

Excerpt terms and conditions

This excerpt is available to assist you in the play selection process.

Excerpts are not intended for performance, classroom or other academic use. In any of these cases you will need to purchase playbooks via our website or by phone, fax or mail.

A short excerpt is not always indicative of the entire work, and we strongly suggest you read the whole play before planning a production or ordering a cast quantity.

The Emperor's New Clothes

Comedy by
Sharon A. Cole

Based on the tale by
Hans Christian Andersen

Dramatic Publishing Company
Woodstock, Illinois • Australia • New Zealand • South Africa

*** NOTICE ***

The amateur and stock acting rights to this work are controlled exclusively by THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC., without whose permission in writing no performance of it may be given. Royalty must be paid every time a play is performed whether or not it is presented for profit and whether or not admission is charged. A play is performed any time it is acted before an audience. Current royalty rates, applications and restrictions may be found at our website: www.dramaticpublishing.com, or we may be contacted by mail at: THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC., 311 Washington St., Woodstock, IL 60098.

COPYRIGHT LAW GIVES THE AUTHOR OR THE AUTHOR'S AGENT THE EXCLUSIVE RIGHT TO MAKE COPIES. This law provides authors with a fair return for their creative efforts. Authors earn their living from the royalties they receive from book sales and from the performance of their work. Conscientious observance of copyright law is not only ethical, it encourages authors to continue their creative work. This work is fully protected by copyright. No alterations, deletions or substitutions may be made in the work without the prior written consent of the publisher. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, videotape, film, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher. It may not be performed either by professionals or amateurs without payment of royalty. All rights, including, but not limited to, the professional, motion picture, radio, television, videotape, foreign language, tabloid, recitation, lecturing, publication and reading, are reserved.

For performance of any songs, music and recordings mentioned in this play which are in copyright, the permission of the copyright owners must be obtained or other songs and recordings in the public domain substituted.

© 1976 by
SHARON A. COLE

Printed in the United States of America
All Rights Reserved

(THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES)

ISBN: 978-0-88680-045-1

IMPORTANT BILLING AND CREDIT REQUIREMENTS

All producers of the play *must* give credit to the author of the play in all programs distributed in connection with performances of the play and in all instances in which the title of the play appears for purposes of advertising, publicizing or otherwise exploiting the play and/or a production. The name of the author *must* also appear on a separate line, on which no other name appears, immediately following the title, and *must* appear in size of type not less than fifty percent (50%) the size of the title type. Biographical information on the author, if included in the playbook, may be used in all programs. *In all programs this notice must appear:*

“Produced by special arrangement with
THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC., of Woodstock, Illinois.”

ABOUT THE PLAY

Hans Christian Anderson's "The Emperor's New Clothes" is a tale that everybody loves. Because it lends itself so well to the stage there are many dramatizations, but we think that if you read them all, you'll like this one best.

Although we suppose this will be regarded as a children's play, adults enjoy it, too. *Everybody* delights in watching the pompous, selfish emperor parading around in his underwear. And it's appropriate that a naive, simple child should be the only one honest enough to admit that he can't see the new clothes.

Sharon Cole has brought the characters to life with strong but humorous personalities that your cast members will love playing. Every role is a gem. Many of the roles can be played by males or females. The "children"—Patches, Prince Terry Cloth, and Princess Polly Ester—may be played by children or by adults acting like children. Since this is farce and fantasy, size does not matter; a towering hulk of a boy may be hilarious as the little prince playing with his Teddy bear.

This version of THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES is suitable for all groups and all ages.

After its world premiere at Santa Rosa Junior College in California, it was presented at the annual Summer Drama Workshop at Stephen F. Austin University, Nacogdoches, Texas. Special thanks are due to Dr. W. K. Waters, Jr. of the SFA Theatre Department and Joe Wheelis, past president of the Texas Secondary Theatre Conference, for their help in preparing the script for publication.



NOTE: Although the author has divided the play into scenes, the action is continuous; do not pause between scenes.

THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES

Characters

***Snip** }
***Tuck** } A pair of crafty, sneaky ne'er-do-wells

Lt. Raggs, the Emperor's flunky

***Patches**, everybody's flunky

Sir Yesir, faithful old servant to the Emperor

Lady Yesmum, a weighty lady-in-waiting

Emperor Velvet, also Earl of Corde Roy, Duke of
Denim, etc.

Empress Velveteen, the Emperor's wife

***Prince Terry Cloth**, royal heir

Princess Polly Ester, royal heiress

Shroud, keeper of the (shh—whisper) Dungeon

Townpeople may be added if desired

**May be played by male or female*

★

This dramatization of THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES was first presented by The Children's Theatre Wing of the Summer Repertory Theatre at Santa Rosa, Calif., Junior College, directed by Elliott Schifter, costumes designed by Susan Min, set designed by Alan Wolfson.

THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES

By Sharon A. Cole

[The set is the interior of a castle. There is a large door Up Center with two other doorways Up Right and Up Left. The castle is not in the best of condition. Broken windows and doors—the center door squeaks like “Inner Sanctum!”—cracked boards, crumbling stones, torn banners hanging lifeless, etc. During the play, portions of the castle literally fall apart and fall on people in the cast. The condition of the castle and its inhabitants is due to the fact that the Emperor spends every cent in his domain on clothes. The Empress and her children are slightly less ragged and patched than the servants, but the Emperor is over-dressed to the teeth...hat and crown, coat and cape, velvet and brocade, fur trim and jewels... you name it, he has it!]

As for the rest of the set and props, everything is carried on by the characters. This includes all hand props as well as the furniture. The reason for this is that everything that isn't hung onto or nailed down is up for grabs because the Emperor will sell or hock anything he can lay his hands on to get money to buy clothes. Furniture and props should be constructed of light-weight material so they can be easily carried.

The set may include moving panels or pictures that open. These are for the Emperor's use in stealing. Because of these hidden panels, some of the characters believe the castle to be haunted]

Scene 1

AN OLD BAG FULL OF NEW TRICKS.

[A commotion is heard in the back of the auditorium, behind the audience—banging of pots and pans, loud voices]

VOICE. Get out! Get out of here and don't come back again! Out!
[Enter SNIP and TUCK. They are literally thrown into the aisle from the entrance to the auditorium]

SNIP. Ouch! Oooh!

TUCK. Ooof! Yeow!

VOICE. Stay away, you bums...*[throws in one hat]*

SNIP. Thanks! *[picks up hat]*

VOICE. ...crooks!...*[throws in another hat]*

TUCK. Thanks! *[picks up hat]*

VOICE. ...swindlers!!

SNIP & TUCK. Thank you very much. *[They make a deep formal bow with hats in hand, then begin walking down aisle toward stage]*

SNIP. Ooooh! That was certainly a close call.

TUCK. Yes indeed. I hope you're all in one piece. Nothing bruised?

SNIP. *[Rubbing backside]* No, just my pride.

TUCK. I thought the food in there was free. It was very good...

SNIP. Even though we had to eat and run! I'm afraid there is no such thing as a free meal any more.

TUCK. Oh well! Times are changing but nothing can change our friendship.

SNIP. Nothing!! *[They do a secret handshake. By this time they have reached and mounted the stage. They introduce themselves to the audience:]*

SNIP. I'm Snip *[bows]*.

TUCK. And I'm Tuck *[bows]*.

SNIP. We have no money—*[pulls out pocket linings]*

TUCK. But we do have luck. *[Slaps Snip on back]*

SNIP. Here we stand. *[Up straight]*

TUCK. Arm-in-arm. *[Link arms]*

SNIP. Trying to stay...

TUCK. Out of harm. *[Huge each other with fear]*

SNIP. Here we stand. *[Up straight]*

TUCK. Side-by-side...

SNIP. Looking for trouble.

TUCK. No place to hide! *[Hands over faces—peep through fingers]*

SNIP. One more thing...

TUCK. ...we want to make clear...

SNIP. We are brave,...

TUCK. ...we do NOT know fear. *[A noise comes from within the castle. SNIP and TUCK both scream and hit the floor. While saying the following lines, they crawl across stage and hide Down Left—in the pit if there is one]*

SNIP. Shhh!

TUCK. I hear a very strange noise. *[Enter LT. RAGGS, Down Right from the dungeon dragging a large gunny sack. His back is to the audience and there is a large patch on the seat of his pants]*

SNIP. Aw—oh!

TUCK. It's one of the Emperor's boys! *[They peek over the edge of the stage—or out of their hiding place]*

RAGGS. I don't know why I always have to do all the work around here. I'm not supposed to be hauling and carrying things. I'm a guard—that means I stand and guard. Won't carry this sack one step further. *[Stops Center and lets go of sack]*

SNIP. AaaaChooooo!

TUCK. Quiet! Shhh! *[Puts hand over Snip's mouth]*

RAGGS. Halt! Who goes there. State your business! Ho! Show yourselves! *[He spins around in a circle shouting but doesn't see Snip and Tuck. Draws his sword which is only a hilt with about 4 inches of a broken blade on the end]* Answer to me or you'll answer to my sword! *[A piece of the castle falls to the ground. RAGGS turns to attack]* What HO!! oh!! This place is falling apart. You call this a castle? *[He kicks stone]* You call this a sword! *[He puts sword back, turns up-stage]* I'll call the child from the kitchen! *[Shouts]* Patches!! *[Turns to audience and folds arms as if to wait. The child, PATCHES, has already entered from Up Right and runs to Lt. Raggs' side panting]*

PATCHES. Yes, sir! Lt. Raggs, sir! At your service, sir! *[Salutes and stands at full attention until RAGGS says "at ease"]*

RAGGS. *[Startled]* Uh...uh...uh what took you so long, Patches!?

PATCHES. Sorry, sir! Had to wash the floor before I came, sir!

RAGGS. That's no excuse. But I'll overlook it this time.

PATCHES. Thank you, sir! Very kind of you, sir! May I be of service?

RAGGS. Yes! Follow me. *[PATCHES, frozen still into salute and full attention, slowly shuffles feet and follows Raggs]*

RAGGS. Well, hurry up! *[PATCHES shuffles faster]* What are you doing? Is there something wrong? Can't you move any faster? *[PATCHES shuffles full speed, circling Raggs]* Halt! *[PATCHES stops]* At ease!!

PATCHES. *[Crumple to floor]* Thank you, sir!

RAGGS. On your feet. On your feet! I haven't got all day to stand here. I want you to throw that sack out. *[He walks Down Right, only turning to answer questions]*

PATCHES. Why?

RAGGS. The Emperor ordered it.

PATCHES. Doesn't it belong to the tailor?

RAGGS. Yes!

PATCHES. Doesn't the tailor want it?

RAGGS. No!

PATCHES. Why?

RAGGS. He doesn't need it.

PATCHES. Why?

RAGGS. *[Turns slowly to Patches]* Why? Because the Emperor didn't like the clothes the tailor made. Why? Because the tailor didn't do his work properly—AND—because the tailor asked TOO MANY QUESTIONS AND WAS THROWN IN THE DUNGEON!

SHROUD. *[Enters from Down Right dungeon area and advances forcefully—speaks in a tomb-like voice]* Dungeon! Dungeon! Did somebody say dungeon?

RAGGS. Not now, Shroud!!! *[Shaking head, SHROUD exits to dungeon. RAGGS towers over Patches]* ANY MORE QUESTIONS???

PATCHES. Gulp *[quietly]* —no.

RAGGS. WHAT?????

PATCHES. NO, SIR! *[Salutes and stands at attention. RAGGS exits Up Center. PATCHES drags sack and dumps it into the laps of Snip and Tuck, whom he doesn't see. PATCHES exits Up Center or Up Right. SNIP and TUCK look in the sack; they are excited at what they find]*

SNIP. When we're down and out—

TUCK. And people call us saps,

SNIP. Well, what do you know!

TUCK. Good luck falls in our laps!

SNIP. What's in there? Money, food, gold?????

TUCK. No! Scissors! Needles! Pins!

SNIP. Oh that is too bad.

TUCK. No! This is too good. We are now tailors. The Emperor will pay us royally for new clothes.

SNIP. We can't spin or sew.

TUCK. We won't have to!

SNIP. You've been out in the sun too long. I'm allergic *[aaachooo!]* to dungeons! *[Noise comes from the dungeon entrance; they hide. SHROUD enters eagerly, speaks in his funereal voice]*

SHROUD. Dungeon! Dungeon! *[Looks around, sees no one, disappointed]* I know I heard somebody say "dungeon"! A dungeon keeper's life is no picnic!! *[Returns to dungeon]*

SNIP. There's one tailor in the *[whispered]* dungeon now, let's

not make it a Tailor's Convention.

TUCK. Trust me! Believe me! We have nothing to worry about. We will be showered with gold for the Emperor's new clothes.

SNIP. What if the Emperor doesn't like his new clothes???

TUCK. I have a plan. The Emperor will see nothing wrong with the clothes we make. I'll explain. We have many things to do—follow me. *[They grab bag and run off—down the aisle or through the audience or just off stage Down Right]*

Scene 2

HELP! IT'S THAT GHOST AGAIN

[Enter SIR YESIR, Down Left door. He carries a small folding stool, has an ink stand around his neck (like a cigarette girl's tray), with paper, ink well, and a large quill pen on it. A large chunk of the castle crumbles and falls as he enters, barely missing him]

SIR YESIR. Good Heavens! This place is falling apart at the seams! *[Shouts]* Lt. Raggs!! Lt. Raggs!!

RAGGS. *[Puffing]* Yes, sir, Sir Yesir. At your service, sir.

SIR. Do something about this rubble here. Call that child from the kitchen to sweep it up. *[Sits on stool and writes busily]*

RAGGS. Yes, sir, Sir Yesir. *[Calls to the interior of the castle]* PATCHES!! Get the broom and report on the double!! *[Enter PATCHES with broom on shoulders and salutes]*

PATCHES. Yes, sir!!!

SIR YESIR. Don't bother me, child, I'm very busy. *[Doesn't look up, works busily]*

RAGGS. Sweep up! DOUBLE QUICK!!

PATCHES. Yes, sir!

SIR YESIR. Child, I said DON'T call my name. Lt. Raggs, if you can't keep that child quiet, you'll be in the dungeon guarding that tailor all day!

SHROUD. *[Enters more eagerly than before but speaks in same low, slow, grave-like voice]* DUNGEON! Somebody said "dungeon," I know it!!! *[Searches about for a victim]*

RAGGS/PATCHES/SIR YESIR. NOT NOW, SHROUD!!! *[He exits snarling]*

SIR YESIR. Well, get on with it!

RAGGS. Yes, sir!

SIR YESIR. What? Now you're at it. In that case, Lieutenant, you'll march from one side of this castle to the other. And keep a close lookout for any new tailors! Do you both understand???

RAGGS/PATCHES. YES, SIR!

SIR YESIR. *[Jumping up]* Silence! Get to work!! Both of you!!!

[PATCHES sweeps up and then exits Up Right door. LT. RAGGS marches Down Right to Down Left and back again. He pauses now and then to look out over the audience for tailors (perhaps with an extending spy glass). Enter LADY YESMUM Up Left. Hanging from ribbons from a belt are a cloth bag, a brush, mirror, perfume atomizer, and feather duster. She tiptoes up behind Sir Yesir and puts her hands over his eyes]

LADY YESMUM. Surprise! Guess who!?

SIR YESIR. *[Jumping]* I wish you wouldn't do this.

LADY YESMUM. Guess who?

SIR YESIR. I know who it is. Let go of me. *[Writhes around]*

LADY YESMUM. I'll give you a hint.

SIR YESIR. I don't need a hint. It's...

LADY YESMUM. Shh! One hint is always allowed. Knock! Knock!

SIR YESIR. Oh I give up.

LADY YESMUM. Wait for the clue. You'll get it. Knock! Knock!

SIR YESIR. Who's there.

LADY YESMUM. Lady Yes!

SIR YESIR. Lady Yes who?

LADY YESMUM. Lady Yesmum! That's the hint. Now guess who?

SIR YESIR. Lady Yesmum. Now get your hands off of me.

LADY YESMUM. You win. *[Removing hands]* It's me. How clever you are, Sir Yesir. Yes sir, you are ever so clever. *[She bats her eyelashes at him]*

SIR YESIR. Is there something I can do for you, Lady Yesmum?

LADY YESMUM. Is there ever...*[closes her eyes and puckers up]*

SIR YESIR. Yuk! I mean do you have the mail for today?

LADY YESMUM. Huh? Oh—sigh—here it is. *[Holds it out, then snatches it back]*

SIR YESIR. Give me the mail.

LADY YESMUM. *[Backing up]* Please?

SIR YESIR. *[Following]* Please!

LADY YESMUM. Pretty please? *[Holds it behind her back]* With sugar on it?

SIR YESIR. Pretty please! With sugar on it!! [*They stop in front of Up Center door in profile, facing one another. A hand reaches out and grabs mail out of Lady Yesmum's hand. She screams*]

LADY YESMUM. Help! It's the ghost again. He stole the mail! Help! Help! I'm going to faint.

SIR YESIR. Wait! I'll get you my stool. Don't faint yet! [*He gets stool and puts it behind Lady Yesmum*] Sit down!

LADY YESMUM. [*A hand reaches out and grabs the stool; she sits on floor*] Eeek! Help! The ghost is here again. Help!

SIR YESIR. Wait! I'll help you up. [*He puts his ink stand down by wall. As he helps Lady Yesmum up (this takes three tries), a panel opens in wall and the hand steals ink stand*]

LADY YESMUM. Oh! Thank you! I'm feeling better now. [*Flirting*] You're so strong.

SIR YESIR. It was nothing. I must get back to work. My ink stand is gone!

LADY YESMUM. [*Running around*] Eeeek! Help! The ghost! The ghost!

SIR YESIR. [*Shouting*] PATCHES.

PATCHES. [*Enters Up Right with broom*] Yes, sir, Sir Yesir. More sweeping? [*He furiously sweeps circles around Sir Yesir*]

SIR YESIR. Stop. Give me that broom. [*Ghost hand takes broom*] Take Lady Yesmum to the kitchen for a cup of tea—she's not feeling well. [*Looks around for broom*] What happened to the broom?

PATCHES. This way, Lady Yesmum. Watch your step!

LADY YESMUM. [*A chunk of castle falls*] Help. The ghost. The ghost. [*Exit LADY YESMUM and PATCHES Up Right. SIR YESIR crosses to Raggs*]

SIR YESIR. Lt. Raggs, any sign of new tailors on the road?

RAGGS. No one yet, sir.

SIR YESIR. Keep looking. If a new tailor doesn't come, we may all be in the dun—[*stops to look for Shroud; whispers*] dungeon tonight.

RAGGS. Aye! Aye! Sir! [*Marches and looks out over audience*]

Scene 3

WAITING FOR THE NEW TAILORS.

[Enter EMPRESS VELVETEEN Up Center. She carries a large fan]

EMPRESS. *[Angrily]* Sir Yesir!

SIR YESIR. *[Aside]* Oh-oh, it's the Empress Velveteen. *[Hurrying to her]* Your Hi—

EMPRESS. What was all that screaming?

SIR YESIR. It was—

EMPRESS. *[Pacing furiously]* There's no excuse for noise before noon.

SIR YESIR. I—

EMPRESS. Do we make ourself clear???

SIR YESIR. Of cour—

EMPRESS. If you can't do your job properly, we can find a place for you *[SIR YESIR tries to keep her from saying it, but fails]* in the DUNGEON. *[SHROUD enters on the run; then comes to a halt]*

SHROUD. I know I heard somebody say "dungeon" this time!! I know it!

EMPRESS/SIR YESIR. NOT NOW, SHROUD!!! *[EMPRESS points her finger at him menacingly. SHROUD ducks and cowers off stage]*

EMPRESS. We wouldn't like the *[whispered]* dungeon, would we????

SIR YESIR. N-n-o-n-o—

EMPRESS. When you're finished mumbling, Sir Yesir, would it be too much for me to ask that you announce the Royal children so that they might come out and play???

SIR YESIR. Certain—

EMPRESS. *[Coming to a halt]* Fine. Get on with it.

SIR YESIR. *[Takes position at door Up Center]* His Royal Highness, the Prince Terry Cloth. *[PRINCE enters carrying a mangy teddy bear, skips to Empress]*

PRINCE. Good morning, Mummy dear.

EMPRESS. *[Patting his head]* Isn't he sweet?

PRINCE. Yes, Mummy dear.

SIR YESIR. Her Royal Highness, the Princess Polly Ester. *[PRINCESS enters carrying a stuffed rabbit with only one ear. She skips to Empress]*

PRINCESS. Good morning, Mummy dear.

EMPRESS. Precious. Absolutely precious. Can you curtsy for Mummy?

PRINCESS. [*Curtsying clumsily*] Yes, Mummy, sweets.

EMPRESS. Such grace. Would my darlings like to play?

PRINCE. Yes, I want to play.

PRINCESS. Me first. I want to play first.

PRINCE. Me first. Me first.

PRINCESS. My Bunny plays first.

PRINCE. My Teddy plays first.

EMPRESS. Now, children, I want you to play together. Such enthusiasm.

PRINCESS. Mummy, we made up a new game to show you.

PRINCE. It was Teddy's idea.

PRINCESS. Dumb, Terry, DUMB.

EMPRESS. No fusses. Play the game for Mummy. [*They cross Down Center and play Ring-Around-the-Rosy—a new version*]

PRINCE & PRINCESS. Ring around the collars, Pocket full of dollars—Patches. Patches. All fall down. [*Enter PATCHES Up Right door, crosses to children*]

PATCHES. Your highnesses called? May I help you up? [*They are afraid of Patches*]

PRINCE. Mummy, help us!

PRINCESS. Mummy! Mummy!

EMPRESS. You, guard. Get that dirty child away from my darlings. Children, come to Mummy.

RAGGS. [*Collaring Patches*] Ho, Patches. Don't mess with the highnesses now.

PATCHES. Sorry, sir.

EMPRESS. Lt. Raggs, are you keeping watch for new tailors?

RAGGS. Yes, mum. [*Enter LADY YESMUM Up Center door. She thinks someone called her*]

EMPRESS. Have you seen any tailors?

RAGGS. No, mum.

LADY YESMUM. May I help you, your ladyship??

EMPRESS. Take the children to the playroom.

LADY YESMUM. Come children. [*LADY YESMUM and CHILDREN exit*]

EMPRESS. [*Calling*] SIR YESIR!! [*After a beat*] WHAT CAN BE KEEPING THE MAN?? Why is there never any one to answer when I call?

SIR YESIR. *[Running in]* Yes, your highness?

EMPRESS. Why are there no tailors?? *[Enter SNIP and TUCK down path with their large sack—approaching slowly]*

PATCHES. Look. Someone is—

RAGGS. Quiet, child.

EMPRESS. WELL—as I was saying. Why are there no tai—

PATCHES. Those men look like tailors.

SIR YESIR. Be still. Do you want to go to the dungeon? *[SHROUD enters happily]*

SHROUD. Somebody said it! Somebody said “dungeon”—I know it!

ALL OTHERS. NOT NOW, SHROUD!!!! *[EMPRESS points finger again, this time dangerously. SHROUD hangs head, dodges imaginary blows and returns to dungeon]*

EMPRESS. Why must people interrupt us all the time! No one does his job around here.

SNIP. *[Clearing his throat]* Excuse me.

PATCHES. It's just that I saw some men coming.

TUCK. *[Tapping Raggs on shoulder]* Pardon me.

RAGGS. *[Ignoring Tuck]* My apologies, your highness. The child hasn't been brought up properly. She's just a servant.

SNIP & TUCK. QUIET!!!!!! *[Everyone stops talking and looks at Snip & Tuck]*

EMPRESS. WELLLLLLLLLL!

SNIP. We would like to see the Emperor.

EMPRESS. We would, would we?????????

TUCK. Yes.

EMPRESS. And who do you think you are!

SNIP & TUCK. We're the new tailors.

ALL. THE NEW TAILORS!

SNIP & TUCK. The new tailors!!!!!! *[They bow and congratulate each other]*

EMPRESS. Sir Yesir, summon the Emperor immediately! Patches, bring the Royal Children, but don't touch them! Hurry, Hurry!!!