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Play Reviews

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Play Reviews


Reviewed by Nancy Hovasse

Plays For Young Audiences featuring The Emerald Circle and other plays by Max Bush includes ten plays by Bush. The text is a vivid display of the range of Bush's talent. He proves equally adept at adapting literature as well as creating original pieces for the stage. The playwright's strengths and weaknesses are often related to his personal interest in exploring the balance between reality and the subconscious through the use of repetition as a dramatic technique. This repetition typically reveals itself through his use of replaying a primary action to explore the psychological realm of Bush's characters. Scot E. Copeland, in an exceptional introduction to the text, offers a comprehensive explanation of Bush's ability to create works that simultaneously entertain and explore the deeper recesses of the contemporary human psyche.

Overall, this anthology offers a rich collection of work that is interesting, challenging, and entertaining for theatre producers and their audiences. Featuring the work of one of the most widely produced playwrights writing for young audiences today, Bush's anthology is a necessary part of every professional's library.

The ten plays in the text are categorized in the editor's preface as adaptations of classic tales (Hansel and Gretel, The Little Brother and The Little Sister, Pass in Boots, The Boy Who Left Home To Find Out About the Shivers, and Rapunzel), heroic fantasy-adventures (Voyage of the Dragonfly, 13 Bells of Boglewood, and The Crystal); and contemporary plays of social and psychological issues affecting young adults (Rockway Cafe, The Emerald Circle, and Ghost of the River House). The plays are reviewed here in the order in which they appear in the text.

Ghost on the River House

B 4+

Ghost of the River House opens with a ten-year-old female protagonist named Jenny chasing after her father and eleven-year-old brother who are preparing for a "men only" fishing trip. Much to her dismay, Jenny is left behind in an old, ruined house near the river's edge with her sympathetic grandfather to wait for the men's return. Grandfather reminds Jenny that local folklore tells of hidden money and jewels, as well as evil spirits that haunt the deserted river house. Soon, voices are heard, and the ghost of Sondra, Jenny's great-great-aunt, appears. She has haunted the house for over one hundred years in order to protect her treasures. Boldly, Jenny asks Sondra to show her the events that led to her hiding her riches. Slowly Sondra comes to trust Jenny and reveals the truths of her past through a series of flashbacks. In the end, Jenny's friendship helps Sondra find peace.

The play presents some production challenges, because action includes characters from both the past and the present simultaneously. Lighting is a key element in the production, as is sound. A cast of five actors (two female, three male) can easily play the six roles. As in several of the plays found in this anthology, the playwright uses repetition of dialogue and action to separate reality from illusion. In this case, repetition of the critical action featuring the characters from the spirit world slows the progress to the climax and delays the resolution without a substantial payoff for the audience or the characters. With a
running time of approximately fifty-five minutes, this play is appropriate for high school amateur and small-scale professional productions.

_Hansel and Gretel, The Little Brother and The Little Sister_

B 1+

Closely adapted from the Brothers Grimm fairy tale, _Hansel and Gretel, The Little Brother and The Little Sister_ tells the classic tale in frightening detail. Hansel and Gretel act in concert to create a single protagonist, as they battle the obvious dangers of children living in an impoverished home and the invisible dangers of child abuse and neglect. Overhearing their parents' plan to abandon them in the forest because they can no longer afford to feed them, Hansel creates a clever plan to help them find their way home. Because he is successful in his plan, the children's mother schemes a second time to trick them into the forest. Not quick enough to divert her plan, the children find themselves alone and hungry in the depths of the dark woods. Befriended by a strange white bird, the children are led to a house made of cookies and candy inhabited by an old witch. The witch plans to fatten the children up and eat them herself. In the end, the children trick the witch, reunite with their father, and learn that their evil mother has recently died.

Although true to the original, Bush's play ends too quickly. The symbolism of the white bird is never fully explored. Neither is the possibility (as it is minimally suggested) that the children's encounter with the witch and her cookie house was a shared dream or hallucination that reflects their relationship with their own mother. Although clearly drawn from the original tale, the action of the parents in the play is despicable, and contemporary audiences not familiar with the entire Grimm's tale may be disturbed by the blatant child abuse presented in a play for young audiences.

The play requires a minimum of five actors, with some doubling. Production elements can be either simple or elaborate, allowing the show to be produced at a level fitting a company's budget. The play may be frightening to very small children, but clearly those familiar with the classic tale will enjoy this literal adaptation. Approximate running time is fifty-five minutes.

_The Emerald Circle_

A 7+

With a seamless flow of action between a cemetery and the basketball court on the protagonist's driveway, _The Emerald Circle_ explores an adolescent's emotional journey toward healing. Fourteen-year-old sweethearts David and Sandy meet secretly late at night in the local cemetery. Their innocent romantic encounter turns into a night of terror when the two are forced to defend themselves physically against a man who appears from the shadows in an attempt to kidnap Sandy. Bush repeats the pivotal scene of the play several times. With each playing he exposes greater detail, forcing the protagonist to relive the experience and choose whether or not to confront the painful truths surrounding the horrific event. In the context of the anthology, this technique is redundant. However, it is used successfully in this play, slowly replaying the events and layering in details that lead to an understanding of the protagonist's emotional state. The structure creates a metaphor for the agonizing flashbacks and the painful nagging self-doubt that would certainly follow such a terrifying incident.

This poignant piece could be easily staged in any kind of playing space. Because of the flexible sense of time and space, some lighting is needed to isolate moments of action. Costumes consist of simple contemporary dress. The piece runs approximately one hour and requires a cast of two women and three men. Due to the violence in the play, it is not recommended for young audiences. Junior high, high school, and professional groups can produce this work quite successfully. The accessible roles of Sandy,
Dave, and Chip are well written for teenage actors and provide an excellent challenge.

*Puss in Boots*

A All

*Puss in Boots* is a delightful adaptation of the classic tale. As in each of the adaptations found in this anthology, Bush has stayed true to the original characters and story line, but he still manages to present the classic tale in a fresh light. Fleshing out the traditional characters, the playwright provides a contemporary conscience without the heavy moralizing and sentimentality of the original. In this story, young Claude, the Miller’s son, is dismayed to learn that upon his father’s death his sole inheritance is his father’s cat, Puss. The cat soon proves to be a master swordsman and resourceful companion, and their relationship, though often contentious, is based on genuine affection. Infatuated with the Princess Annette, Claude tells Puss of his admiration for the young royal, knowing that his station in life would never allow the opportunity for even a brief introduction. The loyal, clever Puss creates a hilarious scheme by which Claude assumes the role of the marquis of Carabas, outwits the King, and earns his daughter’s hand.

Set in France in the late 1600s, this adaptation offers outstanding opportunities for elaborate period costuming and set design. However, because of the strength of the script, a more modest production concept would be effective. Although the play includes traveling through several locations, the piece can be produced quite easily and would work exceptionally well as a touring piece. Appropriate for production by school, community, or professional companies, this charming piece will appeal to all ages.

13 Bells of Boglewood

B All

Best described as a contemporary fairy tale, *13 Bells of Boglewood* is a fantasy adventure on the theme of greed. The story revolves around two humans who enter the forest looking for lost gold. They soon realize that finding and retrieving their treasure will not be an easy task. The invisible fairies who inhabit the forest depend on the gold dust as a life-giving potion, and their visible counterparts, the hideous spriggans, guard the treasure hidden in a hollow hill. To complicate matters, a mysterious character known only as the greedy Bogle holds the secrets to the location of the gold, but he too has his own self-interest at heart.

With a running time of approximately sixty-five minutes, this play may be too long for most touring venues. However, the possibility of a very simple set may make it appealing for some touring companies. The author does note that the set should suggest a "real forest" rather than a "magical forest," the action occurring in the "present year." Due to the silliness of the characters and broad physical comedy, the play is most appropriate for very young audiences. The piece is a possibility for production by junior or senior high school groups that perform for younger children. A minimum of seven actors is necessary.

The Crystal

B 7+

Probably the most complex script found in this anthology, *The Crystal* takes its audience on a mythical journey involving questions familiar to children of broken homes. Through the play, issues of trust, respect, and selflessness are explored from a safe distance, allowing young audiences to recognize and process the status of relationships in their own lives.

Hiding out on a remote island, Robin and Cullen, seventeen-year-old twin brothers, are the
sons of a powerful wizard. They were abandoned, along with their mother, when their father became involved with the evil sorceress, Mora. As they play begins, Audrey, Kate, and Sloan, emissaries from the twins' homeland of Errigal, discover the island and intend to help the boys return home and claim their rightful place. Remarkably, the young women announce that they were each promised at birth to the twins as their future brides, and that their father never abandoned the boys of his own will but was the prisoner of the sorceress Mora. Astonished by the news, the young men are infuriated by their mother's lack of disclosure and set sail to reclaim their birthright. What follows is a journey filled with surprising revelations, quiet heroics, forgiveness, and familial love.

Not recommended for production by groups younger than high school age, the play requires a minimum cast of three females and four males. Although the playwright notes that the set can be suggested, some sound and lighting effects are necessary for the action in the script.

The Boy Who Left Home to Find Out About the Shivers

B 5+

The Boy Who Left Home to Find Out About the Shivers is another example of Bush's ability to give an old tale new life. Dealing once again in layers of consciousness, this play explores a young boy's journey into his own mortality. Unable to feel the shivers, the character of "Boy" is cast out at the top of the play. Undaunted, he sets out to learn about the shivers. On his journey, he meets an innkeeper who tells him of a castle that is so scary that the king has promised his daughter in marriage to the man who can spend three nights there. Fending off a frenzy of ghosts and goblins, the Boy survives his trial and is granted the hand of the princess without a single shiver. However, the clever princess devises a simple plan that finally brings his quest to a successful end.

With a running time of approximately sixty-five minutes, the play can be cast with seven or eight actors playing eighteen roles. The script does call for various locations throughout the Boy's journey: his house, a bell tower, the high road, an inn, and a haunted castle. The text recommends that the set be designed to fragment, the pieces capable of moving in and out rapidly. This piece is appropriate to produce with children.

Rockway Cafe

C 7+

The least satisfying play in the collection is Rockway Cafe. Fourteen-year-old Rachel, living with her single mom, Della, magically pops in and out of the television screen in her living room. She takes the place of Roxanne, her favorite teenage idol, in an adolescent soap opera, complete with "cute guys" and rock 'n' roll. In a predictable turn of events, Roxanne steps into Rachel's life, where she acts as a catalyst for change in the dysfunctional relationship between mother and daughter.

Although the musical score was not available to this reviewer, the lyrics in this musical play are uninteresting. The dialogue provided for the "tv characters" especially lacks substance. Instead of developing the story of Rachel and her mother, the playwright seems to be simply commenting on what he believes to be the popular teenage culture. The story treatment betrays that the one believable relationship in the play between the mother and daughter begs to be genuinely investigated.

Rapunzel

A 7+

During the 1998 meeting of the American Alliance for Theatre in Education, Bush spoke to a group of aspiring playwrights. When asked about adaptation as part of a playwright's
repertoire, he commented, "Adaptation is craft rather than art." If this is true, then Bush is a master at his craft and at his very best with this adaptation of Rapunzel. Once again balancing the basic story within a contemporary psychological matrix, the playwright's adaptation allows today's audiences to see a reflection of themselves in the archetypal characters.

True to the original, the play begins with Rapunzel's mother selfishly and greedily sacrificing all for her own desires—a metaphor that is certainly applicable to today's society. Next comes Rapunzel's abduction by a spiteful witch who manipulates Rapunzel's affection for her own ends. The young prince arrives, and he and Rapunzel fall in love. Their romance discovered, the witch banishes Rapunzel into the wilderness and then tricks the prince into visiting the tower in search of Rapunzel, leaving him blinded and in despair. Eventually the two are reunited and, true to fairy-tale form, all is remedied with their union.

With three simple settings, the play can be easily staged in a theatre or for touring. The seven characters can be played by four actors—two males, two females. Stage lighting would be useful but is not necessary for the success of the production. This play is appropriate for production by high schools as well as adult companies.

Aalmauria: The Voyage of the Dragonfly

A 7+

Queen Meaghan in Aalmauria: The Voyage of the Dragonfly is the kind of character every young actress has been waiting to play. Swashbuckling and courageous Meaghan accompanies Captain Taran, whom she admires and who admires her, as he sets sail for the enchanted but dangerous island of Aalmauria. The island is believed to hold a flame which could save Meaghan's kingdom from the ice age that threatens her people. However, attending Meaghan on the journey is Cynric the magician and his daughter Mariana. Mariana has also set her affections on Captain Taran and plots to undermine her queen in hope of gaining his favor for herself. Friendship, truth, and courage are challenged as the exciting adventure unfolds.

A wonderfully crafted adventure, the play explodes with magnificent images of sword fights and dragons. The play requires several locations, including Meaghan's castle, the interior of the "Dragonfly" ship, and the cave on the island of Aalmauria. Offering delightful staging opportunities, the piece fully staged would be beautiful; however, the strength of the language suggests that a clever minimal set could serve the play as well. This piece is a gem for young actors.


A 3-6 Reviewed by Athena Madan

The tranquility of a summer's picnic between three friends is shattered. Incorrigible Toad, on his latest therapeutic whim ("The poetry of motion!")), steals a sports car in pursuit of life's more exciting highways. His bumpy path along the Wide World lands him in jail. As his noble friends Mole and Rat search relentlessly in the Toad-less Woods, Toad manages to escape prison in the clever disguise of a Washerwoman. Toad falls into the clutches of a cruel and callous Thief. Mole and Rat get lost. It's Badger to the rescue as he reunites the trio with their long-awaited picnic basket.

Featuring Grahame himself, this is a commendable adaptation of the quaint, imaginative classic. The magic of the fantastic Willow Wood and the animal friendships (including their idiosyncrasies) which makes the story so well-loved by children is delightfully maintained. Lyrics and dialogue are witty, with smooth transitions between them. Children will find the music easy to learn but fun enough to keep on singing. Cast is flexible, a minimum call of eleven.
36 Brigham Young University


B 3-6 Reviewed by Athena Madan

Every little girl is born a princess,
Somewhere up in heaven it’s decreed.
Yes, every little girl is born a princess,
Rulers in a world of make believe...

Hail, hail, to love and friendship,
Nothing will divide us, let’s agree.
Hail, hail, to lifelong friendship,
A sisterhood of princesses are we.

The antithesis of Cinderella, this is Sara Crewe’s journey from a loving home—complete with a devoted, doting father and whistling Walt Disney-like birds—to a drafty one-room attic above mean Miss Minchin’s Orphanage. Her luck changes when a mysterious gentleman from India moves in next door, and anonymous food and gifts flood her attic room. Can it be that her fortune has been retrieved? True to fairy tales, Sara’s goodness is rewarded, and mean Miss Minchin is “properly” rewarded for her evil ways.

The characters in the script are strong—we learn early who is likeable and who is not—and, for the most part, consistent; though the music sounds suitable and pretty enough for a little princess, it does little to forward the action. The cast calls for four males, eleven plus females, and a stuffed monkey. Most of the roles can be played by children; some of the singing roles may be more difficult to learn at this age. Costume and staging requirements are simple.


Varies 1-8 Reviewed by Melinda Wolfer

This collection contains several plays originally published by Seattle Children’s Theatre or Rain City Projects now available together in a new edition from Smith and Kraus. Although some of these works have been reviewed as individual plays in past issues, we will review all of them as part of this new, important collection. They are all original works commissioned by Seattle Children’s Theatre (except for Mother Hicks, which was, however, updated for the Seattle production). Four are adaptations of literary works. All add richness and depth to the Theatre for Young Audiences cannon. The collection is a must for anyone seriously interested in this field (Editor’s note: H. R. O.)

Dietz, Steven. *The Rememberer.*

Joyce Cheeka, the rememberer in her Squaxin Indian tribe, is responsible for preserving the culture and traditions of her ancestors. Appointed to her position at a young age, she struggles to maintain her Native American heritage, as she is taken from her Indian reservation to the Tulalip Training School. It is a government institution that attempts to suppress the Indian’s language, customs, and lifestyle and teach the white man’s culture, preparing the children for life in mainstream America. With the help of her deceased Aunt Sophie’s spirit and the teachings of Mud Bay Sam, Joyce learns courage and responsibility, and assimilates the cultures of her two lifestyle influences together. For example, Joyce learns stitching skills from the school mistresses and makes an Indian salmon-patterned quilt for a member back on her reservation. Acting as storyteller, adult Joyce tells the audience, “I passed something else onto my children, as well: The history, the humor, the legends. The stories of our people. There is a lot to remember.”

Based on Ms. Cheeka’s real life experiences, *The Rememberer* presents an empowering viewpoint of children and champions their ability to preserve and enrich future generations. Young audiences will identify with all characters, and
especially admire Joyce’s integrity and love for her heritage.

This excellent new work is as exciting to read as to produce. The play shares aspects of “Squaxin” culture, such as baking ashes, bread, the folklore of the Pitch Woman, and traditional music. It also includes sections of dialogue in the native “Squaxin” tongue. Because of its large cast size (five men, four women, eight children, dancers, and musicians) and technical requirements, The Rememberer could be difficult for a touring company to produce. However, the subject matter and rich characters will give professional or very experienced amateur performers an exciting and satisfying challenge in production. Children and adults alike will love The Rememberer.

Sachar, Louis. There’s a Boy in the Girls’ Bathroom.

A 3-6

This humorous contemporary American play features Bradley Chalkers and his fifth-grade class in a journey of realizing self-esteem and confidence. At school, Bradley is a loud-mouthed, story-telling, attention-seeking bully; at home with his stuffed animals he is a soft-hearted, good-natured, friendly boy. Bradley develops a mutual friendship with the new elementary school counselor, Carla. Because Carla believes in Bradley and treats him with respect and validity, he realizes his self-worth:

BRADLEY: Carla?
CARLA: Yes.
BRADLEY: Can you see inside monsters. Can you see the good?
CARLA: That’s all I see.
BRADLEY: Well, how does a monster stop being a monster? I mean, if everyone keeps treating him like a monster?
CARLA: It isn’t easy. I think first he has to realize for himself that he isn’t a monster. That I think is the first step. Until he knows he isn’t a monster, how is anybody else supposed to know?

Although Carla is fired at the end of the play, it brings a necessary separation between her and Bradley. He realizes he can love himself and be loved by others independent of Carla.

This play is rich with emotion and maturity. Young audiences will identify with this play because of the realistic characters and relevant issues. For example, little Melinda Birch is a tough female character who stands up for herself and gives black eyes to troublesome boys. Jeff Fishkin is a new boy who wavers between the popular kids’ acceptance and true friendship with the less popular crowd. Colleen Verigold grapples with gender issues and eventually musters up courage to invite boys to her birthday party. This play will provide an excellent springboard for discussion with young audience’s concerns about school and relationships.

There’s a Boy in the Girls’ Bathroom is a complex production that gives ample performance opportunities for both adults and children. While experienced performers should be cast in lead roles, many inexperienced children may be cast in extras roles as additional classmates and school children. This play also uses puppetry, as four actors manipulate Bradley’s stuffed animal friends. Stage directions in the play call for a simple set and minimal scenic changes.

Sandburg, R.N. Anne of Green Gables

A 1-6

This adaptation of L. M. Montgomery’s classic Canadian novel is a gem. Set on Prince Edward Island at the turn of the century, young orphan Anne Shirley is eager to be adopted by the old spinster and bachelor siblings, Marilla and Matthew Cuthbert. Anne’s temper, sensitivity to her physical appearance, and tendency to escape to her romantic dream-world makes her “trial period” humorous to watch. She insults Marilla’s best friend, Mrs. Lynde, intoxicates young Diana Barry with currant wine, is accused of stealing Marilla’s amethyst brooch, and smashes her
writing slate over classmate Gilbert Blythe’s head. On the other hand, Anne also demonstrates maturity and responsibility: she is honest, sincerely desires to control her temper, works hard, is at the top of her school class, and saves the life of the Barrys’ baby, Minnie May.

At the end of the play, Anne allows herself to believe that Marilla and Matthew love her and truly wish to keep her when they tell her:

MATTHEW: I’d rather have you than a dozen boys. You mind that, Anne—rather than a dozen boys. You’re my girl.

MARILLA: And mine. It’s never been easy for me to say things out of my heart, but I love you as dear as if you were my own flesh and blood. I need you here, Anne.

Because she is teased and taunted about her hair (called “Carrots, carrots!”) by Gilbert Blythe, Anne’s grudge against him underscores all her good deeds and righteous intents. The play wraps up in a melodramatic style, in order to teach a lesson. Diana Barry lovingly scolds Anne:

You’re impossible. When you’ve done something wrong, everyone’s expected to say it’s all right. But when someone’s done something to you, there’s no way to make up for it. How can anyone be friends with you?

After pondering her attitude and desire to stay at Green Gables, Anne tells Gilbert:

You’ve always treated me like a friend; I’ve just been too foolish to realize it.

The play is fun and easy to follow. Although much of the dialogue from the novel is omitted, and some lines are manipulated to fit this adaptation’s intent, Sandberg preserves the effervescent, sparkling essence of Montgomery’s story.

Adapted from the Janet Taylor Lisle novel of the same name, Afternoon of the Elves is a poignant story of poverty and privation. The script investigates the difficulties of a friendless child who must care for her emotionally and physically invalid mother. In order to escape from her arduous life, the young girl creates a fanciful elf village from the trash in her backyard, which she shares with a friend.

This excellent script, filled with powerful and descriptive dialogue, may help children better understand those who are different from themselves. It shows how easy it is to make judgments without really knowing a person, and how those judgments can not only be inaccurate, but hurtful. Casting includes five actresses and one actor.


Lucy and her fourteen-year-old sister, Terroba, are trying to make sense of a world out of their control. When their widowed mother moves them to Grandmother Minnie’s home, Lucy is angry about the change. She likes the new home even less when Minnie gets sick and passes away. Now Lucy is angry at her grandmother for dying and becomes afraid of death. She transfers this fear into tangible objects and refuses to go near Minnie’s things, like her portrait or big, stuffed chair. Lucy comes to terms with her fears through a dream in which the teen-age Minnie from the portrait and the chair come to life. They share her imaginative play, helping her see beyond anger and fear so she can overcome them.

The play is a skillful examination of the very real fears of childhood, created in a fun and entertaining manner. Characters are well developed; dialogue is rich and stretches our worldview. York has captured a world through the eyes of a ten-year-old and has brought that innocent and uniquely imaginative world to life.
The play would best be done by a professional company. It can be played with a cast of three (two female, one male). The script includes a sketch of the set design and the costume design for the chair from the premier production at Seattle Children’s Theatre.

Zeder, Suzan. *Mother Hicks*

* A 4+

Zeder’s classic tale of loneliness and quest for identity is revised in this Seattle Children’s Theatre play anthology. This play is based on a collection of oral folklore from the W.P.A. Federal Writer’s Project which the playwright read a number of years ago. Mother Hicks, the title character, lives in a small midwest town during the Depression. She is a middle-aged woman who lost her child many years previous and knows how to heal with herbs and natural medicines. Because she is unlike the other townsfolk, Mother Hicks is suspected of being a witch. When natural disasters or life misfortunes occur, Mother Hicks is accused of using her craft.

Mother Hicks and a deaf/mute named Tuc encounter an orphan girl who is searching for her family. All three are outcasts searching for friends, longing for family, and seeking acceptance. They befriend each other and help the girl learn about her identity. When the townsfolk assume Mother Hicks has kidnapped and is holding the girl hostage, they swarm together and plan to rescue her, by force if necessary.

The revisions in this script make the relationships more poignant and the story line more meaningful. In this version Zeder has developed the hatred and prejudice of Izzy Sue Ricks, the town’s busy-body. Izzy’s malicious characteristics contrast sharply with the outcasts’ innocence and lack of guile. Zeder also further develops Girl’s emotional journey. One beautiful moment in the new version is an exchange in which Girl shows her infant blanket to Mother Hicks, hoping that Mother Hicks will really be her mother. The author also adds a disturbing depiction of a shanty town, where a father had to break up his family in order to survive. The changes Zeder has made in her script bring *Mother Hicks’* deep, brilliant themes and lessons alive.

The playwright strongly urges a deaf actor play the role of Tuc to make the use of sign language in this play have “emotional eloquence and physical poetry.” It requires adult actors in all roles, except the part of Girl—who should be played by a young girl.

★ ★ ★ ★


* B 8-12 Reviewed by Athena Madan

He’s the high school heartthrob, the editor of the school’s newspaper, and he’s dating the homecoming queen. He’s got everything going for him, right? There’s just one thing: he’s HIV positive. This is the story of a group of high school students as they deal with the day-to-day reality of AIDS and how to cope with losing a good friend.

The statistical information on AIDS presented in the script is researched and accurate; it is also presented in a manner that will still maintain the attention of the audience. Character development and interaction is believable, for the most part. Some of the minor characters are more superficial in motive, but this may be because these are high school “stock” characters, representing a larger group of students who have similar interests and abilities. Overall, however, this is a script that deals tactfully with an important issue on a level that we are still afraid to deal with, and in a nonthreatening way.

The message? Darby writes his own “Final Deliberations” in the high school newspaper the week of his death: “I read somewhere once that as you grow up, people move in and out of each other’s lives and each leaves his or her mark on the other. You find that you are made up of bits and pieces of all who ever touched your life, and you are more because of it and would be less if they had not touched you. Wake up people: if any good comes out of my death, let it be that I made you a little more careful.”
Cast calls for two males, six females but is flexible. Stage requirements include a slide show (to denote the passage of time and the development of relationships among characters). This would be ideal for a touring production.


Reviewed by Athena Madan

This is a delightfully funny script. The Clackerville manor is plagued with a curse—the howling Hound of the Clackervilles! It creeps closer and closer to each of its victims and literally hounds them to a frightful death. Granny, the local witch, confirms the curse is true and predicts Hank Bob Clackerville’s future demise. Luckily for Hank Bob, his faithful girl, Daisy Mae, summons a Dynamic Duo to solve the mystery—none other than the famous Sherlock Holmes and his ever-loyal sidekick, Dr. Watson. Posing as exterminators, our daring detectives endure the overbearing Ma Clackerville, her equally overzealous daughters, Sue Bob and Lou Bob, hidden wills and passages, and a pair of missing boots in this melodramatic mystery.

There are ten male and nineteen female in the script. Stage requirements are minimal; the entire ninety minutes takes place within the same setting. Probably even more fun in the show than the action itself is designing the Hound, who will leave even the audience howling right along!