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Play Reviews

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periods add up to thirty-plus years of beautiful, vibrant, upbeat, and very productive living.
Highly recommended for ANYBODY 12 years and up.--Afton Miner.

PLAYS

This play is based on fact. It is about an underground youth organization called "The Young Guard," which was operational in Krasnoden, Russia, during the German occupation. Members of the Young Guard are interrogated by the Gestapo as the past unfolds in many different scenes in this memory play. We see the Guard as it becomes operational and follow its members as they are betrayed, captured, and executed.
The Young Guard is an excellent play demonstrating martyrdom, heroism and youth. The young victims of the Nazi war machine fight and die for what they believe in. However, this would be a difficult play to produce with its large cast (35+), numerous short scenes, Russian terms and names...a challenge for the performers and director.
High school students would enjoy performing this play. It has the potential of being a fine educational tool if the director is interested in supporting the script with study of Russian history and attitudes, Naziism, and facts about World War II. With background information, the young performers could do a better job of portraying the characters in the play.--Robyn Bishop.

Based on the book by Margery Williams, Boffey and Pilcher's musical version of The Velveteen Rabbit presents the adventures of a toy rabbit who becomes real. The playwrights have preserved the story, but not the spirit of Mrs. William's charming tale. In an attempt to modernize the original, they have made several extreme and unfortunate character changes.
Margery Williams' Nana is a crisp, no-nonsense nanny--a grumbling disciplinarian with a heart of gold. This musical version Nana is a rather sardonic creature (resembling Miss Hannigan from the musical ANNIE) who threatens the Velveteen Rabbit in song (Top Banana Nana): "You had better beware/ Or I'll tie your little ears in knots/ And shave all your hair." The wild rabbits who comfort
the Velveteen Rabbit in the woods have also suffered character damage. The once shy and beautiful creatures of Ms. Williams' story have become hip and jive-struttin' in Boffey and Pilcher's version...using language such as "hey, man...far out far gone, dude." Such dialogue is incongruous with Ms. Williams' style which the playwrights have at times sought to keep through the use of a narrator who quotes heavily from the book. It is this uncomfortable juxtaposition of Williams' original words with the playwrights' upbeat language one finds jarring. However, many of other songs ("Toy Love," "Boy Love," "March of the Toy Tin Soldiers") work in the context of the book and the play.

Ms. Williams' book lends itself to adaptation as a musical, but the playwrights botched a good idea.--Lisa Kirkwood.


This is a pleasant little skit which, though hardly worth a second glance, is illustrative of a major problem in the publication of children's plays today. Scripts are being published for the sake of "getting it in print" rather than waiting until the work is fully developed.

The fact that a work is published and offered for public purchase indicates that it is worthy of public consumption. Restaurants don't serve unbaked breads or uncooked meals. And, I for one, am tiring of unfinished scripts being served to my artistic palate.

A Christmas Carol for J.I. Rodale has the thrown-together quality of a skit written for the annual office Christmas Party. I suspect that many of the jokes and puns relate directly to Mr. Rodale and/or other staff members of Rodale Books, Inc. In other words, this play was written for Mr. Rodale and company and will probably prove utterly un producible for other groups. There are some clever lyric adaptations of "The Twelve Days of Christmas," and the idea of Santa turned health-nut trying to shape up an out-of-shape father and son team is humorous. But please be forewarned that this sixteen-page script attempts to cover one year in the life of the father and son. There are six separate time periods and several different locations (a living room on Christmas Eve, a garden in the summer, etc.)

If you are looking for a ten-minute Christmas skit which will be relevant to your group, I suggest you write your own. To Mark Bricklin I suggest he withdraw A Christmas Carol for J.I. Rodale from publication, develop his clever idea about an ecologically-
minded Santa Claus, expand his script to a thirty page one-act, and serve up a real play.--Lisa Kirkwood.


Widow Boggs runs a hotel in the small town of Moskeeter "somewhere in the Deep South." She is surrounded by incompetent help, which seems appropriate since she is as inept as they are. Because a landslide blocks roadways, five travellers are trapped and become involuntary guests at the Boggs Hotel.

The title, Landslide, suggests an exciting, event-filled, action-packed play—which this is not. The plot of this two-act affects the mind like a sleeping pill. Nothing really happens. A few stones roll onto the stage and occasional sound effects indicate falling rocks, but the real landslide is the fourteen paper-thin characters that tumble on and off stage speaking trite, boring lines at designated times. For a comedy the humor is pretty stale. The characters and the action remain on the same level from beginning to end. A cast would have to work very hard to make this play come to life for any audience.—Janice Card.


Royalty: $35-first performance; $30-2nd performance; $25-all others.

The play is well written, delightful vehicle for helping children cope with and understand death. Tish's Grandpa is dying. She goes to her favorite tree and wishes upon the evening star that her grandpa would live forever. Her imagination creates a wonderful dancing bear being pursued by Ringmaster (death). In the end the dancing bear finds a little bear to teach his dances to so he will live on in something else. Tish decides to do the same thing with her Grandpa as she begins to understand death. The characters create many fun and touching moments. The script provides an excellent method of teaching a concept that is difficult for children to understand.

High school and college students, as well as community groups would enjoy performing this play. Audiences of all ages would gain something from the play.—Robyn Bishop.

How do you adjust to a new town, school, friends, and a little league team? This fast-paced musical tackles the task with "magic sneakers" worn by "Sneakerman," the nickname picked up by Edward, the new boy in town. With the shoes on, he passes tests, makes friends and wins games. Then his rival steals them, and he must prove to himself it was he who was super, not his shoes.

Self-confidence is the play's theme wrapped around a loving family and suburban friends. Characters include a sneaky sneaker salesman, a sympathetic teacher, an authoritarian principal and an assortment of friends in addition to the family. This play could be staged by community or school groups.—Harold Oaks.