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Dramatic Publishing



BECCA

Book, music and lyrics by
Wendy Kesselman

BECCA

IUPUI/IRT Bonderman Award

AATE Distinguished Play Award

Commissioned by the New York State Council on the Arts and produced as winner of the Bonderman National Children's Playwriting Symposium, Indianapolis, Ind.

Musical. Book, music and lyrics by Wendy Kesselman. Musical arrangements by Michael Starobin. Cast: 1m., 1w., 9 either gender. Reality and fantasy mix in this powerful exploration of the inner journey of children. The world of dreams vs. fears, love vs. abuse of power, and freedom vs. responsibility is imaginatively presented through song, dance and dialogue. In *Becca*, Jonathan's small pets languish in cages, remembering a time when he played with them. Little sister, Becca, portrayed as a beautiful but sad doll, is Jonathan's "pet" now. He relishes the control he has over her, imagining he has her undying love and devotion. But one day, Becca refuses Jonathan's order to "Say you're my doll" and is banished to the closet. Scary creatures of the closet haunt Becca but evaporate when she finally opens her eyes. She emerges with new confidence and determination to be free and eagerly encourages the animals to free themselves as well. The pets muster their resolve, escaping to the field and forest. Becca leaves Jonathan, returning only after he has expressed heartfelt remorse for his actions. Together, they begin anew, as equals and friends. Excellent source for theatre for young audience studies. Single int. set. Suitable for touring. Approximate running time: 75 minutes. Code: BE9.

Front cover: Trini Alvarado as Becca in the Interart Theatre production of *Becca*. Photo: courtesy of Susan Gardner.

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Becca



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BECCA

A MUSICAL

Book, music and lyrics by
WENDY KESSELMAN

Piano arrangements by
MICHAEL STAROBIN



DRAMATIC PUBLISHING
WOODSTOCK, ILLINOIS • AUSTRALIA • NEW ZEALAND • SOUTH AFRICA

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(BECCA)

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THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY

of Woodstock, Illinois

BECCA was commissioned by The New York State Council on the Arts under its special project for Younger Audiences.

BECCA was selected as the winner of the 1987 IUPUI National Children's Theatre Playwriting Competition. It was produced by the University Theatre at the Mary Cable Theatre in March 1987 for the National Children's Playwriting Symposium.

The Interart Theatre
Originally Presented
BECCA

a
new musical

Book, Lyrics and Music
by WENDY KESSELMAN

Directed by BARBARA ROSOFF

Arrangements and Musical Director - Jerome Leonard Isaacs

Choreography by Dalienne Majors
Scenic Design by Linda Conaway
Costumes and Masks by Jane Stein
Lighting by Geoffrey T. Cunningham
Stage Manager - Naomi Berger

Cast: In order of appearance

Grasshopper Victor Ephrossi
Parrot Tom Corbett
Salamander Emily Zimmerman
Bullfrog William Wagoner
Jonathan John Bucek
Becca Trini Alvarado
The Rats Lynda Rodolitz, Camille Tibaldeo
Ida The Spider Karen Stefko
The Escaped Snake Julius L. Webster

Margot Lewitin - Artistic Director

MUSICAL NUMBERS

SCENE ONE

- “WE’RE STUCK”, Animals
- “RIGHT FROM THE BEGINNING”, Jonathan
- “BONJOUR, BONJOUR”, Becca
- “SOMETIMES I’M LONELY”, Becca and Animals
- “BEAUTIFUL LONG WHITE DRESS”, Jonathan

SCENE TWO

- “WHO KNOWS WHAT’S IN THE CLOSET”, Animals and Creatures
- “ONLY ME”, Becca
- “WE ARE THE RATS”, Rats
- “IDA THE SPIDER”, Ida
- “THE SNAKE WHO ESCAPED FROM THE NEW YORK ZOO”, Snake
- “THE WICKEDEST WITCH”, Witches
- “CLOSET FINALE”, Creatures and Becca

SCENE THREE

- “WE’RE STUCK” (*Reprise*), Animals, Becca and Jonathan
- “BECCA, LITTLE SISTER”, Animals and Becca
- “RIGHT FROM THE BEGINNING” (*Reprise*), Jonathan
- “ONCE I HAD THE SUN TO WARM ME”, Jonathan
- “SOMETIMES I’M LONELY” (*Reprise*), Jonathan and Becca

CHARACTERS

BECCA

JONATHAN

THE ANIMALS

The Parrot

The Salamander

The Grasshopper

The Bullfrog

THE CREATURES IN THE CLOSET

The Rats

Ida the Spider

The Escaped Snake

The Witches

SCENE

The entire action takes place in a child's room during the late afternoon.

For Brian

SCENE ONE

A child's room.

A large window curves around one side of the room. A closet door is on the other side. There is a small table and two small stools. On the table is an oversized tea set: a tremendous teapot and huge blue cups and saucers.

On the window seat is a group of very large toys. There is a big bear, a lion, a hobby horse with a raggedy mane, and a beautiful DOLL with long braids and large eyes, sitting on a small blanket.

In the foreground are four cages. Each one contains an oversized ANIMAL. In the first there is a PARROT, in the second, a SALAMANDER, in the third, a BULLFROG, and in the fourth, a GRASSHOPPER. The PARROT is sitting on a swing. HE is holding a cane.

In front of their cages, just out of the ANIMALS' reach, is a blue food container. Scattered nearby are several broken instruments.

The PROLOGUE is interrupted by a very loud, slow "Tic, Tac, Tic, Tac," coming from a metronome.

JONATHAN, a slender boy of ten, is practising "Au Clair de La Lune" on the violin. Halfway through, He makes a mistake and goes back to the beginning of the piece. HE starts again, and again makes the same mistake.

The ANIMALS cringe each time JONATHAN makes the mistake. The BULLFROG snaps his mouth open and shut. It is JONATHAN who has created the ANIMALS' cages, using materials inherent to each ANIMAL'S natural habitat, with loving care.

When the ANIMALS begin to talk, JONATHAN continues practising, aware that THEY are making noise, but not listening to what THEY are saying.

GRASSHOPPER: If he makes that mistake one more time I'll scream..

BECCA

PARROT: What makes you think he won't? He's only made it about thirty thousand times.

SALAMANDER: She told him he had to get it right today.

PARROT: She told him she told him. You dummy—she tells him that every day. He's never gonna get it right. He's gonna make the same mistake the next time. Just wait—you'll see.

(JONATHAN starts the piece from the beginning again, while the ANIMALS listen, paralyzed. Sure enough, HE makes the same mistake)

PARROT: *(Continued)*
(Laughing uproariously)
See? What'd I tell you?

SALAMANDER: I was sure he'd get it this time.

PARROT: Dream dream dream. That's all you ever do.

BULLFROG: *(Snapping his mouth open)*
I'm hungry.

PARROT: Another dreamer.

BULLFROG: *(Snapping his mouth shut)*
I'm hungry.

PARROT: The worst kind.

BULLFROG: *(Shouting)*
I'M HUNGRY!

PARROT: *(Shouting back)*
WHO ISN'T? He hasn't fed us in three days.

JONATHAN: SHHH!
(He continues playing "Au Clair de la Lune," starting at the beginning and going right up to the place where HE makes the same mistake again)

GRASSHOPPER: *(Shrinking back)*

BECCA

My nerves. My nerves are shot to pieces. Remember when they made him learn the tuba? Remember that?

PARROT: How can we forget?

GRASSHOPPER: And the trumpet? Remember the trumpet?

(The PARROT imitates the sound of JONATHAN playing the trumpet solo from Verdi's "Aida")

SALAMANDER: *(Picking up a banged in trumpet)*

He almost got the trumpet.

PARROT: *(Snickering)*

Sure, sure.

GRASSHOPPER: Then there was the clarinet.

(The PARROT imitates the sound of JONATHAN playing the first few bars of Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue" on the clarinet)

SALAMANDER: You do that very well.

(JONATHAN comes in again with the same mistake on the violin)

PARROT: Now it's the violin.

GRASSHOPPER: *(In a loud whisper)*

Listen. I think our only chance is if we all band together. I was up all night thinking. I've got a plan.

PARROT: Another one? You're always having them. You've had fifty plans in the last week!

GRASSHOPPER: No, listen to this one. This one's perfect.

(The PARROT leans on his cane, waiting)

PARROT: *(Exasperated)*

Well. . .c'mon. C'MON.

GRASSHOPPER: If you'd just be quiet for a minute, maybe I could. . .remember what it was. . .

(The GRASSHOPPER quivers with the effort to remember)

Let me think. . .I'm sure I'll remember it.

PARROT: You always say that.

JONATHAN: (*Turning around angrily*)

Will you be quiet! I've got to practise.

(*HE makes the same mistake again*)

GRASSHOPPER: I forgot.

PARROT: You always forget.

GRASSHOPPER: Maybe it'll come back to me.

PARROT: Don't count on it.

SALAMANDER: If you could only get some sleep, I'm sure you'd remember in the morning.

PARROT: Yes, try and get some sleep, will you? You keep me up all night with your jumping, jumping, jumping all the time.

GRASSHOPPER: (*Twitching*)

Well, what can I do? I'm nervous. I've always been nervous. But at least in the fields I could jump, I could fly.

PARROT: The fields, the fields. Don't talk about the fields to me!

SALAMANDER: Oh, if he'd only let me out — just for a minute — I'd climb out the window and run back to those fields right away.

GRASSHOPPER: If he'd only let me out—just for a minute—I'd hop all the way to the end of the world.

BULLFROG: If he'd only let me out—just for a minute—

(*HE snaps his mouth open and shut*)

I wouldn't know where to begin.

(*The ANIMALS look at each other. The music of "WE'RE STUCK" begins. THEY sing while JONATHAN goes right on practising "Au Clair de la Lune"*)

"WE'RE STUCK"

SALAMANDER: (*Sings:*)

DO YOU THINK HE WILL EVER LET US OUT

BULLFROG:
LET US OUT

GRASSHOPPER:
DO YOU THINK HE WILL EVER SET US FREE

PARROT:
SET US FREE

SALAMANDER:
DO YOU THINK WE WILL EVER

BULLFROG:
EVER BECOME

ANIMALS:
ALL THAT WE WERE MEANT TO BE.

SALAMANDER:
DO YOU THINK THAT OUR TIME WILL EVER COME

ANIMALS:
EVER COME

BULLFROG:
DO YOU THINK WE WILL EVER HAVE SOME FUN

ANIMALS:
HAVE SOME FUN

GRASSHOPPER:
DO YOU THINK THAT OUR DOORS WILL EVER
OPEN AND THEN

ANIMALS:
WE WILL START TO LIVE AGAIN.

BUT WE'RE STUCK
WE'RE STUCK
WE'RE STUCK HERE FOR GOOD
AND GOOD'S NOT THE WORD
FOR HOW WE FEEL.

BECCA

WE'RE STUCK
WE'RE STUCK
IF WE COULD GET OUT WE WOULD
BUT EVERY DAY
IT GETS MORE REAL.

SALAMANDER:

DO YOU THINK THAT THE SKY COULD STILL BE BLUE

ANIMALS:

STILL BE BLUE

BULLFROG:

DO YOU THINK ANY PROMISES COME TRUE

ANIMALS:

STILL COME TRUE

GRASSHOPPER:

DO YOU THINK THAT THE DARKNESS WILL EVER BECOME

ANIMALS:

A DAY WHEN WE WILL SEE THE SUN.

ANIMALS: (*Continued*)

BUT WE'RE STUCK
WE'RE STUCK
WE'RE STUCK IN THIS PLACE

PARROT:

JUST LIKE SOME BEES INSIDE SOME HONEY

ANIMALS:

WE'RE STUCK
WE'RE STUCK
WE'RE STUCK WITH THAT FACE

BULLFROG:

AND WE CAN TELL YOU, IT'S NOT FUNNY!

SALAMANDER:

STILL I BELIEVE THAT ONE DAY WE'LL ALL GET OUT

ANIMALS:

WE'LL GET OUT!

BECCA

GRASSHOPPER:

AND WE'LL RUN AND WE'LL LEAP AND DANCE ABOUT

BULLFROG:

DANCE ABOUT!

SALAMANDER:

FOR I STILL TRUST IN MY DAYDREAMS

GRASSHOPPER:

AND MY DAYDREAMS TELL ME

ANIMALS:

THE DAY WILL COME WHEN WE'LL BE FREE

THE DAY WILL COME WHEN WE'LL BE—

(Their singing is interrupted by the final frenzy of JONATHAN'S trying to get "Au Clair de la Lune" right on the violin. As the ANIMALS writhe in their cages, the BULLFROG snaps his mouth open and shut in a paroxysm of frustration. JONATHAN saws away louder and louder, making the same mistake over and over again. HE scrapes the strings wildly one last time and throws down the violin)

JONATHAN: I won't, I won't, I won't! I don't care what they say. I'm never going to play the violin again! Or do my homework! Or feed the animals!

(The ANIMALS make pitiful sounds, and JONATHAN, hesitating, moves to feed them, then turns away)

JONATHAN: *(Continued)*

None of you are getting a thing!

"RIGHT FROM THE BEGINNING"

JONATHAN: *(Continued)*

(Sings:)

THEY SAY, "PRACTISE, PRACTISE, PRACTISE!"

IT'S NOT FAIR!

THEY SAY, "DO TOMORROW'S LESSON!"

I DON'T CARE!

THEY SAY, "EAT YOUR SOUP, YOUR SPINACH,
FIX YOUR HAIR!"

THEY'RE IN AND OUT

THEY'RE EVERYWHERE!

BECCA

BUT IT REALLY DOESN'T MATTER
WHAT THEY SAY
I'LL DO ANYTHING I WANT TO
ANYWAY.
AND I'D RATHER PLAY WITH BECCA
ANY DAY
YES I'D RATHER PLAY WITH BECCA,
I'D RATHER PLAY WITH BECCA,
I'D RATHER PLAY.

FOR RIGHT FROM THE BEGINNING
BECCA WAS MY DOLL
EVERYTHING I TELL HER
SHE MUST DO
IF I TELL HER
SHE MUST SING
I JUST HAVE TO PULL THE STRING
SHE'S THE SLAVE AND I'M THE KING
EVERYDAY, EVERYDAY.

AND RIGHT FROM THE BEGINNING
EVERYTHING SHE SAID
WERE THINGS THAT I HAVE TOLD HER
SHE MUST SAY
I CAN TELL HER
BLACK IS WHITE
I CAN SAY THE DAY IS NIGHT
EVERYTHING I SAY IS RIGHT
ANYWAY, ANYWAY.

THEY SAY, "EAT UP ALL YOUR BEANS,
THEY'RE GETTING COLD!"
THEY SAY, "NO MORE GAMES WITH BECCA,
YOU'RE TOO OLD!"
THEY SAY, "DON'T DO WHAT YOU WANT,
DO WHAT YOU'RE TOLD!"
BUT I REFUSE TO
BE GOOD AS GOLD.

WHAT THEY SAY GOES IN ONE EAR
AND OUT THE OTHER
THEY SAY "DO IT!"
I SAY "YES!"
BUT I DON'T BOTHER.
FOR THERE'RE SO MANY MORE THINGS
THAT I WOULD RATHER—

BECCA

LIKE I'D RATHER PLAY WITH BECCA,
I'D RATHER PLAY WITH BECCA,
I'D RATHER.

(JONATHAN runs over to the group of very large toys. HE picks up a long ribbon which is attached to the beautiful DOLL. As HE slowly pulls the ribbon toward him, BECCA, the DOLL, awakes. Her eyes gaze fixedly ahead. Jerkily with rigid movements, SHE stands up. As JONATHAN continues singing and pulling the ribbon, BECCA walks woodenly toward him)

JONATHAN: *(Continued)*

FOR RIGHT FROM THE BEGINNING
RIGHT FROM WHEN YOU CAME
RIGHT FROM WHEN YOU WALKED
AND WHEN YOU TALKED
I WAS ALL THAT YOU COULD SEE
YOU DID EVERYTHING FOR ME
YOU WERE JUST WHAT I HAD WANTED
YOU TO BE, YOU TO BE.

AND YOU'LL STAY WITH ME FOREVER
FOREVER YOU'LL BE MINE
FOREVER I WON'T EVER NEED A FRIEND
AND YOU'LL KEEP ON BEING GOOD
DOING EVERYTHING YOU SHOULD
YOU ARE NOW AND YOU WILL ALWAYS
BE MY DOLL,
BE MY DOLL,
BE MY DOLL
RIGHT TILL THE END.

(As JONATHAN pulls the string, BECCA'S head goes up and down. Her eyes snap closed)

JONATHAN: *(Continued)*

(Pulling on the string again)
C'mon Becca. Open your eyes.
(BECCA's eyes remain shut)

JONATHAN: *(Continued)*

Did you hear me? I said, open your eyes!
(HE tugs on one of her braids. BECCA's head tips to the side. Her eyes jerk open)

BECCA

JONATHAN: *(Continued)*

Okay, now smile. C'mon, you know how to smile.

(BECCA's face remains frozen)

JONATHAN: *(Continued)*

I said smile, little doll. Smile!

(He pulls on the ribbon. BECCA'S body sways back and forth. SHE breaks into a beautiful frozen smile)

JONATHAN: *(Continued)*

That's right. Now walk. C'mon, just take a few steps.

(HE gives her a little push. BECCA starts walking mechanically up and down, back and forth)

JONATHAN: *(Continued)*

One two three four five six seven eight. And backwards. One two three four five six seven eight.

(BECCA has stopped at the count of seven)

JONATHAN: *(Continued)*

C'mon Becca. Dolls don't get tired. Dolls never get tired. Dolls can go on forever.

(HE puts her foot back into place. BECCA smiles her beautiful frozen smile)

JONATHAN: *(Continued)*

Okay, now let's see what else you can do.

(HE pulls on the ribbon and BECCA whirls around)

JONATHAN: *(Continued)*

What can you do that no other doll in the world can do?

(BECCA tips over and goes into a forward roll)

JONATHAN: *(Continued)*

Excellent. That was just excellent.

(HE unties the ribbon)

And now for the real test.

(BECCA does three whirlwind cartwheels right across the room)

JONATHAN: *(Continued)*

Terrific. And now. . .

(HE hands BECCA a jump rope and SHE mechanically skips rope)

BECCA

JONATHAN: *(Continued)*

And for the final slambang performance. . .

*(Very slowly, as if it might break, BECCA begins opening her mouth.
We can almost hear the joints squeak)*

“BONJOUR, BONJOUR”

BECCA: *(Sings:)*

BONJOUR, BONJOUR
JE M'APPELLE BECCA
C'EST MON NOM
IT'S MY NAME
ET MAINTENANT
AU REVOIR GOOD-BYE GOOD-BYE
GOOD —

GOOD-BYE, GOOD-BYE
JE M'APPELLE BECCA
C'EST MON NOM
IT'S MY NAME
ET MAINTENANT
AU REVOIR GOOD-BYE GOOD-BYE
GOOD —

BECCA, BECCA
MY NAME IS BECCA
C'EST MON NOM
IT'S MY NAME
ET MAINTENANT
AU REVOIR GOOD-BYE GOOD-BYE
GOOD —

JONATHAN: *(Breaking in)*

Perfect. You're perfect. That's what you are. You're a perfect little doll.

(HE hugs her)

What do you say when I hug you?

(HE bends her over and back)

BECCA: *(Mechanically)*

I love you.

JONATHAN: *(Hugging her again)*

That's right. Louder!

(HE bends her over and back again)

BECCA

BECCA: *(Loud and emotionless)*

I love you. I love you.

JONATHAN: *(In ecstasy)*

That's it, that's it, that's it! Now what are we going to do? I know. It's teatime. I want my tea.

(HE sits down at the small table)

C'mon Becca, don't just smile there. Bring me my tea.

(Rigidly, with doll-like steps, BECCA walks to the small table)

JONATHAN: *(Continued)*

Serve me.

(Stiffly, BECCA starts pouring the tea. There is nothing in the pot)

JONATHAN: *(Continued)*

(Taking a fake sip)

Hey wait a minute. This tea's not hot. What's the matter with you?

(HE hits BECCA)

What do you do when I hit you?

(BECCA starts to cry abruptly, a false doll's cry, and stops again just as abruptly, going back into her beautiful smile. JONATHAN is delighted. HE hits her again. Again the false doll's cry. And again the smile. HE lifts her up and whirls her around the room)

JONATHAN: *(Continued)*

Oh my beautiful wonderful perfect little doll! There's nothing you can't do. Nothing. And now. . .because you've been so perfect, because you've been so good, I'm going to get you the perfect surprise.

(HE thrusts BECCA onto the window seat, along with the other toys)

So stay right there and don't make a peep till I get back!

(HE fixes her mouth in the beautiful smile once again, and runs out. BECCA remains still as a statue)

SALAMANDER: He was nice once. Remember?

GRASSHOPPER: Yes. Once.

PARROT: A million years ago.

SALAMANDER: No, the day he found me. After the rainstorm.

GRASSHOPPER: In the high grass at twilight. I had bruised my wings.

BECCA

BULLFROG: That morning on the lily pad. I had just caught a fly.

SALAMANDER: He knelt down beside me.

BULLFROG: He talked to me so sweetly.

GRASSHOPPER: He picked me up so carefully.

SALAMANDER: He carried me so gently out of the woods.

PARROT: *(Shrieking)*

And then what? He locked you up in that cage. Admit it.

(Waving his cane, HE swings back and forth on his swing)

GRASSHOPPER: *(Not paying any attention)*

I loved it when he stroked my back. He hypnotized me that way.

PARROT: He'd roast you now if he could. Fried grasshopper — one of his favorites, he always says.

SALAMANDER: I loved it when he talked to me. He'd talk to me for hours.

BULLFROG: I loved it when he tickled me. I couldn't wait for him to come into the room.

(HE pauses)

I'm hungry.

PARROT: Stop thinking about that. You're not going to get any.

BULLFROG: *(Excited)*

Any what?

PARROT: Any anything.

BULLFROG: *(Snapping his mouth open and shut several times in succession)*

I'm hungry.

PARROT: *(Beginning a rapid interchange)*

Cállate!

BULLFROG: I'm hungry.

PARROT: Ta guele!