Mermaid in Miami

By Wade Bradford

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STORY OF THE PLAY

Ernie is a lonely old fisherman, without much joy in his life, until he meets an unlikely friend: a mermaid named Breeze. She has just escaped from the cruel underwater kingdom of the idiotic Emperor Tropico and hopes to enjoy her newly found freedom. But just hanging around in Ernie's lagoon isn't enough for her. When she spies on Rico, the local heart-breaker, practicing for an upcoming dance competition, Breeze decides to become human and pursue her dream of becoming a dancer. However, there are many obstacles in her way. For one, she must make a deal with the magical and cruel-hearted Swamp Hag. But along her journey, Breeze is helped by friendly dolphins, dim-witted hermit crabs, and of course, her good friend Ernie. This production offers a humorous assortment of delightful characters. Easy to stage, fantastic to perform, "Mermaid in Miami" is a show certain to make a big splash with audiences.

SETTING

It might give the story an interesting period-piece quality if set in the 1960s. Costumes and musical moments from this period might harken back to a more innocent yet turbulent time, thereby complementing the plot and characters. But nothing will truly be lost if the director decides to set this play in the present day, complete with modern costumes and so forth.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

Act I
Scene 1: On the ocean, the morning after the huge storm.
Scene 2: On the beach, a short time later.
Scene 3: At Ernie's cove, a short time later.
Act II
Scene 1: On the beach, the following day(s).
Scene 2: On the beach, a short time later.

CAST OF CHARACTERS
(4 m, 6 w, 17 flexible, extras, doubling possible)

BREEZE: A young mermaid who longs to become human.
ERNIE: An old fisherman who befriends Breeze. A crusty old-timer who might be rough around the edges, but deep down, is an old softy.
GRACE: A shy, kind-hearted seamstress; she is secretly in love with Rico.
RICO: A confident young man who is so consumed with his dance career, he doesn't realize he is in love with Grace. He's the smoothest operator on the beach.
EMPEROR TROPICO: The arrogant dictator of a down-trodden underwater empire.
SWAMP HAG: The cruel-hearted, spell-casting old lady who lives in the swampy outskirts of town. She looks a bit like a gypsy and a bit like a voodoo witch doctor. All in all, she looks like trouble.
EBB and FLO: Friendly and funny dolphins.
PRINCE DORKUS: An idiotic "fish boy" who is supposed to marry Breeze.
AIR SPIRIT: A mystical, graceful woman who guides Ernie to Breeze's rescue.
ROJO and AZURE: The Lambada sisters, Rico's ex-dance partners. (They can double as Swamp Spirits.)
WILL and JAKE GRIMM: (Or Willa and Jackie) Reporters covering the big dance competition.
SWAMP SPIRITS #1, #2: (Can be doubled with Lambada Sisters.)
FRIENDS #1, #2
CRABS #1, #2, and #3
VENDORS #1, #2: (Can be doubled with Reporters.)
CONTEST JUDGE
TEEENAGERS (or Kids) #1, #2, and #3
EXTRAS AS BEACHGOERS

SET DESIGNS

The set designs should be simple, yet creative and colorful.

Open Sea: Use a two-dimensional cutout of a rowboat placed center stage. In front and behind it are more two-dimensional cutouts of ocean waves. Another option would be to use long strands of wave-like fabric stretched across the stage to emulate the ocean. If this were done, ideally a stagehand on each side would undulate the fabric to create the wave effect. But that might get tiring! Rock set piece, see Scene 3 description.

Beach: Downstage wave cutouts can now be turned around to reveal beach sand dunes. Feel free to paint starfish, seaweed, sand castles, etc. on them.

Swampy lagoon: Center stage and to stage left, there are "rock" set pieces surrounded by weeds and cattails.

SPECIAL EFFECTS

Turbulent wind, rain and storm effects
Foreboding music
Mystical chime-like sound
Gentle breeze
Beach music
Mambo/limbo music
Salsa music
Cats fighting, hissing
Crashes
"Dazzling" music
Splashing water
Cuban music
Classical music
Thunder and lightning
Gentle wind
Wind picking up

* Additional notes at the end of the script.

Scene 1

(AT RISE: The stage is dark. A SPOTLIGHT shines down upon an OLD FISHERMAN who stands downstage left.)

ERNIE: I'll never forget the storm. In one moment, the night was still and as black as tar. An instant later, a howlin' wind roared in! *(Turbulent WIND. Loud, but not so loud as to drown out Ernie's speech.)* The rain pelted the ocean. *(RAIN.)* Lightning spat. Thunder belched. It was as if there was trouble brewing beneath the waves. And then, just as the wind and the rain and the lightning and the thunder began their mighty battle … *(The STORM rises to a crescendo. Then, very abruptly everything falls silent.)* … it all stopped. And the morning sun came out as if nothing had ever happened. *(ERNIE moves to the rowboat center stage as the LIGHTS rise to reveal the set. He picks up a fishing pole, getting ready to fish.)* Well, that storm may be over, but I still say that trouble's a-brewin'. My big toe is twitchin' and that's never a good sign. Not to mention, I've been on this ocean long enough to know that there's some spooky things down there in that water.

(Deep, foreboding MUSIC begins to play. ERNIE becomes worried, looking around the boat. All of a sudden, when the music gets really spooky, two DOLPHINS pop their heads up, directly behind the rowboat. They squeal with delight. They clap their fins together.)

DOLPHINS: Ha ha, scared you!
ERNIE: You lousy dolphins! How many times have I told you not to do that?! You scared the saltwater right out of my taffy!
EBB: Hi, Ernie!
FLO: Hi, Ernie!
EBB: Were you out on the water last night?
ERNIE: In that storm? Are you mad?
FLO: Oh, it was pretty groovy!
EBB: Ridin' those wild waves!

FLO: Rockin' and a rollin' and whatnot.
ERNIE: A storm might be fun for the likes of you marine-mammals, but I was safe and secure at home.
EBB: Your home? Oh, you mean your little shack by that lagoon?
FLO: That's a tiny little thing.
EBB: Yep. But I guess it's enough room since you live all by yourself.
FLO: All alone. With no one to talk to.
EBB: But I hear him talking to people all the time.
FLO: Nope. He's just talking to imaginary friends. Or to animals.
EBB: Talk to animals? What a nut.

(THEY laugh. ERNIE explodes.)

ERNIE: Get out of here, you two!
FLO: Why, he's so lonely, I bet he talks to that creepy old swamp hag!
EBB: That old witch? He must be desperate!
ERNIE: I said scram!

(The two DOLPHINS duck away behind the rowboat.)

ERNIE: Those dolphins think they're so smart. I hardly ever talk to imaginary friends and never the hag! The nerve of them.

(A mystical, chime-like SOUND, along with a gentle BREEZE. A mysterious, beautiful yet unseen VOICE calls to him, probably over a microphone.)

VOICE: Old man …. Old man ….
ERNIE: Who is that?
VOICE: Old man ….
ERNIE: Who you calling old?!
VOICE: Follow the breeze, old one …

End of Freeview

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