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*Dramatic Publishing*

# ANDROCLES AND THE LION

A Full-length Play  
by  
JAMES ENGELHARDT



**Dramatic Publishing**  
Woodstock, Illinois • London, England • Melbourne, Australia

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JAMES ENGELHARDT

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## FROM THE PLAYWRIGHT

Before researching the source of *Androcles and the Lion*, I assumed (as many of us do) that it was merely a fable. Quite the contrary. The original tale was written by Apion, a first-century Egyptian teacher. Apion records that, during a visit to the amphitheater in Rome, he witnessed Androcles recount his adventures with the Lion.

There's a ring of truth to Apion's story. One begins to believe that, long ago, a runaway slave was put on trial for his life, and that his one chance for freedom depended on an act of kindness performed for a ferocious beast.

In this retelling, Androcles' adventures have been expanded upon for the stage. And although Seneca, Plautus, and Terence (Rome's greatest playwrights) weren't really present that day, they add immeasurably to the fun. But the spirit of the play remains true to Apion's vision: If we could be kinder to one another, the world would be a better place in which to live. Kindness can, in fact, be its own reward.

# ANDROCLES AND THE LION

A Full-length Play  
For 3 Women and 6 Men, optional extras

## CHARACTERS

ANDROCLES  
THE LION  
BRUTUS  
SENECA  
PLAUTUS  
TERENCE  
THE EMPRESS  
SADIRA  
HESTER

## SETTING

The play begins and ends in the Roman arena.

Unit set of levels. Three simple settings on platforms or wagons.

Running time: 65 minutes

*ANDROCLES AND THE LION* had its premiere at the DePaul University Merle Reskin Theatre, Chicago, Ill., October 10, 1995 with the following artists:

CAST  
(in order of appearance)

Brutus . . . . . ERIC SLATER  
Sadira . . . . . STEFANEE GIA WHITE  
Hester . . . . . JENNIFER VICTORIA BOSWORTH  
Plautus . . . . . PATRICK BELTON  
The Empress . . . . . COLLEEN CAVANAUGH  
Terence . . . . . RUSSELL HARDIN  
Androcles . . . . . ANDREW RAMCHARAN  
Seneca . . . . . NATE BIDDICK  
The Lion . . . . . CHRISTOPHER J. DeMARIA

PRODUCTION STAFF

Director . . . . . DONALD W. ILKO  
Scenic Design . . . . . JAKE OUTLAND KAVANAGH  
Costume Design . . . . . MOLLY OLIVER McGRATH  
Lighting Design . . . . . DARIN KEESING  
Sound Design . . . . . JEFFREY WEBB

## ANDROCLES AND THE LION

THE SCENE: *A setting depicting a Roman amphitheater, perhaps incorporating the actual audience in its design.*

AT RISE: *DRUMS SOUND! MARCH MUSIC, appropriate to a first-century Roman parade, is heard in the distance. A PROCESSION enters, led by three soldiers: SENECA, PLAUTUS, and TERENCE, playing instruments or carrying standards. They're followed by BRUTUS, Legion Commander, dressed in helmet and armor. He's followed by SADIRA and HESTER, dressed as slaves, reluctantly playing instruments or tossing flower petals. They're followed by the EMPRESS, waving grandly to the spectators. Finally, ANDROCLES enters, chained at the wrists and ankles. All parade around the arena; the EMPRESS ascends the steps to her throne. SADIRA runs to embrace ANDROCLES; BRUTUS snaps his lash. Reluctantly, SADIRA and HESTER join the EMPRESS, begin serving her food and drink. BRUTUS climbs the stairs to the magistrate's pedestal. SENECA, PLAUTUS, and TERENCE stand at attention, holding their standards. BRUTUS signals to TRUMPETERS stationed atop the amphitheater. MUSIC: FANFARE.*



BRUTUS. Citizens of Rome! For your entertainment, and to honor our glorious Empress— (*The CROWD CHEERS.*)

EMPRESS. Oh, how they love us!

BRUTUS. I, Brutus, shall today present a pageant! You'll see three tableaux depicting my heroic exploits as Legion Commander in Africa!

(*MUSIC: DRUM ROLLS. BRUTUS gestures to SENECA, who steps forward.*)

SENECA. See Brutus—honored by African ambassadors with donations of corn at his mill!

(*SENECA gestures to PLAUTUS, who steps forward.*)

PLAUTUS. See Brutus—capture a ferocious Lion, bare-handed, at a desert oasis!

(*PLAUTUS pokes TERENCE, who steps forward.*)

TERENCE. See Brutus—save his ship and its cargo of corn in a stormy sea!

BRUTUS. And for my big finish—Androcles, my condemned slave, shall be fed to that same Lion!

(*The LION's fearsome ROAR is heard behind the arena's gate.*)

EMPRESS. Excellent, Brutus! The citizens do love us so when we present carnage. (*The CROWD CHEERS.*)

PLAUTUS. Hear that crowd? Give the public what they want, and they turn out every time.

TERENCE. This is too cruel. I prefer love stories. Nobody gets hurt and they end happily.

SENECA. Plautus! Terence! Stand at attention!

*(PLAUTUS and TERENCE raise their standards and stand at attention.)*

BRUTUS. Seneca! Let my spectacle begin!

SENECA. All hail to the Empress!

PLAUTUS/TERENCE. Hail to the Empress!

CROWD. Hail to the Empress!

PLAUTUS. We who are about to entertain, salute you!

*(SENECA and TERENCE salute the EMPRESS. MUSIC: FLOURISH. PLAUTUS dances, with his standard, before the EMPRESS.)*

SENECA. Plautus! Get over here!

*(PLAUTUS runs to SENECA and TERENCE, helps them pull on a pageant wagon depicting a mill. BRUTUS descends from his pedestal, mounts the mill wagon.)*

BRUTUS. The first tableau—I receive offerings of corn from African ambassadors, in the name of the Empress!

*(SENECA, PLAUTUS, and TERENCE form a tableau of kneeling ambassadors happily offering tributes of small grain jars to BRUTUS. MUSIC: FLOURISH. The CROWD CHEERS, APPLAUDS. SENECA, PLAUTUS,*

*and TERENCE pull on a pageant wagon depicting an oasis.)*

BRUTUS. The second tableau—I capture a ferocious Lion, barehanded, for the Empress!

*(SENECA, PLAUTUS, and TERENCE form a tableau cheering BRUTUS on as he holds a lion cutout aloft in his bare hands. We hear the real LION's ROAR from behind the iron gate. BRUTUS cowers in terror, dropping the LION cutout; he quickly picks it up again. MUSIC: FLOURISH. The CROWD CHEERS, APPLAUDS. SENECA, PLAUTUS, and TERENCE pull on another pageant wagon depicting a ship in a stormy sea.)*

BRUTUS. The third tableau—I save my cargo ship in a stormy sea, for the Empress!

*(SENECA, PLAUTUS, and TERENCE form another tableau, tending sail, as BRUTUS simultaneously steers the tiller and holds the cargo secure to the deck. MUSIC: CONCLUDING FLOURISH. The CROWD CHEERS, APPLAUDS. BRUTUS steps forward, bows to the EMPRESS and the spectators. Behind him, PLAUTUS takes a bow. TERENCE takes a bow. SENECA pulls both of them back.)*

SENECA. Get back in position! You're not actors, you're soldiers! Raise your standards!

*(PLAUTUS and TERENCE grab up their standards and stand at attention.)*

EMPRESS. Commander Brutus, approach our throne.

*(BRUTUS climbs steps to the EMPRESS, removes his helmet, kneels before her.)*

EMPRESS. How may we honor your heroic deeds? What reward do you request?

BRUTUS. Hold on—got it! Why not proclaim me Governor of all Africa? It's perfect.

EMPRESS. That's a rather large request.

BRUTUS *(produces a very long scroll)*. I've written a short speech celebrating my many qualifications—

EMPRESS. That's not necessary. We are convinced of your loyalty and ability. Therefore— *(Raises a chain of office above BRUTUS' head.)* By the power invested in us as Empress, we declare Brutus Governor of all—

ANDROCLES. Wait, Empress! The tableaux he showed you were false!

EMPRESS. Who dares speak such impudence?

SENECA. It was the condemned slave, Androcles.

TERENCE. What a snitch.

ANDROCLES. I'm not a slave. I'm a free African. And I claim the right to tell my side of the story.

BRUTUS. And I deny you that right. Seneca! Gag the prisoner.

*(SENECA removes ANDROCLES' headband and ties it around his mouth.)*

ANDROCLES. Brutus enslaved me! Stole my property—!

PLAUTUS. Now he's *really* in for it.

EMPRESS. What is his crime?

---

BRUTUS. He ran away. Thus, he committed the crime of theft, for stealing his master's property—my property.

EMPRESS (*turns her thumb down*). Then he's guilty and the sentence is death. Get on with the execution.

SADIRA. But Androcles speaks the truth!

EMPRESS. Silence, slave!

SADIRA. I'm not a slave, either. I am Sadira, Princess of the Desert Province.

HESTER. And, furthermore, I'm Hester, her Advisor. Also a free woman.

EMPRESS. Brutus, these slaves you've given us are too arrogant.

BRUTUS. Forgive me, Empress. Their duties are new and strange to them. (*He raises his lash.*) A good flogging should bring them into line—

TERENCE. But, Commander, flogging slaves is against the law.

BRUTUS. Don't confuse me with facts! (*Hastily hiding his lash; to EMPRESS.*) And, by Jupiter, a good law it is!

SADIRA. Brutus plundered the Provinces of corn. He stole all the gold my people possessed.

EMPRESS. That's a serious charge. And how does Brutus answer?

BRUTUS. Hold on—got it. If I stole all their gold, then why have I none to show for it?

EMPRESS. Well answered. Therefore, we proclaim Brutus Governor of all Africa! (*Places the chain over BRUTUS' head.*) All hail to Brutus!

CROWD. Hail to Brutus!

BRUTUS. And hail to myself!

EMPRESS. Now for the good part. Bring on the Lion.

*(BRUTUS struts grandly back to his pedestal.)*

BRUTUS. Clear the arena! Seneca! Unchain Androcles, so the Lion may have some sport.

*(SENECA unchains ANDROCLES; then SENECA, PLAUTUS, and TERENCE move the pageant wagons out of the arena.)*

SADIRA. Have mercy, Empress?

EMPRESS. Why?

SADIRA. Because I love Androcles. Surely, you must understand the meaning of love?

EMPRESS. Certainly. When the Lion eats Androcles, the citizens shall love us all the *more*.

BRUTUS. Release the Lion!

*(MUSIC: FLOURISH. SENECA, PLAUTUS, and TERENCE open the gate, retreat to stands. MUSIC: AFRICAN DRUMS. Out bounds a huge LION, uttering a terrific and deep ROAR, his mane streaming over his muscular shoulders. SNARLING angrily, LION immediately dashes towards BRUTUS, who cowers upon his pedestal.)*

EMPRESS. Oh, look how he hates you, Governor!

*(Then LION turns, sees ANDROCLES, charges forward—and stops in amazement. He approaches ANDROCLES slowly, crouches down, and licks his hand. Then ANDROCLES and LION rub their heads together, joy-*

*fully. He puts his arm around LION and scratches him behind the ears. The CROWD SHOUTS with wonder.)*

EMPRESS. But he loves Androcles! *(She holds up both of her arms for silence.)* Peace, good citizens! Brutus! What is the meaning of this miracle?

BRUTUS. That should be easy to explain—

EMPRESS. Then explain! How does a runaway slave have magical powers over savage beasts?

BRUTUS. Hold on—got it! He's a sorcerer! His magic will destroy us all! *(The CROWD GASPS.)*

EMPRESS *(cowering)*. How may we protect ourselves?

BRUTUS. Isn't sorcery also a crime punishable by death?

EMPRESS *(turns her thumb down)*. Yes! He's guilty! Off with his head! Right away!

BRUTUS. Plautus, Terence! Keep the Lion back! Seneca! Go slay the insolent wretch!

*(SENECA enters the arena, draws his sword, stalks toward ANDROCLES. PLAUTUS and TERENCE follow, keeping the SNARLING LION at bay with their standards.)*

SADIRA. You're making a terrible mistake! At least listen to his side of the story!

EMPRESS. Give us one good reason.

HESTER. Perhaps the citizens will love you even *more* than they do now?

*(SENECA forces ANDROCLES to kneel.)*

EMPRESS. Is that possible?