

# **The PRINCE and the PAUPER**

Adapted by  
R. Rex Stephenson

Based on the Mark Twain Classic

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### **DEDICATION**

This play is dedicated to my Aunt Barbara and my sister-in-law, Sharon

### **STORY OF THE PLAY**

During the last years of his life, Mark Twain entertained a group of young girls who came to be known as the Angelfish Club. Twain told his young friends stories, provided snacks for them, and seemed to have become a grandfather who loved to share his home with the group. Several years before, when Twain was living in New York City, Albert Bigelow Paine was selected to take dictation as Twain recalled the events of his life for his autobiography. Twain often became a bit cantankerous, making Paine shoot billiards, or eat with him before he would dictate. These two events have been united to create the frame for the dramatized version of *The Prince and the Pauper*. The play takes place in Twain's attic in Connecticut. As the girls enter for the meeting, Twain begins to pass out the parts and the girls finally get into the fact that some of them will be playing boys. This is the perfect show for a group with numerous females available for roles and a small number of males. The great story is there and is told in a charming way. Full length.

### **PRODUCTION HISTORY**

*The Prince and the Pauper* was first produced in July of 2002 by the Blue Ridge Dinner Theatre at Ferrum College in Virginia. Joe Ray directed the production and Tony Pica was in charge of design. Emily Rose and Justin Jewell were the music directors.

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**CAST OF CHARACTERS**

*(4M, 2W, 9G, 2B)*

**GIRLS**

SAMANTHA:

ESSIE: Plays Edward Tudor.

DOROTHY: Plays Tom Canty.

CASSIE: Plays Lady Edith, Royal Chair Person, Tom's mother.

CONSTANCE: Plays the Doctor, Tom's sister, Blind Bess.

MARGIE: Lady Jane Grey.

MILLICENT: Plays the Taster, Beggar, Tom's sister.

LAURA: Plays Chamberlain.

MARY: Plays Plumber's daughter.

**BOYS**

BERTIE: Plays Hugh Hendon, Guard, Sheriff, Judge.

MITCH: Plays Guard, Stranger, Jailer.

**ADULTS**

MR. PARSONS: Plays Cook, Mr. Canty, John Hobbs, Henry VIII.

BIGELOW PAINE: Plays Priest, Miles Hendon.

MARK TWAIN: Serves as narrator.

PLUMBER: Plays Hugo, Guard at jail.

MRS. MARSHALL: Plays Holy Hermit, Essie's mother, Lady with the pig.

RACHEL: Plumber's assistant.

EXTRAS, if desired

**THE BACKGROUND**

During the last years of his life, Mark Twain entertained a group of young girls that came to be known as the Angelfish Club. Twain told his young friends stories, provided snacks for them, and seemed to have become a grandfather who loved to share his home with the group. Several years before, when Twain was living in New York City, Albert Bigelow Paine was selected to take dictation as Twain recalled the events of his life for his autobiography. Twain often became a bit cantankerous, making Paine shoot billiards, or eat with him before he would dictate. I have united these two events to create the frame for the dramatized version of *The Prince and the Pauper*.

## **THE PRODUCTION**

The Prince and the Pauper calls for rapid scene and costume changes. Locations are established by the lines in the script and with a prop or two to help define the place. For example, when King Henry VIII talks to his son, he is seated in a chair on the platform upstage center. Henry is flanked by a couple of guards with double sided battle axes to create the regal location. Likewise, when the band of rogues is gathered outside, maybe a campfire or several torches could help to reinforce the location.

The platforms set right and left are used for actors to sit on when not in a scene; to suggest a definite location, like the Holy Hermit's house; and to store props and costumes.

The girls all wear fluffy blouses and skirts with knickers underneath. To begin the "play" they simply remove their skirts and add additional, simple costumes. Togas, robes, and cloaks are added to the original outfit to create princes or paupers. A bit of fur or gold braids can be added to a toga to build a noble's outfit. A torn, soiled or a ragged toga, likewise, creates a rogue's costume. Hats are also effective in helping to distinguish characters. Twain wears an academic robe throughout the play.

## **THE SETTING**

The set can be as elaborate or as simple as the director desires. The play takes place in Twain's attic in Connecticut. The set can be as elaborate or as simple as the director desires. In our production, the goal was efficiency and functionality. We sat platforms on stage right and left. These were mostly four feet wide and two feet tall. A 6x 8 foot platform, about 30 inches high, created the dais that was stationary in the center upstage area. This platform was flanked by clothing racks to the right and left; black stage curtains provided the background. To reinforce the attic setting, we built two medium sized stained glass windows that were to the right and left of the large 6 x 8 foot painted drop of Mark Twain that hung behind the dais. A battered desk with an old typewriter was set downstage right. When the play opens, a few tables, chairs, boxes full of costumes and props, steamer trunks, and other junk that might be found in an attic are scattered about the stage.

**ACT I**

*(AT RISE: COOK enters moving about a chair, typewriter, etc. After about twenty seconds SAMANTHA, ESSIE, DOROTHY, MILLICENT, CONSTANCE, MARGIE and LAURA enter.)*

SAMANTHA: *(Speaking to the Cook.)* We are here.

ESSIE: *(The COOK crosses to meet them.)* And right on time. The Angelfish Club has arrived.

COOK: Were you to come today?

DOROTHY: Yes, and we are quite sure about the time. Eleven o'clock.

CONSTANCE: And we were to meet in the attic.

SAMANTHA: When do we get a snack?

ESSIE: Don't be rude, Samantha. That's not why we came.

COOK: But he was expecting Mr. Bigelow Payne today.

They are to work on Mr. Twain's autobiography.

CASSIE: We are quite sure it was today. I wrote it down.

DOROTHY: But she lost the paper it was written on.

MILLICENT: Look, we brought our things! *(She pulls up her skirt, showing her knickers.)*

CASSIE: I know it was today. Today we get to make up a story.

ESSIE: No, no. You have it all wrong. Mr. Twain makes up the story; we get to act it.

SAMANTHA: And invite our friends and charge them money to see it.

COOK: Well, come in. I can't have you standing about in Mr. Twain's stairway.

CONSTANCE: Thank you very much. I promise not to spill anything on the carpet today.

MARGIE: You promised that last time, and you did.

*(The GIRLS all enter the attic.)*

COOK: I'll go check with Mr. Twain. You may be correct. He did have me to gather up some of the strangest things. *(He exits.)*

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CASSIE: I've never been in a play, except once at Sunday School. I played the sheep.

ESSIE: I know Mr. Twain has something wonderful in store for us. Every time we come up to this great attic, we have fun. And I read the book just like Mr. Twain asked - did all of you?

*(SOME hold up books, showing they have read the story. BIGELOW enters.)*

BIGELOW: I knocked, but no one came to the door, so I just ... What are you doing here? *(No answer.)* I said, what are you all doing here?

DOROTHY: We are all well, thank you, and hope you had a pleasant trip.

*(BIGELOW crosses to the center of the room.)*

BIGELOW: I'm sorry. I didn't aim to be rude, but Mr. Twain and I are to write this afternoon.

MARGIE: Oh, no you're not, because today.

*(DOROTHY crosses to her to shut her up.)*

DOROTHY: Shhh ... Don't you think it is a very pleasant day today, Mr. Payne?

BIGELOW: What do you mean we're not going to write today? I think it is very good for Mr. Twain that you girls come once or twice a week to chat with him and hear stories, but what you don't understand is that Mr. Twain is a very famous literary figure.

DOROTHY: We know. He wore his outfit for us once.

BIGELOW: What outfit?

SAMANTHA: The one that made him a doctor of philosophers.

BIGELOW: You're talking about the academic regalia he received when he was awarded an honorary doctorate from Oxford - the only American ever so honored.

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