full of depth, and the likeable characters are warm and entreating. The positiveness of the play filters through the prejudice and ignorance; it touches us without being didactic.

This play should be performed by adults, with the exception of the girl, who is thirteen. The deaf man needs to be performed by an actor with skills in American Sign Language, because much of the beauty of this play comes from the visual effect of the signing. —Erin Caldwell