

Kipling's Just So Stories

Based on the book by Rudyard Kipling

Adapted by R. Rex Stephenson

With additional dialogue by Emily Rose Tucker

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STORY OF THE PLAY

Kipling's dramatic and entertaining stories about how the Camel got his hump, how the Elephant got his nose, how the Whale got his spout, and other richly woven tales come to life in this engaging full-length play. Mr. and Mrs. Kipling and their two bubbly yet unpretentious daughters serve as narrators. The story weaves from animal tales to the final human one, how Man—or in this case an enterprising young girl!—wrote the first letter. Especially engaging is the two-person whale which is a great theatrical device. Easy to produce, this whimsical play is sure to charm everyone.

ORIGINAL PRODUCTION

This play was originally produced as a musical June 28-July 1, 2005, by the Blue Ridge Dinner Theatre in Ferrum, Virginia. The original cast included:

Director: R. Rex Stephenson
Choreographer: R. Carter Cox
Rudyard Kipling: Joe Ray
Josephine Kipling: Chandra Diesel
Camel, Elephant, Child, Goldfish: Maria Alegre
Horse, Crocodile, Strange Man, Narrator: Michael Antico
Djinn, Narrator, Mother: Catherine Baggs
Camel, Zebra, Whale, Head Chief, Horse: Giuseppe DiMeo
Dog, Snake, Neolithic Lady: Kara Dunne
Camel, Snake, Whate, T. Bopsulai, Man: Dustin Johnson
Ox, Elephant Mother, T. Tewindrow: Nicole Sanderson
First Assistant to the Vice-Chief's Deputy: Blake Allen
Mouse: Kane Allen
Baboon: Taylor Allen
Man, Giraffe, Vice-Chief: Zach Allen
Chorus: Abigail Ardis, Kelly Bennett
Deputy Vice-Chief: Dakotah Kelly
Neolithic Lady: Amelia Pagans
Chorus: McKenzie Prillaman, Casey Robertson
Snake, Neolithic Lady: Brittany Stone
Chorus: Arthur Stump, Blaire Stump, Cheryl Stump
Emma, Narrator: Ruth Trochim
Giraffe: Drew Turner
Baboon, Neolithic Lady: Kasey Winnemuth
Snake: Kaitlin Wray

Production crew included:

Rehearsal Pianist, Austin Robey; Lights, Juliet Stephenson; Costumes, Martha Stephenson, Faye Prillaman, BRDT Company; Scenic Artist, Kara Dunne; Box Office, Abigail Ardis, Melisa Allen; Usher Coordinator, Ruth Jones.

SCENES AND CHARACTERS

The play can be done with as few as fourteen people by eliminating one Baboon and the three Assistant Chiefs. With the exception of Kipling, Man and Tegumai, the rest of the cast can be women. As narrators, Kipling family members weave in and out of most of the scenes, thus their roles cannot be doubled easily. Use extras as desired.

Act I

The Kipling Family

Rudyard Kipling (storyteller)

Caroline Kipling (wife)

Josephine (elder daughter)

Elsie (younger daughter)

How the Camel Got His Hump

Camel

Horse

Dog

Ox

Man

Djinn

How the Elephant Got His Trunk

Betty (a narrator)

Emma (a narrator)

Elephant Child

Giraffe

Baboon 1

Baboon 2

Mother Elephant

Zebra

Snake

Crocodile

How the Whale Got His Spout

Whale 1

Whale 2

Goldfish

Sailor (female)

Act II

How the First Letter Was Written

Accompanist (non-speaking)
Tegumai
Teshumai
Taffy
Trees (3 actors)
Strange Man
Neolithic Ladies (1, 2, 3 & 4)
Head Chief
Vice-Chief
Deputy Vice-Chief
Assistant Deputy Vice-Chief
Warriors and Extras
Reporter

How the Cat Became Friendly but Not Family

Michael (a narrator)
Wild Man
Woman (Josephine)
Baby (Elsie)

Dog
Cat
Mouse
Cow
Horse

PERCUSSION SOUND EFFECTS

Sound effects used in the original production included: tambourine, slapstick, wood block, cowbell, kazoos, slide whistle, ratchet and vibraslap. The original production also used hand drums, a cabasa, and maracas. Other small percussion instruments may be used to create sound effects as well, and to accompany the chanting of the "War Dance."

PRODUCTION NOTES

The simpler the setting, the better. A large drop with "Kipling's Just So Stories" painted on it and original student artwork inspired from animals in the play will suffice for scenery. Several platforms scattered about would add variety and also make it easier for a director in staging a large cast.

The water the Great Djinn creates in the desert is simply a long roll of blue material brought in by several actors and stretched across the stage. The Great Djinn's magic carpet could well be flown down from a flyspace, however, four actors can carry the Djinn on a carpet stapled to a piece of ¾-inch plywood.

The "deer skin" in "How the First Letter Was Written" requires a bit of preparation by the actress portraying Taffy. Naturally, it has to be pre-painted, however, if the actress carefully unfolds the deer skin one section at a time, and she is drawing with her back to the audience, and the Strange Man is in a similar position, the audience will never see the full picture until it is hung on the trees.

COSTUMES

Costumes would be best as representational, so that the Dog might have ears, a Horse a mane, a Cat a tail. In the original production three people were used to create the Camel and two people to create the Giraffe. The Snake can be made with between two and six actors, depending upon the cast available and the size of the stage.

For the Whale, shape a piece of wood to resemble the front view of a whale, then cut it in half. Cut two large holes for the eyes, and two actors approximately the same height can put their faces through the holes. Handles placed on the back side allow the actors to easily move the whale forward and back. When the Whale swallows Little Fish, it just separates, and when the Woman escapes, the Whale again separates.

The Crocodile actor wears a glove that resembles a crocodile's mouth. For the Elephant's trunk use a dryer hose and cover it with grey sweatshirt material. It is attached to a headband and a string that ties around the actress' head. When the Zebra arrives with loud sound effects and your whole audience is looking stage right, Mrs. Kipling can surreptitiously untie the nose. There are probably many other ways to accomplish this, but this is probably the simplest and least time consuming. Overall, it is not necessary to hide these accoutrements.

As far as costuming the company, Kipling can wear a period suit from the early 1900s. For the rest of the company, costumes can consist of khaki shorts or pants with brightly colored tee-shirts; however, they could just as well wear leotards, sweatsuits, or about any combination of clothing, except blue jeans or bib-overalls.

End of Freeview

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