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*Dramatic Publishing*



BY  
**MAX  
BUSH**

**THE  
BOY WHO LEFT  
HOME TO FIND  
OUT ABOUT THE**

**SHIVERS**

# THE BOY WHO LEFT HOME TO FIND OUT ABOUT THE SHIVERS

Written by award-winning playwright, Max Bush, author of numerous plays for children and youth. Co-commissioned and premiered by the Nashville Academy Theatre and Hartford Children's Theatre, this play is rooted in a tale by the Brothers Grimm. A boy, unable to know fear, follows a quest to know himself. Bush's gift for physical comedy rolls through this wisdom tale.

**Comedy.** *By Max Bush. Based on a story by the Brothers Grimm. Cast: 4m., 3w., with doubling, or up to 17 (8m., 3w., 6 either gender).* Boy, an innocent teen who becomes a charming hero, begins as a simpleton because he knows no fear of ghosts or graveyards. Banished for lack of understanding, Boy comes upon a haunted castle and accepts the challenge to stay three nights. The Powers of Death haunt here, hating the living. Should he survive, his reward is to marry the princess. But Boy mostly wants to learn the shivers there. Despite their horrifying appearances of a fierce ghost, wild cats, a corpse, and a mysterious singing bride, the ghostly inhabitants are unable to scare the boy. The castle is restored ghost-free to the king, and Boy wins the princess, but he still seeks an answer to the mystery of his life. It takes the wits of the chamber maid and the help of the princess to teach the boy the shivers when he least expects it. *One set, with set pieces. Peasant and fantasy costumes. Music in book. Code: BF5.*

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The Boy Who Left Home to  
Find Out About the Shivers



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# THE BOY WHO LEFT HOME TO FIND OUT ABOUT THE SHIVERS

**FROM THE BROTHERS GRIMM**

Adapted by  
**MAX BUSH**



**Dramatic Publishing**

Woodstock, Illinois • Australia • New Zealand • South Africa

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(THE BOY WHO LEFT HOME TO FIND OUT ABOUT THE SHIVERS)

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To Lynette Gallert,  
for her belief in this strange, wise story

THE BOY WHO LEFT HOME TO FIND OUT ABOUT THE SHIVERS  
was co-commissioned by the Nashville Academy Theatre and Hartford  
Children's Theatre. The play opened in Nashville, Tennessee, in  
October, 1994, with the following cast and crew:

CHARACTERS

BOY . . . . .	Brandon Boyd
SON . . . . .	Dobehi Lacaden
FATHER . . . . .	Teddy Giles
SISTER . . . . .	Jenny Littleton
SEXTON . . . . .	Phil Perry
SEXTON'S WIFE . . . . .	Persephone Felder-Fentress
ALICE . . . . .	Rona Carter
INNKEEPER . . . . .	Phil Perry
KING . . . . .	Teddy Giles
PRINCESS . . . . .	Jenny Littleton
1 CAT . . . . .	Dobehi Lacaden
2 CAT . . . . .	Persephone Felder-Fentress
DOG . . . . .	Phil Perry
BRIDE . . . . .	Jenny Littleton
COUSIN . . . . .	Teddy Giles
GHOST . . . . .	Rona Carter
LADY'S MAID . . . . .	Persephone Felder-Fentress

STAFF:

DIRECTOR . . . . .	Scot Copeland
STAGE MANAGER . . . . .	Daniel C. Brewer
TECHNICAL DIRECTION . . . . .	Scot Boyd
ASSISTANT TECHNICAL DIRECTOR . . . . .	Raymond Speakman
TECHNICAL ASSISTANTS . . . . .	Richard Neville, Laurie Powell
COSTUMERS . . . . .	Ida Bostian, Tracey Howard
SOUND . . . . .	Daniel C. Brewer

The play opened in Hartford, Connecticut, at the Hartford Children's Theatre, in October, 1994, with the following cast and crew:

**CHARACTERS:**

BOY . . . . .	Michael Pancheri
SON . . . . .	Dan Affleck
FATHER . . . . .	Jason Bush
SISTER . . . . .	Kuhneena Sanko
SEXTON . . . . .	Gregory J. Dixon
SEXTON'S WIFE . . . . .	Nora Matthews
ALICE . . . . .	Molly Pearson
INNKEEPER . . . . .	Dan Affleck
KING . . . . .	Jason Bush
PRINCESS . . . . .	Quisi Kelly
1 CAT . . . . .	Nora Matthews
2 CAT . . . . .	Kuhneena Sanko
DOG . . . . .	Gregory Dixon
BRIDE . . . . .	Molly Pearson
COUSIN . . . . .	Dan Affleck
GHOST . . . . .	Jason Bush
LADY'S MAID . . . . .	Molly Pearson

**STAFF:**

DIRECTOR . . . . .	Alan Levy
COSTUME DESIGN . . . . .	Priscilla Putnam
STAGE MANAGER . . . . .	Holly Stocker
TECHNICAL DIRECTION . . . . .	Alan Levy
ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER . . . . .	Jamal James
MAKE-UP . . . . .	Jeanette Wilson
LIGHT BOARD . . . . .	Steven Hubbs

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## CHARACTERS

BOY ..... a teenager  
SON ..... his older brother  
FATHER ..... his father  
SISTER ..... his sister  
SEXTON  
SEXTON'S WIFE  
ALICE  
INNKEEPER ..... Alice's husband  
KING  
PRINCESS  
1 CAT  
2 CAT  
DOG  
BRIDE  
COUSIN  
GHOST  
LADY'S MAID

With doubling, all roles can be played by 7 or 8 actors.

TIME: Long ago.

PLACE: Various locations throughout Boy's journey: his house, a bell tower, the high road, an inn, and a haunted castle.

## NOTE

Because of the nature of the tale, the sets need to be suggested and fragmented, built to come on and off rapidly and simply. The costumes should be built to allow for movement.

Although the scenes are numbered, the action flows without break, without going to black or even the traditional blues. I suggest a single, extended crossfade from one scene to the next, that will allow us to follow the Boy and the action around him.

There are a number of ways to bring scenic elements on and off during the castle scenes. The pieces could be brought on by a “shadow” or many “shadows” or be moved by completely unseen hands. This would depend on concept and available resources.

Tune of song, GATHER YOUR ROSE BUDS, by W. Lawes (1802-1845).  
Lyrics from poem, “TO THE VIRGINS, TO MAKE MUCH OF TIME”, by Robert Herrick (1591-1674).

### IMPORTANT BILLING AND CREDIT REQUIREMENTS

All producers of the play *must* give credit to the author(s) 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(s) *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 the size of the title type. Biographical information on the author(s), if included in the playbook, may be used in all programs. *In all programs this notice must appear:*

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# THE BOY WHO LEFT HOME TO FIND OUT ABOUT THE SHIVERS

## Scene I

*(At rise: Son, Sister, Sexton, Sexton's Wife and Boy are sitting around the fire, listening to Father finish telling a ghost story. The Boy sits apart.)*

*(Simultaneously; a chorus of insistent voices.)*

SON: What happens next?  
SEXTON: Don't stop there, Sir!  
WIFE: Heaven bless us, what happens?  
SISTER: No, no, no, no, no!  
BOY: Then what does he do?

FATHER: *(Speaking separately.)* That's enough for now.

*(In concert.)*

SON: What happens next, Father?  
SEXTON: No, no, finish the story!  
WIFE: You can't stop now!  
SISTER: No, no, no, no, no!  
BOY: I want to know what he does.

FATHER: You want me to go on?

*(Again, simultaneously.)*

SON: Yes, what happens next?  
SEXTON: Yes, finish the story!  
WIFE: Yes, for heaven's sake!  
SISTER: Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes!  
BOY: Yes, what does he do?

FATHER: You're not too scared?

BOY: *(After a moment of silence.)* No.

OTHERS: *(In chorus.)* Yes!

SISTER: It gives me the shivers. But how does it end?

FATHER: All he had to do was stay one more night in the castle,

and the treasure would be his. He laid nex tto the fire pretending to sleep. Scrape. Thu np. Thump. Something was being dragged a cross t he floor towards him.

SISTER: Get away. Get away!

FATHER: What was it?

SISTER: Don't just lay there, do s omething

FATHER: Falunk. Something dropped on the floor right nex tto him.

SON: I k nowwhat it is.

SISTER: Is it good?

FATHER: A filthy smell pierced his nose.

SISTER: Nooo.

FATHER: He jumped up and there lay the ro ting bo dyo this friend the Old Innk eeper,dragged up from the grave. Aaahh!

*(He screams. The Others, except the Boy, scream in response.)*

OTHERS: Aahhh!

FATHER: He screamed. And unable to bear it any long er,he ran up the stairs lo o k infor a way out. He came to a window, jumped out into the dark nes and fell down into the waterway - - splash - - where he drowned.

*(Silence, as they absorb this ending.)*

SISTER: That' serrible.

SEXTON: I k now he' dnever get that treasure, not him.

SISTER: He drowned? That' swhat happened?

WIFE: It gives me the shivers.

SON: He wasn't brave enough.

SEXTON: He wasn't smart enough.

SISTER: I liked him. He should get the treasure. Father, tell it again and this time, he gets the treasure.

WIFE: Scared the poor boy out of his mind.

SON: Ah, that gives me the shivers.

BOY: You keep saying: "It gives me the shivers, it gives me the shivers!" It doesn't give me the shivers.

SEXTON: Well it gives me the shivers, and I've heard the story before.

BOY: It must be another one of those tricks that I just can't learn.

FATHER: Well, that's all for the night.

SEXTON: And we must be going too.

WIFE: Thank you for the fine meal. But I'm afraid that story is going to keep me up all night.

FATHER: Sister, fetch the Sexton's coat. Son, I'll need you to take a pair of new breeches to our poor Cousin's house.

*(Sister goes to fetch light coats for Sexton and Wife. The Father picks up a pair of breeches.)*

SON: Our Cousin, the one who has just died, Father?

FATHER: That's the one.

SON: Now?

- FATHER: He's to be buried tomorrow, and they need these breeches for him to be buried in.
- SON: Oh, no, Father, I won't go.
- SEXTON: You will obey your father, Son.
- SON: But I'll have to go through the graveyard to get to his house and it'll be dark by the time I get there. It'll give me the shivers.
- WIFE: After that story, it would give any of us the shivers.
- BOY: It wouldn't give me the shivers.
- FATHER: *(To Boy.)* But I can't send you to our Cousin's house. You'd get lost, or you'd go to the wrong house, or you'd come home wearing the breeches . . . and not know where they are.
- (All others laugh.)*
- BOY: Yes, father. *(Curiously, to himself, not a response to his father.)* But I wouldn't get the shivers.
- SEXTON: I can bring the breeches to your poor Cousin in the morning before church.
- SON: Thank-you, Sir.
- FATHER: *(To Boy.)* Listen, you over there in the corner, you're getting to be big and strong, and you eat a lot. You'll have to learn something to make a living by. Your brother is always working, helping me with the tailoring, but you're useless.
- BOY: Oh, yes, Father, I'd be glad to learn something. If possible, I'd like to learn how to get the shivers, that's something I just don't understand.
- SEXTON: As the twig is bent, so the tree will lean.

BOY: What does that mean?

SON: It means you're an idiot.

FATHER: *(A quiet scold.)* Son.

BOY: But if I learned about the shivers I might make something of myself.

SISTER: A bigger idiot.

*(Sexton's Wife laughs, unable to stop herself.)*

FATHER: *(A little stronger.)* Sister.

SEXTON: *(To Boy.)* If all you want is to learn about the shivers, I'll teach you, boy.

BOY: You will? I'd make a good student. I'll do just what you tell me.

WIFE: *(Genuinely concerned.)* Are you sure you want to try to teach this boy something?

SEXTON: What can it hurt?

WIFE: Well, remember what happened when . . .

FATHER: *(To Sexton.)* He's bound to get something out of it if you teach him.

SEXTON: Sure, I'll teach you, boy. I'll teach you, tonight. And we'll have a good laugh, too.

BOY: Thank-you. Then I'll learn something and then I'll know something, and then I'll make a living.

SEXTON: Good Lord, we'll all count our blessings.

FATHER: I have to see this.

WIFE: So do I.



SEXTON: Come on, Boy. You're prayers answered!

*(Music, the scene shifts around them to Scene II, the bell tower. Son, and Sister exit. The Father, The Sexton, his Wife and Boy walk together. Under music.)*

BOY: *(To Father.)* I'm going to get the shivers. *(To Sexton and his wife.)* I'm going to get the shivers!

SEXTON: *(Once they near the tower, to Father and Wife.)* Wait in our house until you hear the bell, then come out and join us, and we'll have a good laugh.

*(Father and Wife exit. Boy and Sexton proceed to foot of tower. Music out.)*

## Scene II

SEXTON: Now, you wait here and count to fifty. You can count to fifty, can't you?

BOY: Yes.

SEXTON: Well, it's a miracle.

BOY: What is?

SEXTON: Count to fifty then go up and ring the bell and the shivers will surely follow. Do you understand?

BOY: Count to fifty then go up and ring the bell and the shivers will surely follow.

SEXTON: It will be midnight and you must ring the bell so the people all over the countryside will know that all is well. Begin counting to fifty, now.

BOY: One. *(He pauses.)*

SEXTON: Two.

BOY: Oh, are you going to count with me?

SEXTON: No, I was helping you.

BOY: I can count to fifty by myself.

SEXTON: Then why did you stop?

BOY: I was wondering why I don't go up and ring the bell now. It's midnight. Do you know why I have to count? Is that part of getting the shivers?

SEXTON: If I say it is, it is.

BOY: Is it?

SEXTON: Yes it is! Count to fifty!

BOY: Should I start over?

SEXTON: No!

BOY: One - - I mean two. *(Slowly.)* Three, four, five, etc.

*(The Sexton quietly climbs the stairs. Once up, he wraps himself in a hooded, white shroud and stands in the corner.)*

Twelve. *(He continues, amusing himself as he counts; then finishes last numbers in record time.)* Fifty! Sexton? *(He looks, doesn't see him.)* Count to fifty then go up and ring the bell and the shivers will surely follow.

*(He runs up the stairs, comes to the bell rope and takes it in his hands. The Sexton opens his arms, the Boy sees him.)*

Who's there?

*(Silence. Sexton gestures in a ghostly fashion.)*

BOY: Answer me, or go away. You've no business here in the middle of the night. This is a church. I don't think you're supposed to be here. Who are you?

SEXTON: Oooooooooo.

BOY: Oooo is no answer. What are you doing here? Are you here to learn about the shivers?

SEXTON: Oooooooooo.

BOY: What language is that? That's not even church language. What are you doing here?

SEXTON: Oooooooooo.

BOY: Answer me if you're an honest man, or I'll throw you down the stairs.

*(The Sexton gestures wildly. The Boy gestures in like fashion as he again asks:)*

Who are you? What are you doing here?

SEXTON: Woooooooooooo!

BOY: All right, then.

*(The Boy charges Sexton and they struggle. The Boy pushes the Sexton down the stairs.)*

Out you go.

SEXTON: Ah! Ow! Stop it! No! Ow!

BOY: *(Boy trips him and the Sexton falls.)* And stay out of this tower.

*(Boy pursues Sexton, pushing him away from the bell tower. He punctuates the following words with pushes and swats.)*

BOY: Only honest men belong here. There's honest work, here. To ring the bell so the people know that all is well. And to learn about the shivers. *(He breaks off his attack.)* There you are. And I hope you've learned something.

*(The Sexton lies groaning in a heap some distance from the tower. To himself.)*

Ring the bell and the shivers will surely follow.

*(Boy goes back up bell tower and begins ringing bell. Sexton tries to move, but collapses, holding his leg.*

*Father and Wife enter, move to foot of bell tower.)*

FATHER: Boy!

BOY: Here, Father.

FATHER: What are you doing?

BOY: I'm ringing the bell but I don't feel any shivers, yet.

*(Wife goes up tower.)*

WIFE: Where's my husband?

BOY: I don't know. When do I get the shivers?

FATHER: Stop ringing that bell!

*(He stops.)*

BOY: *(Checking himself out.)* I'm not shivering.

WIFE: Do you know what's become of my husband? He went up into the belfry ahead of you.

BOY: No, but somebody was standing on the stairs across from the sound hole, and when he wouldn't answer and wouldn't go away, I thought he was up to no good,

so I pushed him down the stairs.

WIFE: You pushed him down the stairs?

FATHER: No, not again.

WIFE: Oh, Heavens. Where is he?

BOY: He's down there somewhere. Go take a look. You'll see if it was him. I'd be very sorry.

FATHER: *(They search the area.)* Sexton?

WIFE: Where are you?

FATHER: Sexton?

*(The Sexton groans.)*

There - -

*(They run to Sexton.)*

Sexton.

WIFE: Are you hurt?

SEXTON: He hit me. He kicked me. He pushed me down the stairs. He broke my leg.

WIFE: Get that brute out of our church!

*(The Boy has come down from tower.)*

FATHER: *(To Boy.)* What godless thing have you done, now?

WIFE: You heathen! You're possessed!

FATHER: The Devil must have put you up to it.

BOY: Father, I'm perfectly innocent. He was standing there in the night like someone that's up to no good. I didn't

know who he was and I warned him three times to say something or go away.

WIFE: He was pretending he was a ghost. He was teaching you about the shivers.

BOY: I didn't get the shivers.

SEXTON: It's not my fault. You can't teach a pig to fly.

WIFE: Ungrateful devil.

BOY: So I thought he wasn't an honest man and that I'd teach whoever it was a lesson. So I told him if he didn't answer me I'd throw him down the stairs. He didn't answer me, so I threw him down the stairs.

*(Wife helps Sexton up.)*

SEXTON: I didn't think he'd do it, the brute.

FATHER: Heavens above, with you I'll never have anything but trouble. You understand nothing and you learn nothing. Get out of my sight. I don't want to see you anymore.

BOY: Yes, Father, gladly, I'll go away and learn to get the shivers. Then at least I'll know something to earn a living by.

FATHER: Still the shivers!

WIFE: Heaven protect us.

SEXTON: You're a plague to everyone who knows you.

WIFE: You give me the shivers!

*(She's helps Sexton off.)*

BOY: Lucky woman. Good-bye.