

HEIDI

by
Lane Riosley

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STORY OF THE PLAY

Joanna Spyri's classic story of the orphan who spreads sunshine everywhere she goes is well represented in this fast-paced adaptation. Heidi conquers her grandfather, Peter, Klara, Herr Sesemann and all those with whom she comes in contact. About 60 minutes.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(5M, 5W, 1B, 2G + chorus.)

HEIDI
KLARA
AUNT DETE
PETER'S MOTHER
GRANDMOTHER
FRAULEIN ROTTENMEIER
GRANDFATHER (Alm Uncle.)
PETER
SEBASTIAN, THE BUTLER
WHITTLER
MALE VILLAGER
FEMALE VILLAGER
HERR SESEMANN
CHORUS: Possibly 3 to carry and be scenery, train,
mountain, goats, etc.

SUGGESTION FOR DOUBLING OF ROLES

(3M, 3W, 3 chorus.)

Actress One: Girl, Heidi
Actress Two: Aunt Dete, Klara, Grandmother
Actress Three: Peter's Mom, Rottenmeier
Actor One: Whittler, Grandfather (Alm Uncle.)
Actor Two: Peter, Sebastian the butler
Actor Three: Villager, Sesemann
Chorus: Possibly 3 to carry and be scenery, train, mountain,
goats, etc.

HEIDI

(AT RISE: is an empty space with low cutout Alps painted in a simple folk style. In the center of the stage is a clock face with movable hands. The OLD WHITTTLER enters. He is dressed in the style of the late 19th century Swiss.)

WHITTTLER: When I was a child I thought anything was possible. When I was a boy I thought anything was possible but it was away in my future. When I was a man I thought anything was possible if I made it so. Now I am old, and I know that anything is possible ... if I believe. *(He goes to the clock.)* For many years I made clocks. Fine wooden clocks. For many years after that I also made toys. *(Shrugs.)* I diversified. The funny thing about the toys was that at first I made all the toys alike. Every doll was like every other doll and every toy horse like every other toy horse. I don't remember exactly when I decided to make them all a little different from each other. But, I am ahead of myself, and you shall see, anyway. But it does involve you! All of you! You are here for a reason, which you will see! But now, I would like to introduce you to *(Indicates clock center.)* my finest creation. It doesn't look like much, does it? But just wait. It does something really remarkable. *(Pause.)* Just wait. *(Pause.)* No really, just wait. *(Pause.)* Now whatever is the matter with this thing?

(He tinkers and hammers at the clock, it begins to CHIME loudly and he staggers back, holding his head. MUSIC BOX MUSIC plays.)

WHITTTLER: *(Cont'd.)* Now! Here they come!

(From two entrances opposite come four figures dressed as Swiss PEASANTS, simple but colorful costumes, stylized, like folk art, a girl, a woman, a boy and a man. They enter in robotic stride, they are automatons, clock figures.)

(They perform a routine of walking, carrying buckets which they exchange in a halting dance. The last one, a boy, pulls a trio of carved wooden goats, one on a spring, bouncing, seeming to jump. The boy leads the goats in and takes a bucket, in a few motions, milks a goat, hands the bucket to the girl, she hands it to the woman. The man passes by reading a book. He closes the book to shake hands with the children. All at once all action stops frozen. A GRINDING sound is heard.)

WHITTLER: *(Cont'd.)* Oh!

(The WHITTLER hurries to the clock and taps it. The FIGURES jerk and jump to life, performing their routine backwards. The Whittler flaps his hands in alarm and taps the clock again, the figures stop, resume their routine normally, they exit.)

WHITTLER: *(Cont'd.)* You see? Not an ordinary clock! It does need some oil, I think, and a few adjustments, but there is more to it than even this. When this clock and its marvelous figures were almost completed, I had a few friends over, some children, and they began talking about the figures as if they were alive! They told me a marvelous story which I had never heard before, about a little girl who lived in the alps ... but I'm getting ahead of myself again. Anyway, My little friends kept talking to the figures, and carrying on, as if they were old friends at a reunion or something. When they had all gone home for the night, after I sent the last one home with her family, I went around my shop closing the windows and turning down the lamps until my little shop was dark. What do you think happened then? I heard the voice of a child. In the back room. I thought it was one of the children left behind. It wasn't. *(He exits and returns with the little GIRL FIGURE on a two wheel dolly.)* It was this one. *(He looks around.)* I'm telling you, it was this one! The children treated her like a real little girl and she became a real little girl!

WHITTTLER: *(Cont'd.)* All you have to do is believe with me and she will walk and talk and ... and ... *(He looks around.)* You don't believe me? *(To figure.)* Tell them.

(Pause. He turns his back on the figure. SHE carefully turns her head to look at him.)

WHITTTLER: *(Cont'd.)* This one was the start of it all! She ... *(He snaps his head around trying to catch her.)* She became exactly as the children described, and she remembers all her adventure! She... *(The FIGURE again turns and watches him. He spins around, but not in time.)* Her name is Heidi. *(HE spins around just in time to catch her looking at him, SHE snaps back into place, rigid and, unmoving.)* And I wish that the children who named her had given her a little less mischief!

WHITTTLER: *(Cont'd. Points to audience.)* Someone out there is believing! Yes! Good! Now, even though these clock figures are very clever, as clock figures go, they can only perform one story, the story my little friends told that first night. So let me wind up the clock, *(He does.)* and we shall see if ... aha!

(The clock CHIMES thirteen and the other FIGURES toddle in, HEIDI joins them, doing the beginning of their routine, then on the thirteenth CHIME they stop.)

WHITTTLER: *(Cont'd.)* Here we go! Let's see ... ah!

(One by one the clock FIGURES make motions indicating they are breaking out of their routine, more lifelike movements and natural gestures, gradually they snap in and snap out of the routine until they are all standing around naturally, free of the routine entirely. One of the figures goes to try to sit in the audience.)

WHITTTLER: *(Cont'd.)* NO! *(He retrieves him.)*
MALE VILLAGER: But I want to see the show!

WHITTILER: You can see it from here! All right! Shall we begin!? *(No one moves.)* Now what is it?

(HEIDI walks over to him and whispers.)

WHITTILER: *(Cont'd.)* Oh! Everybody ... *(He begins to applaud, encouraging the audience to do the same. The FIGURES like it and bow.)* No! That is for the end! Now, we begin!

(SOUND of an Alps horn.)

MALE VILLAGER: It was long ago, high in the mountains of Switzerland! *(He opens the top of the clock, a chest, and pulls out a jacket.)*

FEMALE VILLAGER: A beautiful morning in June, sunny, and still cool from the night! *(Collects a hat from the clock.)*

HEIDI: Up the great mountain called the Alm, up a narrow path climbed a woman and a little girl! *(The WOMAN starts putting clothes on HEIDI, sweaters and jackets and hats.)* A tall woman and a little girl wearing a lot of clothes! *(The clothes keep coming.)* Entirely too many clothes! *(She pulls away and squares off with the woman, a battle of staring wills. The woman holds out a final scarf.)* And a scarf! *(Not conceding, she puts on the scarf.)* They climbed the hill!

DETE: The tall woman!

HEIDI: And the little girl wearing entirely too many clothes!

DETE: You must dress warmly! You don't want to catch cold, do you?

HEIDI: But ... Aunt Dete, it's summer!

DETE: Well, if you wear all your clothes at once, then you won't have to carry a suitcase! Now come on! *(Leads her around in a circle, and as she walks HEIDI sheds clothes.)* Hurry up! Now what ... *(Sees clothes all over the stage, including a couple draped across the Alps.)* Look at all these clothes, it will take us forever to collect your clothes! What a thoughtless child you are!

HEIDI: I was hot!

End of Freeview

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