1987

Play Reviews

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Play Reviews


*Hold That Tiger* is a play examining how a family copes with a medical crisis. Set during the Polio scare of the 1950’s, the play follows the advancement of the disease and the development of the Salk vaccine through the eyes of the Hart family. Based on a true story, we view the physical and emotional strain on each family member as they learn to accept and then cope with their altered lives. The play ends on a positive note as the family decides to put the disease behind them and “move on to other areas of living.”

The play is presented on multi-levels using many theatrical devices such as flashbacks, dreams, soliloquies, chants and chorus. The transitions tend to be abrupt and hard to follow. The intent of the play gets lost amid all the “devices” used, leaving a feeling of having sat through an over-zealous pep rally. The piece demands very careful timing and choreography. Set and costumes can be kept
simple to give a flavor of the locale and action. Experienced actors are a must, particularly for the Hart children. Notes are included with information relative to the physical effects of the virus on the characters.

The script would best be performed for Jr. High and above and could be done for family audiences. — Chris Bartlett


*Dragon Tale* opens up with a beautiful overture that sets the stage for a cleverly written and funny musical. It's the typical story where the evil dragon lives outside of town and someone needs to conquer the dragon in order to save the town. The King has offered his beautiful daughter's hand in marriage to anyone who can rid the town of the dragon. A stranger (Hugh) falls in love with the princess, so he confronts the dragon and traps the dragon in his own spell, thus saving the town.

The music and lyrics are refreshing while the scripts borders on melodrama. The action is propelled by songs, such as “Yoo! Hoo! It’s Hugh!,” and “Recipe for a Princess.” In fact the majority of the play is music.

The nicest thing about this musical is that there are no royalties, just a requirement to buy at least 15 copies of the singer/actor score (@$2.50) and a single full score (@$11.95). You can also buy a full show track on cassette tape ($35.00) if an orchestra is not available.

I enjoyed this play, and was particularly impressed with the score. *Dragon Tale* would be performed best by adults, but children or teens could do it justice. — Erin Caldwell


Mrs. Sally Suddywuddle, a sweet little old lady, in a gesture of friendship, offers to bake cookies for Mr. Jasper Jollyjell, a sour little old man who is her next door neighbor. With the help of the audience, she bakes one big gingerbread cookie. True to the story, the cookie comes to life much to the delight of Sally, who names him Jiminy Jeepers, and much to the disappointment of Jasper, who wants to eat him. Jiminy runs for his life. Along the way he meets a cow (Betty Bovina), a horse (Eustus Aguinas), and a fox (Valerie Vulpine). Each of them try to eat Jiminy but he escapes in the end thanks to Jasper.

This play, excellent for touring, is full of audience participation which will delight pre-schoolers through third grade. A well balanced diet is hinted at as the children learn what cows and horses eat and what goes into gingerbread cookies. Also, an ongoing feud is ended with a gesture of friendship and kindness. The characters, though mostly two-dimensional, work well with the style of the play though very versatile and skilled performers will be needed to handle the audience’s reactions as well as to create believable characters.

The script is unclear on several things. For example, the songs included left me unsure as to whether they are sung or “rapped.” If there is music with the script it was not included. The script is also unclear as to where some of the action is played, or where some of the props come from. A Christmas theme is hinted at but can easily be eliminated. A skilled director should be able to work around these problems. — Dianne Breinholt

*The Hunting of the Snark* is a musical space adventure with a group of stereotyped characters searching for the mythical creature, the Snark, from Lewis Carroll’s poem *The Jabberwocky*. They encounter two of the other character’s from the poem, but that is where the similarity ends. The space travelers finally decide that the Snark does not exist, yet they continue their search. The final line of the play is delivered by the Snark, which proves that he does indeed exist.

I found this a ridiculous play and had a hard time following it. It was difficult to visualize and I felt that it was probably a very visual play. The music is well done and fun. I hope that it plays better than it reads. — Erin Caldwell


This play, *Mother Goose* is a dictionary for trite clichés, and really doesn’t have much dramatic value. It doesn’t even work well with the characters in the Mother Goose nursery rhymes. None of the characters are very likeable. Even Mother Goose is kind of an ornery old woman who deals with people’s problems like they are a burden she has been called to deal with, and finds more glory in complaining about the problem rather than helping the characters in trouble. The play jumps around a lot and is hard to follow (which was complicated by the fact that a page of the script was missing). I can’t imagine this play being done without more elaborate technical facilities. A fly loft is required for the man in the moon, and scene changes happen so quickly that in order to understand them, lighting effects are essential.

This isn’t to say that the play doesn’t have any merits. The Little Maids from Mary Quite Contrary’s garden were very clever and fun to imagine how they would react to the action. And the idea of playing Mother Goose nursery rhymes is good because children these days don’t know them, but I would have liked to have seen the rhymes played instead of played around. — Erin Caldwell


*The Kids of Bristol* is an original musical in two acts which is loosely based on the life of George Muller. The author has taken events from Mr. Muller’s life and combined them into this play, showing what can be accomplished through faith in God. The tone is decidedly religious which should be taken into account when choosing this play for an audience.

The story takes place in Bristol, England. George, a minister, is assigned the Bristol congregation. Upon his arrival he meets opposition from many in his attempts to reform and better organize the congregation. He sees the problem of orphan kids on the streets and opens a “home for girls,” proving to the townsfolk that these children are intelligent and worthwhile. As support increases for his programs, he is able to persuade the “tough boys on the street” to come into a newly established home for boys. The events of the story are accomplished through service and faith that “God will provide.”

The plot tends to be a bit predictable but the pacing moves quickly and easily through the lively music and lyrics. The set can be as simple or elaborate as desired. Much can be done with choreography and multi-level staging to add interest. The cast has 27 members, but some parts may
be doubled, or more kids and townspeople added depending on your needs. This play can be successfully produced at congregation or community levels. All ages will enjoy the story and music.

— Chris Bartlett