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Dramatic Publishing

THE ELVES AND THE SHOEMAKER

An adaptation of the classic Grimm's fairy tale
by
RIC AVERILL



Dramatic Publishing

Woodstock, Illinois • England • Australia • New Zealand

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(THE ELVES AND THE SHOEMAKER)

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This play is dedicated to Tim Griffith, the “Saint” of Liberty Hall, and to philanthropists Charley and Tensie Oldfather, who gave so much to the Seem-To-Be Players and to the entire Lawrence, Kansas, theatre community.

Thanks to all who participated in and sponsored the premiere production of *The Elves and the Shoemaker* performed by the Seem-To-Be Players and community members at Liberty Hall in Lawrence, Kansas, in December of 1999. That first production was the “birth” production without which the play would never have found its magic. The artists were:

GUNTHER Ric Averill
PETER Taylor Worthington
KARL Jeff Blair
THEODORA Trisha Simons
TRESCOTT Ely Fair
MADAME GROTSKY Jennifer Glenn
LITTLE BIT Briahn Simons
HECTOR Hugh Naughtin
SERGEANT Mark Riordan
MARISHA Margaret Perkins-McGuinness
RHIANNA Kate Naramore
DULL Reagon Heikes
DIM Tommy Cottin
QUICK Jessica Heck
SHARP Mulligan Greenwell
BONY Myriam Bloom
SOFTY Rebecca Dreyfus

OTHER ELVES:

Timmia Hearn Feldman, Zoey Hearn Feldman,
Chris Hurte, Prisca Kendagor, Thessa Klocke,
Perry Morrow, Caitlin Puckett, Ariel Richards-Pearson,
Hannah Robinson, Jacquelyn Samp, Hillary Spratt,
Caitlyn Tilden, Erin Timmesch, Amelia Weil

RED SOLDIER #1 Alexander Wickersham
RED SOLDIER #2 Chris Topher Volek
RED SOLDIER Arthur Peters
RED SODLIER Any Sack
BLUE SOLDIER Pat Roberts
BLUE SOLDIER Mick Cottin

REFUGESS:

Kate Blair, Alyssa Buecker, Amy Connoly,
Brenna Daldorph, Ida Greenwell, Caitlin Hornbeck,
Andy Kriegh, Lindsay Ramler, Nick Strole,
Rubea Stoupe, Maya Weil

CAROLERS:

Brooke McLane-Higginson, Sally Burger, Caitie Hilton,
Emma Hoyle, Jake Jordan, Hannah Kapp-Klote,
Lindsey Kennedy, Liz Kincaid, Nandini MacMillan,
Josephine Michener, Charlie Naramore, Sarah Robinson,
Anne Stella, Marley Sutter, Aaron Tilden, Ian Weaver

MUSICIANS:

Keyboard – Shelly Shores
Harp – Lena Stoupe
Flute – Sarah Timmesch
Double Bass – Steve Kapp
Trumpet – Tom Peters

RUNNING & OPERATING CREW:

William Soriano, Julia Barnard, Nicolette Weil,
Jake Angermeier, Jennifer Glenn, Eileen Larson,
Jocelyn Kitchen, Melody Volek, Kathy Marrow,
Cheryl Samp, Rebecca Stroupe, Rita Robinson,
Arther Peters, Matt Chapman, Cyrus Beedles,
Bonnie Robinson, Emily Sack, Jenny Schwering,
Liz Stuewe, Katie Vickers, Kristen Blosser,
Alexis Anderson, Lee Davis, Mia Goldsmith,
Emily Seibel

Director Ric Averill
Stage Manager Maggie Vi Beedles
Costumes Jennifer Glenn
Set Chris Johnson
Lights Anthony J. Bernal II
Choreographer Kimber Andrews
Composer Ric Averill
Poster Design Charles Higginson

THE ELVES AND THE SHOEMAKER

CHARACTERS:

GUNTHER (m) the shoemaker
KARL (m) the tailor
PETER (m) an orphaned refugee
THEODORA (f) his mother
HECTOR (m) the guilty soldier, Blue Uniform
SERGEANT (m) Blue Uniform
LITTLE BIT (f) a poor girl
TRESCOTT (m) the Baron's tax collector and son
MADAME GROTSKY (f) . . an heiress, engaged to the Baron
RHIANNA (f) Queen of the Elves

ELVES - lines are written "in a bundle" but may be spread among the elves who may have been given such names as DULL, DIM, QUICK, SHARP, BONY and SOFTY. These names are not used aloud but are for program and characterization purposes.

RED SOLDIER #1 (m)
RED SOLDIER #2 (m)
REFUGEES, 2-12 (m or f)
OTHER BLUE SOLDIERS, 0-6 (m or f)
OTHER RED SOLDIERS, 0-6 (m or f)

CASTING NOTE:

The play may be done with as few as 2 RED (#1 and #2) and 2 BLUE (HECTOR and SERGEANT) soldiers and 4 REFUGEES. ELVES may be male or female but should be androgynous and no fewer than 4 in addition to RHI-ANNA. RHIANNA, SOLDIERS and REFUGESS may be played by teenagers. LITTLE BIT and PETER are children. ELVES may also be played by children.

CAST size can be anywhere from 18-48 with:

ADULTS – 2m, 2f (GUNTHER, KARL, MADAME GROTSKY, THEODORA)

ADULTS OR TEENS – 5m, 1f (SOLDIERS, TRESCOTT, RHIANNA)

CHILDREN – 1m, 1f, 4-12 either (PETER, LITTLE BIT, ELVES)

OTHER – 2-24 either (REFUGEES, OTHER SOLDIERS)

MUSIC NOTE (see back of playscript for songs):

The Elves and the Shoemaker is NOT a musical. However, Elves do tend to sing...a lot. These Elves sing as they make shoes, and later, boots. There is also a song at the beginning when Peter is awakened. The following songs were composed by the playwright and used in the first production. The first piece shows the scoring we used for piano, flute and contrabass and is a combination of Elf dance and the Awakening Song. The other songs were all sung by the elves while they worked. Please feel free to use any of

these materials that help you tell this story. Arrange them as you wish. Or, if your theatre has a relationship with a composer, have music written specifically for your production, or have your actors chant the songs to incidental music of your choice. The playwright welcomes any inquiries about the music for the piece and would always be open to working with you on music for the production.

SETTING: There are two settings in the play:

1) A barren plain, just outside of a European town, scrubby bushes and trees have already seen the ravages of war, criss-crossing the countryside. This is a land where elves and people live. May be represented by a mid-drop curtain and a few set pieces.

2) The shoemaker's shop and cottage, a pretty, homey place is filled with clocks and knickknacks, stains, dyes, leather tools, shoe stands and clutter. The cottage has a bay window, a four-poster bed, Dutch doors to the outside, a fireplace and a large grandfather clock. There are many drawers and shelves and lofts and other places where elves may appear and disappear.

TIME: Early 1800s, when wars raged across Europe.

THE ELVES AND THE SHOEMAKER

SCENE ONE: The Shoemaker's Shop and Cottage

(The main curtain opens on the empty cottage. Above the fireplace is a drawing of an older man with his hand on the shoulders of his young son, both wearing leather aprons, standing in front of the shop. Bells ring from the town outside. A simple cool flute melody picks up and drifts into the wind. Snow can be seen through the bay window. The door opens and into the room comes GUNTHER, a very grouchy older man wearing a leather apron and carrying a load of firewood. He walks to the fireplace and throws a log on the fire, warms his hands and arms. GUNTHER walks to his worktable and picks up a scrap of leather, cuts a piece, sighs, puts it down. One shoe sits in front of him, half done. He looks off into the distance. The flute melody wanders past again as GUNTHER looks out the window. There is a knock at the door. GUNTHER looks over at the door, doesn't say a word, cuts more leather. There is another knock and GUNTHER continues to ignore it. The door opens and KARL, the tailor, enters.)

KARL. You could open the door, you know. (*GUNTHER grunts.*) You could shout out, "I'm here, come in." Most people do *something* when there is a knock on the door.

GUNTHER. I did something. I wished.

KARL. Wished?

GUNTHER. Wished whoever it was would go away.

KARL. You're not a lucky wisher, are you?

GUNTHER. No.

KARL. What if I'd been a customer?

GUNTHER. There are no shoes.

KARL. You should take down your sign.

GUNTHER. Why?

KARL. You could put up a new one. "The do-nothing-but-complain-all-day shop." Then when people who complain all the time want company...

GUNTHER. People who complain don't want company.

KARL. They do. What good is it to feel sorry for yourself all by yourself?

GUNTHER. I don't feel sorry for myself. The shop is closed.

KARL. I'm not here to buy shoes.

GUNTHER. You're here to complain?

KARL. I'm here to lift your spirits.

GUNTHER. It's not working.

KARL. Listen to me, you sour old coot, the Emperor's forces were pushed back yesterday and it looks as though the war won't come closer than fifty miles.

GUNTHER. Good.

KARL. Not for the Emperor. (*There is a pause. KARL moves closer to him.*) Will you try to work today?

GUNTHER. I am working. (*He picks up some leather and starts to pound it to a sole.*) In fact, I work better alone.

(KARL moves to the fireplace mantle, adds another log to the fire and looks at the picture of GUNTHER with a teenage boy.)

KARL. They posted the lists again today. No one from this village.

GUNTHER *(pounds leather into a sole)*. The forest swallows them whole. Bullets strike from nowhere and they fall like leaves. And the forest swallows them...

KARL. I'll be working hard today. The Baron has a new fiancée, Madame Grotsky, and she's ordered two dresses—full evening wear, for the winter ball.

GUNTHER. You should be back in your shop working.

KARL. Nonsense. That's why I have apprentices. I'll do the trim myself, of course. *(GUNTHER pounds harder, ignoring him. KARL goes to the large grandfather clock, looks at it, then back at him.)* I told her you make the finest shoes in the country.

GUNTHER. I hope she doesn't expect a sample.

(The clock strikes ONE, then the face opens and reveals RHIANNA, the ELVIN QUEEN, who watches them.)

KARL. Gunther, it would do you good to work. To finish some shoes.

GUNTHER. Which I can't do as long as you are standing here jabbering at me.

KARL *(moves to the door)*. I'll be leaving then.

GUNTHER. Good.

(KARL leaves. GUNTHER lifts leather to work, then stops, shoves the mess on the table and all onto the

floor. He puts his head down on the table. RHIANNA reaches forward and pulls the clock face shut. Lights dim. The mid-drop curtain descends.)

SCENE TWO: A Battlefield

(In front of the mid-drop are battle-scarred trees and bushes. Smoke and fog hang deep over the clearing. Drums pound, bugles sound, then gunshots and artillery blasts ring out. REFUGEES rush across the stage, hand in hand, carrying baggage. More refugees enter and they confer, but look up quickly as TWO RED-UNIFORMED SOLDIERS enter and shout orders, scout about, confused. REFUGEES hide. OTHER RED SOLDIERS join them, confer, then run back out. First group of REFUGEES start off as other REFUGEES enter, including a mother, THEODORA, and her son, PETER. Gunshots ring out and they hide behind a bush. FOUR BLUE-UNIFORMED SOLDIERS run on opposite RED's side.)

PETER. Mother?

THEODORA. Hush. Hide.

(They crouch. RED SOLDIERS return. SOLDIERS face, off, kneel and fire their muskets. A young REFUGEE GIRL runs forward, frightened. THEODORA rises up to stop her.)

THEODORA. No!

REFUGEE GIRL. Mama!

(PETER jumps up and pushes the girl to safety, gunshots with “bullets” whizzing by. THEODORA dashes out after PETER. More gunshots.)

THEODORA. No! Peter! *(She is struck and falls, PETER turns to her.)*

PETER. Mother!

(He’s struck and falls as well. One BLUE SOLDIER falls, then two RED. The REDS begin a retreat, firing back as they leave. HECTOR, a BLUE, charges forward.)

HECTOR. Forward!

(The BLUE SOLDIERS charge, there is a sudden volley of musket fire. HECTOR is hit. Bugles sound. REDS retreat, exit. Another BLUE SOLDIER, a SERGEANT, runs to where HECTOR has fallen.)

SERGEANT. Hector? How bad is it?

(HECTOR pulls himself up on his arm, looks over at PETER. Several REFUGEES dash across the stage.)

HECTOR. The boy?

SERGEANT. Never mind the refugees. Let me help you.

(Pulls HECTOR to his feet, grabbing him under the arms.)

HECTOR. But...

SERGEANT. They’ll be back. Quickly.

(SERGEANT drags HECTOR offstage left. More fog. Gunshots diminish. Mournful music begins and lights dim down and turn an eerie blue. PETER and THEODORA do not stir. Lights dim and music swirls. THEODORA slowly stands, now dressed completely in white, leaving her “body” on the floor. She looks down on her son, PETER, and reaches toward him but can’t quite touch him. She looks around, then down upon her own body, reaches down but can’t quite touch that either. She wails an eerie disembodied note.)

THEODORA. Aaaaaaaaa, my son.

(From one side of the stage comes RHIANNA, the ELFIN QUEEN. Behind her are a train of stair-step smaller ELVES. They rush forward to prop up THEODORA as she slumps back toward the ground.)

RHIANNA *(whispers in THEODORA’s ear, the other ELVES whispering a murmured echo)*. Theodora. Theodora.

(THEODORA looks over at RHIANNA, is disoriented.)

ELVES. Theodora, Theodora...

THEODORA. Me? Are you speaking to me. My boy. My Peter.

RHIANNA. We grant you one wish, Theodora.

ELVES. Wish, wish, wish...

RHIANNA. You may live.

ELVES. Live, live, live...

THEODORA. Live? But? Peter—

RHIANNA. You have one wish.

ELVES. One, one, one, wish, wish, wish...

THEODORA. That he may live, then. That my child may live.

(RHIANNA nods and looks to the other ELVES. They move swiftly in front of her, then part to either side. RHIANNA moves to the boy, leans over him, turns and waves others away.)

RHIANNA. Take her now, to safety, and peace.

ELVES. Peace, peace, peace...

(The music swirls and mists and the ELVES lead THEODORA off. Music changes and RHIANNA dances around the body of PETER. She sings.)

RHIANNA.

**There's music in the forest glade,
There's music in the field,
There's music here where life is made,
From vicious war-time yield.**

(She stops and leans down very close, listens to PETER's chest, touches him, looks up in the sky, and then pulls from his chest a bullet. He gasps, sits up. She holds it up in the air.)

**Stand up, Peter, greet the night,
Stand up, Peter, all is right,
The music of the Elfin land,
The music now will help you stand.**

(She laughs and dances off. PETER, catching his breath, gradually and uncomfortably stands. Music continues. PETER looks down at his mother's body. Suddenly HECTOR comes running in. PETER sees him and screams!)

PETER. You go away! Stay away from my mother!

(Gunshots ring out in the distance.)

HECTOR. Come, boy. The battle's shifting back this way!
Come with me.

PETER. You're the one. You shot her.

(Several REFUGEES race across the field.)

HECTOR. There were bullets everywhere, lad. Now come.
The entire army's on the move this night—under cover
of the mist.

PETER. My mother.

HECTOR. There's nothing you can do for her. Come
along.

*(HECTOR pulls PETER away and they move offstage as
the lights dim down. Sounds change and lights dimin-
ish.)*

SCENE THREE: The Shoemaker's Cottage. The next day.

*(The curtain comes up to reveal GUNTHER, head down
on his desk, asleep. There is a knock on the door. GUN-*

THER does not move. Another knock, even more insistent. GUNTHER lifts his head a bit, then puts it back down. There is a third knock.)

HECTOR (*offstage voice*). By order of the army, open up.

(GUNTHER sits up. Another knock. He walks to the door and opens it, revealing HECTOR and PETER standing there. HECTOR is favoring his wounded arm. PETER is frightened but curious.)

GUNTHER. What does the army want with me? I'm too old to— (*Realizes HECTOR has been wounded.*) Are you all right, Lieutenant?

HECTOR. Yes, but I'm so far from my unit they'll count me a deserter soon.

GUNTHER. I can give you some bread. I have little else.

(Goes to his cupboard, retrieves a loaf of bread. HECTOR takes it, puts it in his pack as PETER peeks out at GUNTHER.)

PETER. Where are your shoes?

GUNTHER (*looks down*). On my feet, child.

HECTOR. Thank you, old man. But I didn't come for supplies. I've been looking all over the village for a place for this boy, and I met a man who...

GUNTHER (*shakes his head*). Karl.

HECTOR. Pardon?

GUNTHER. A tailor?

HECTOR. Why, yes...

GUNTHER. I'm sure he'd like another apprentice. He has lots of work and...

PETER. No, the shoes you sell?

(GUNTHER looks at the boy, annoyed, then back at HECTOR.)

HECTOR. He suggested you. Said you'd have need of a new boy.

(PETER walks around the table and begins to pick up the leather and tools that lie on the ground.)

GUNTHER. I don't.

HECTOR. You don't have work? I could place you an order for several pairs of boots, good man. Enough to put the child to work. He, I...

GUNTHER. I don't need anything more from the army, sir. Take him with you. Surely you can use up a few more boys in the service?

HECTOR *(whispers to GUNTHER)*. He's a refugee. I think he lost his mother, no telling what happened to his father. I can't keep him with me.

GUNTHER *(whispers, but louder)*. Nor can I. *(PETER has picked up an awl and smashes it through a piece of leather with a small hammer.)* Put that away, boy, before you hurt yourself.

PETER *(looks up at him)*. I think this punches holes. I think I could make shoes.

HECTOR. Please. I have to report back to camp and the boy's been through enough.

GUNTHER. Where is your camp?