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Play Reviews

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PLAY REVIEWS


K-Adult This book contains four Christmas scripts which promise to be new, warm and exciting. Some are and some are not.

The Occupants (14 pp), a puppet play by Eleanor Boylan, uses hand and rod puppets to tell the story of the birth of Christ from the animals’ point of view. Although humans are never seen, the message is still warm and powerful.

A Christmas Carol (36 pp), adapted by Helen Avery, combines special effects with traditional folk and medieval carols. This script is short and quick (if that is what you are looking for). I do feel, however, there are better adaptations available.

The Chimney Sweep’s Christmas (22 pp), a family musical by Laurie Shepherd, contains a good story-line but too much music for the length. (The music was unavailable for review). Also, I found the postman ambiguous and the acceptance of a doctor who is constantly “under the influence” a bit much.

The final play, A Small Blue Hoping Stone (46 pp), by Mary Melwood, is an attempt at Theatre of the Absurd. Anyone not familiar with the convention of Theatre of the Absurd will find this play somewhat confusing. Having read The Tingalary Bird, a wonderful absurdist play, also by Melwood, I was hoping for the same quality from this script. Instead I was disappointed as well as confused. The play contains a traditional Mummers play, but I had the feeling that the play was just built around it. The hoping stone is mentioned twice, but what it has to do with the script is quite baffling. I felt no sympathy for the main character, only confusion.

The book is available for $9.95, or individual copies of each script can be purchased separately at the following prices:

The Occupants ...........................................$2.00

A Christmas Carol ....................................$3.50

The Chimney Sweep’s Christmas ...............$3.50

A Small Blue Hoping Stone .......................$3.50
The musical Score of *The Chimney Sweep's Christmas* is available from the publisher for $7.50. The first two scripts are definitely worth purchasing.

—Dianne Breinholt


*The Wishing Tree* takes place in the Employee’s Lounge at Central City Shopping Mall on Christmas Eve. Six young people who have hired on as Christmas help are taking their afternoon break and discussing their plans for Christmas. As they share with each other the gifts they wanted to buy for others but can not afford, they are overheard by Nick, the Mall Santa. Nick suggests that they write down a special gift for someone, put the papers in envelopes and hang them on the “Wishing Tree,” (the employee’s Christmas tree). The young people go along, just for fun, realizing that their desires to do for others is a big part of Christmas. When the day’s work is done, they all return to the lounge to find their envelopes have been replaced by others addressed to them. Inside they find their wishes have been answered exactly, from a scholarship to a family vacation. Who is the “Santa?” Is it Nick or Mrs. Hotchkiss, the efficient yet distant Mall Manager? And who is the extra envelope on the wishing tree for?

*Wishing Tree* is a nicely written, touching script about what is really important in our Christmas giving. The story explores the question as to whether the Christmas Spirit is still to be found in this modern, commercialized world. Non-religious in nature, it would play well for any school, church or public group. Set, costumes and lighting can be kept simple with adaptation to almost any playing space. Each of the eight cast members would need to be good singer.

The musical score is varied between lively holiday tunes and slower, thoughtful songs. Voice range is within the soprano/alto/tenor areas, with the only high soprano written for Mrs. Hotchkiss. The score provides piano accompaniment, but orchestral parts are available for percussion and bass. Vocal score and a production/rehearsal tape is available upon request.

I would recommend production by teen or adult performers for their peers.

—Christine Bartlett


This book contains another collection of royalty free, one-act plays from past issues of *Plays Magazine*. Scripts for junior/senior high grades, middle/lower grades, a puppet show, and adaptations from classics are included. Kindergarten through adults will find these scripts easy to perform for classroom, school, church, or community groups, and
teachers will find them to be a nice resource for Christmas programs and activities. The scripts can be adapted for touring, and production notes are included.

Although some scripts are a bit trite, each play contains a special Christmas message—some serious and some humorous. Some of the more memorable ones for the junior/senior level are: *Christmas Eve Letter*, a modern version of the “Yes, Virginia, There is a Santa Claus” story; *A Christmas Promise* where a son/brother is surprised to find himself with four dates to the Christmas dance; and *A Star in the Window*, a warm story of an immigrant couple and a Christmas miracle legend. For the middle grades, I found *The North Pole Computer Caper* hilarious. Who would expect that Santa Claus has a western cowboy son, complete with electric guitar and a computer named Kumquat? *Randy the Red-Horned Rainmoose* in which Randy saves the day when Rudolph develops a cold, and *We Interrupt this Program*, wherein the children of the world repay Santa with a rocket-load of gifts are both excellent for the lower grades. *Santa’s Magic Hat* is a puppet show containing a lesson about greed. The best scripts are the adaptations from literary classics including *A Christmas Carol*, *Sherlock Holmes’ Christmas Goose*, *Little Cosette and Father Christmas* from *Les Miserables*, and *A Merry Christmas*, a round table reading from *Little Women*.

—Dianne Breinholt