

THEATRE FOR A SMALL PLANET

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STORY OF THE PLAY

The magic of theatre, which has always brought people together to work as one, now weaves three tales from around the world together into 90 minutes of captivating entertainment for young audiences.

In the Chinese play, "The Ten Thousand Treasure Mountain," Little Red Maiden and her older brother, K'o-li, learn from their mother and the wise man of the mountain that riches do not always bring joy. Too bad the selfish dragon learns that lesson the hard way!

In a native American play, "Little Burnt Face," the Cinderella story is retold as Little Burnt Sand becomes the only Indian maiden to see the handsome and powerful Chief Rainbow Mist. Because of her sweet and kind nature, Little Burnt Sand becomes his bride and her older, meaner sisters, Tall Raven Hair and Magpie Feather, regret their earlier cruelty to her.

In the delightful English fairy tale, "The Travels of Farley Fox," we find that curiosity can kill, if not a cat, then certainly other too-curious animals. But goodness does win out in the end as Farley Fox learns his final lesson.

Show the children in your audiences that the different cultures aren't so very foreign at all with "Theatre for a Small Planet."

CHARACTERS

(Ensemble cast of 6 to 27)

ACTORS 1, 2, 3: Help introduce the 3 plays.

CHINESE PLAY

“The Ten Thousand Treasure Mountain”

LITTLE RED MAIDEN: poor peasant girl.

K'O-LI: her older brother, faces temptation.

MOTHER: hard-working, honest, wise mother.

OLD MAN: priest of the mountain, must test humans.

MI-MAI: Old Man's daughter, has keys.

DRAGON: wants all the goodies for himself!

NATIVE AMERICAN PLAY

“Little Burnt Face”

LITTLE BURNING SAND: kind, good Indian daughter.

TALL RAVEN HAIR: her mean older sister.

MAGPIE FEATHER: another.

FATHER: the girls' only parent.

SPRING DOVE: announces her brother's coming.

CHIEF RAINBOW MIST: future leader of Micmacs.

KNOWING HEAD: like a fairy godmother.

ENGLISH FAIRY TALE

“The Travels of Farley the Fox”

FARLEY: the ultimate sly fox.

WOMAN #1: owner of Rooster.

ROOSTER: Oxford type, eats Farley's bee.

WOMAN #2: owner of Pig.

PIG: eats the Rooster. Oink!

WOMAN #3: owner of Ox.

OX: eats the Pig.

FARMER: indulgent parent.

SON: Farmer's spoiled child.

WOMAN #4: owner of Bobby, the dog.

BOBBY, THE DOG throttles Farley.

(Note: Same actress can play all the Woman 1-4 with minor changes in costume.)

COSTUMES

Oriental peasant outfits are worn by Little Red Maiden (in red); K'o-li (in brown); and Mother (in black), who also carries a fan. Old Man is dressed in white, walks with a cane or stick, and has a long gray beard. Mi-Mai is dressed in brighter clothes. Also needed is a green dragon costume.

Native American garb is composed of tunic and leggings in buckskin-like fabrics. Spring Dove wears a more elaborate outfit and carries a tom-tom; Knowing Head has a painted face and a stick with a rattle and feathers on the end; and Rainbow Mist wears a dazzling yellow and orange outfit and feathered headdress. Little Burning Sand wears tattered outfit and skin cap at first and later changes into a white skin dress, silver headband, moccasins, and a yellow and orange beaded neckpiece. Sisters add moccasins and headband when they change.

English women wear 19th-century dresses with aprons and mobcaps. Farley wears a jaunty hat and at the end an academic cap and gown. Farmer and son wear dark working clothes. Costumes also needed for rooster, pig, ox, and dog.

Act I

(With house lights still on, ACTORS 1, 2 AND 3 enter with an inflatable globe and play catch. They may even include the audience in this game.)

ACTOR #1: Just a few facts about this little ball we throw through space: Our planet is third from the sun after Mercury and Venus. We're 24,902.4 miles around. We have 197 billion square miles, mostly water. We're traveling around a star, our sun, right now as we play catch, at 66,000 miles an hour. So, the fastest the average person ever flies is when he's just standing on earth eating an ice cream cone or snoring in bed.

ACTOR #2: You have no choice. One airline, one schedule, no free meals. We're all space travelers, whether we want to be or not. We rotate as we fly; every 23 hours, 56 minutes and 4 seconds, we do a turn. Don't knock the rotation. It gives us a chance to get out of the sun and get some sleep and stops people from mowing their lawns.

ACTOR #3: We "star people" have magnetic poles on our little piece of cosmos. We also have salty seas and rain forests and great plains that all teem with life. Some people on our planet are working hard to keep it that way.

ACTOR #2: We're "star people" because the earth itself is believed to be a chunk of our sun star that broke off and decided to go its own way. The funny thing is that, from outer space, we look like a calm of blue peace enveloped in a quiet of white clouds. But if you get in close, you'll see it's not so. We have lightning and earthquakes and tidal waves and sometime wars that chew up the land and the people on it as if they didn't matter at all.

ACTOR #1: We call this event "Theatre for a Small Planet" because, even though once upon a time the earth was a vast mystery to people, today it's a little spaceship we all inhabit. Columbus took three months to cross the Atlantic; the Concorde does it in three hours. Rocket ships in the future will get you around in minutes. So those who used to be foreigners are now neighbors.

ACTOR #1: *(Cont'd.)* So small we've gotten that...

ACTOR #2: Enough facts. It's time to visit some of the neighbors.

ACTOR #3: *(Pointing to the audience.)* Yes. They're all ready.

ACTOR #2: Fairy tales take us around to our neighbors faster than any machine anyway. Spin the globe.

ACTOR #1: *(Putting the globe on floor.)* We spin the globe and the country that faces the audience is the country whose fairy tale we will tell. *(HE spins the globe, while chanting:)* Round and round, / Spin and spin / Tell us, globe, / Which land we're in!

ACTOR #2: *(Picking up the stopped globe.)* China!

ACTOR #3: China!

ACTOR #1: *(Calling offstage.)* S/he said China! You all hear back there? Keepers of costumes. China! *(Two FEMALE and one MALE begin putting on the costumes of Chinese peasants which are handed to them by others.)* People of props. China! *(ACTORS are handed shovels; large rocks are pushed on stage.)* Keepers of flames and lights, dim the house, please. It's China, get ready. *(House lights come down, stage lights come up.)* Someone cue the dragon! And give him his dinner, so he won't eat any of the actors. *(To audience.)* That dragon eats more personnel around here! *(To offstage.)* Ready? Here we go. The Chinese tale, "The Ten Thousand Treasure Mountain." *(As HE goes off.)* Music up, please.

(We hear the strain of a p'i-p'a, a four-stringed Chinese instrument, or a guitar, playing Oriental strains. This is accompanied by wooden clappers and a drum. Whenever music is called for, this is the sound. A young girl, LITTLE RED MAIDEN, dressed in a reddish peasant outfit, and an older boy, K'O-LI, dressed in brown, dig the earth with shovels. The MOTHER, dressed in black, carries a large folding fan. She opens and closes the fan with a flourish and snap at decisive points in the play.)

End of Freeview

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