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Dramatic Publishing

HENNY PENNY

A Play with Optional Music

by

JOY CHAITIN

and

SARAH STEVENS-ESTABROOK



Dramatic Publishing

Woodstock, Illinois • London, England • Melbourne, Australia

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For Alex and Sharon

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Production Notes

Don't think of *Henny Penny* as a "show." Think of it as a "one-size-fits-all" theatrical production. A vehicle that can be adjusted to fit a multitude of age groups, company sizes and performance styles.

As all of us who work with grades K-3 know, the difference in maturity between a kindergartner in the fall and a third-grader in the spring is the difference between early childhood and the transition into middle childhood. Therefore, writing a show that spans this age range and really works for each level is almost impossible, unless you build in flexibility.

The version of *Henny Penny* you hold in your hands is designed for the upper end of the age spectrum—second and third grade. However, with minor revisions, it can be adjusted to fit K and 1—as well as a variety of cast sizes—and we encourage adjustments. What follows are some suggestions for alterations. You are welcome to take any, all, or none of them in order to make this musical work for you and your performers.

First, if you're not a musician, and you don't have one readily available, don't worry about the music. Just have the kids chant the songs. It'll still work. If, however, you can find a musician, so much the better.

Second, you can use between five and 100 actors in a *Henny Penny* cast. Here's how. If you need a short show for a small number of kids, trim some parts. We set this up for 10 animals (Henny Penny, Cocky Locky, Ducky Lucky, Goosey Loosey, Turkey Lurky, Funky Monkey, Sheepy Weepy, Mama Llama, Pandy Handy, and Giraffy Laughy) and a tree. Some of the animals are critical to make the plot work, but some can be trimmed. I would remove them in this order: Sheepy Weepy, Goosey Loosey, Mama Llama,

Turkey Lurky, Ducky Lucky and Funky Monkey, i.e., remove from the middle, not the beginning or the end. Then, just rewrite a new bridge over the absent character(s)—i.e., have Cocky Locky tell Henny Penny, “Let’s find Pandly Handy! He can help us fix the sky!” In that one line, you’ve eliminated six characters!

If you need a short, simple show for a larger number of kids, trim the characters as described above, but have several kids play each character, i.e., have several Henny Pennys (or a Henny Penny family), and distribute her lines among them. That way there are less parts to keep track of, and each child gets a smaller, easier part to learn. (You could use thirty kids with five characters—six kids per character.) And don’t worry about audience reaction; parents love to see their children doing something special.

If you need a more complicated and/or a longer show for a smaller number of performers or for older children or adults playing for a child audience, use the script as it stands.

If you need a more complicated and longer show for a large number of children, use the script as it stands, but use as many kids as you need. Just divide 11 into your cast size to determine the number of performers you need to put on a part. And instead of one tree, you can have a whole forest—all pelting poor Henny Penny with acorns at the end. Use your imagination. I won’t tell you an upper cast size limit; only you know how many children you can deal with on a stage at any one time. My upper limit is 80 when I’m the only director, but you may have more fortitude than I.

So, good luck! There is no best way to do this show. The best way is whatever works for you, based on your performers’ ability levels, age range, and cast size. Have fun!

Sarah Stevens-Estabrook

HENNY PENNY

A One-act Play
For a flexible cast*

CHARACTERS

HENNY PENNY
COCKY LOCKY
DUCKY LUCKY
GOOSEY LOOSEY
TURKEY LURKY
FUNKY MONKEY
SHEEPY WEEPY
MAMA LLAMA
PANDY HANDY
GIRAFFY LAUGHY
TREE

*As mentioned in the Production Notes, each character can be played by a flexible number of performers.

HENNY PENNY

AT RISE: *SONG #1 up. TREE is ULC. HENNY PENNY is sweeping, DR of TREE. Music fades out.*

HENNY PENNY. Look at this mess! I've told them a million times. If you're going to eat your corn on the sidewalk, make sure you peck up every last kernel! I don't have time for this! If I have to spend the whole morning sweeping, I'll never get to the market on time. And if I don't get to the market on time, I won't get everything I need to make dinner! And if I don't get everything I need to make dinner... (*TREE can't bear one more complaint. S/he throws an acorn and hits HENNY PENNY on the head.*) Hey! What was that? (*Looks around.*) That hurt! (*Looks up in tree; doesn't see anybody.*) Hm... There's nobody up there! (*Looks around. Holds arms up.*) It's not raining... (*Looks up at the sky.*) Oh, no! It must have been a piece of the sky! (*Starts to panic.*) Oh, my gosh. That means the sky must be falling! (*Frantic.*) Oh, my gosh! (*Hysterical.*) Oh, my gosh! (*Sings.*)

(SONG #2)

**THE SKY IS FALLING! THE SKY IS FALLING!
WHAT AM I GOING TO DO?**

**THE SKY IS FALLING! THE SKY IS FALLING!
I FELT IT! IT MUST BE TRUE!**

**THE SKY IS FALLING! THE SKY IS FALLING!
A PIECE FELL ON MY HEAD!**

**I HAVE TO WARN THE OTHERS,
OR ELSE WE'LL ALL BE DEAD!**

(COCKY LOCKY enters.)

COCKY LOCKY. Good grief, Henny Penny! What on earth is the matter with you?

HENNY PENNY. It's not the earth, Cocky Locky! It's the sky! It's falling!

COCKY LOCKY. No, it's not. Get a grip, Hen. You're always blowing things out of proportion!

HENNY PENNY. No, really, I felt it! *(Feels head. Screams.)* Oh, my gosh.

COCKY LOCKY. What's the matter?

HENNY PENNY. There's a bump! Right here! Feel it!

COCKY LOCKY *(feels bump)*. Oh, yeah. Look at that. Gee...

HENNY PENNY. See? I told you.

COCKY LOCKY. You got a real goose egg there.

HENNY PENNY. Now do you believe me? *(Sings.)*

(SONG #3 — same as SONG #2)

**THE SKY IS FALLING! THE SKY IS FALLING!
WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?**

HENNY PENNY & COCKY LOCKY.

**THE SKY IS FALLING! THE SKY IS FALLING!
I/SHE FELT IT! IT MUST BE TRUE!**

**THE SKY IS FALLING! THE SKY IS FALLING!
A PIECE FELL ON MY/HER HEAD!**

**WE HAVE TO WARN THE OTHERS,
OR ELSE WE'LL ALL BE DEAD!**

(DUCKY LUCKY enters, wearing a turban and carrying a crystal ball.)

DUCKY LUCKY. Dead? Who's dead?

COCKY LOCKY. We are, unless we do something about the sky!

DUCKY LUCKY. What's the matter with the sky?

HENNY PENNY. It's falling! I felt it!

DUCKY LUCKY. Are you sure?

COCKY LOCKY. Of course, we're sure! Look at the bump on her head!

DUCKY LUCKY *(feeling bump)*. There's a bump there, all right, but that doesn't necessarily mean the sky is falling! Maybe we should consult a higher authority. *(Song #4 up. During introduction, DUCKY LUCKY begins "hocus-pocus" movement over crystal ball. HENNY PENNY and COCKY LOCKY take up positions on either side. DUCKY LUCKY sings.)*

(SONG #4)

**SPEAK TO ME! SPEAK TO ME!
MAGIC CRYSTAL BALL!**

**PLEASE SOLVE OUR MYSTERY.
SING IF THE SKY WILL FALL!**

*(HENNY PENNY AND COCKY LOCKY lean forward,
cupping their ears to better hear ball.)*