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## **Family Plays**

# Reynard the Fox

By

Arthur Fauquez

Translation by

Marie-Louise Roelants

Introduction by

Mouzon Law

# Reynard the Fox

Three U.S. premieres at the Madison Wisconsin Theatre Guild,  
the University of Texas Department of Drama  
and the Centenary College of Louisiana.

*Satire. Developed from legends by Arthur Fauquez. Translated from French by Marie-Louise Roelants. Cast: 6m., 1w.* In this sparkling satire, Reynard is brought to trial for his offenses against the other animals. He is given a year of probation, in which to mend his ways. But the playful fox cannot resist the opportunity to trick his fellows. He accumulates a long list of misdeeds before the year is half up. Enraged by this, the wolf and the bear lead a conspiracy against him and actually have the noose around his neck when the hunters close in, trapping all the animals. Struck with terror, each one schemes only for his own safety. *It is Reynard who contrives a way to save all of their lives. Single set, which changes seasons. Animal costumes. Approximate running time: 1 hour, 40 minutes. Code: R96.*

## Family Plays

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ISBN-13 978-0-87602-187-3



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Printed in the United States of America  
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(REYNARD THE FOX)

ISBN: 978-0-87602-187-3

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*Reynard the Fox* was first produced, under the title of "Le Roman de Renart", in 1958, by the Theatre de l'Enfance in Brussels, Belgium, under the direction of Jose Geal, and was subsequently toured across Belgium, in more than a hundred performances.

Translated from the French by Marie-Louise Roclants, an abridged version was presented in 1960 by the Madison, Wisconsin Theatre Guild, under the direction of Donald Von Buskirk.

The first full American premiere was presented in 1961 by the Department of Drama of the University of Texas, at Austin, Texas, under the direction of Mouzon Law. For this occasion, the costumes were designed by Lucy Barton, the set created by H. Neil Whiting.

A subsequent production of *Reynard the Fox* was presented in 1962 by the Jongleurs of Centenary College, at Shreveport, Louisiana, under the direction of Orlin Corey. This was the first production to make use of the animal costume-make-up designs provided for the play by Irene Corey.

## INTRODUCTION

In the domain of current dramatic literature for children, REYNARD THE FOX stands apart — very much as Reynard, himself, stands apart from his *confrères* in the animal kingdom. Both the character, and the play about him, are unconventional in the context of their societies. This unconventionality — this individuality — is the strength of both.

Reynard's subtle charm, his wise way, his lack of pretention, his unalloyed honesty about himself, his *joie de vivre* tempered with his realistic approach to life, his bright, brave, good natured wit, render him without peer in his society and place his services in demand. By the same token, the unusual qualities of the script render it a departure from most plays for children and point to a possible new direction in children's theatre which may place the services of mature artists in greater demand for child audiences.

REYNARD THE FOX fulfills the necessary requirements of a script for children in that it tells an entertaining story, filled with colourful characters and their comic actions, with dramatic suspense. But . . . it goes further — much further:

Its theme wittily comments upon the good and the bad in everyone, and the hypocrisy of those who would be the judge of others.

Its characterizations of the animals are as subtle and as complex as are real people.

Its language is elevated. All of its story is not illustrated in action; some of it relies upon language alone for its communication — and that language oftentimes utilizes a vocabulary which extends the child's own.

Its type is essentially satire. It places on stage as the leading character with whom you are to sympathize, a rascal whose motives even in his heroic moments, are (realistically enough) tinged with a consideration of self. This fox is a satirical character, and the basic truth buried in his actions is inescapably satirical.

It plays on many levels of meanings, and its significance lies in its comment on the human counterparts of its animal characters.

REYNARD THE FOX asks the producing company to play to children, rather than play-down-to them. It asks children to understand a concept of



human behaviour which may be at variance with the philosophical diet upon which they have fed.

In so doing, the play respects the intellect and the sensitivity of the child. In so doing, it also provides thought-provoking entertainment for the adult and, for that reason, has caused many an adult to question whether or not it is a play for children. In its pre-publication run, it caused not one child to question its suitability for them. They understood Reynard and were glad he was alive — and they went out of the theatre with something more than they had when they came in.

—MOUZON LAW

# REYNARD THE FOX

*by*

Arthur Fauquez

Translation by Marie-Louise Roelants

## CHARACTERS

Tiecelin, *the Crow*

Reverend Epinard, *the Hedgehog*

Brun, *the Bear*

Ysengrin, *the Wolf*

Noble, *the Lion*

Reynard, *the Fox*

Lendore, *the Marmot*

## SYNOPSIS

The entire play takes place in the heart of the forest.

Prologue

Scene 1. Spring

Scene 2. Summer

Scene 3. Autumn

Scene 4. Winter

Epilogue

# REYNARD THE FOX

by

Arthur Fauquez

## PROLOGUE

*(Tiecelin, perched in the crotch of a tree, practicing.)*

TIECELIN: Caw! *(Higher)* Caw! *(Higher)* Caw!

*(Brun enters, patch over one eye, his arm in a sling.)*

BRUN: Stop that infernal racket!

TIECELIN: Caw! *(Higher)* Caw!

BRUN: Stop!

TIECELIN: You are interrupting my practice, Seigneur Brun. Caw!

BRUN: Stop this instant, and summon the King!

TIECELIN: *(notices him.)* The King? Good heavens, what has happened to you? Have you been caught in a bramble bush? Ha, ha, ha!

BRUN: Enough of your insolence! Call the King at once!

TIECELIN: Lord Bear, I am the King's Registrar. If you wish an audience with the King, you must state your reason to me.

BRUN: I have been beaten, do you hear? Look at me!

TIECELIN: Ha, ha, ha!

BRUN: I have been beaten, and it is all the fault of Reynard the Fox!

TIECELIN: Reynard did this to the mighty Bear?

BRUN: He tricked me. I want the King to punish him.

TIECELIN: Oh, if it was only one of Reynard's tricks —

BRUN: But look at me!

TIECELIN: I am. Ha, ha, ha!

*(Ysengrin limps in, on a crutch, his head bandaged.)*

YSENGRIN: Sound the trumpets!

TIECELIN: Baron Ysengrin!

BRUN: You, too?

TIECELIN: What a pair! Ha, ha, ha!

YSENGRIN: One more caw from you, Crow, and I'll wring your scrawny neck. Summon the King!

TIECELIN: The King is not to be called just because you stubbed your toe.

YSENGRIN: Stubbed my toe? I have been attacked by dogs. Look at me!

TIECELIN: Yes, I see. Ha, ha, ha!

BRUN: Who has done this to you?

YSENGRIN: It is all the doing of Reynard the Fox!

BRUN: Gr-r-r-r!

TIECELIN: Reynard did this to the powerful Wolf?

YSENGRIN: He tricked me.

BRUN: Me, too.

BOTH: Summon the King!

TIECELIN: (*climbs down.*) Gentlemen, if I were to summon the King every time Reynard played a trick, he would soon appoint a new Registrar.

YSENGRIN: But this is not to be borne!

BRUN: I intend to accuse Reynard in court.

YSENGRIN: Yes. We'll bring him to trial.

BRUN: And we shall demand his punishment.

YSENGRIN: I shall demand his hanging.

TIECELIN: Hanging?

BRUN: Yes! We have had enough of his tricks.

YSENGRIN: We are going to get rid of the Fox!

TIECELIN: If you have been unable to get rid of him in the field, how do you expect to get rid of him in Court?

BRUN: The King will do us justice.

YSENGRIN: Bring us to the King!

TIECELIN: Gentlemen, I am a man of law, and I will give you my best legal advice. Go home and lick your wounds. Reynard will trick you in Court, just as he has tricked you in the field. You have no evidence.

BRUN: Evidence? What of my black eye? And my arm?

YSENGRIN: Look at my lame leg. And my head!

TIECELIN: Yes, ha, ha, ha! What a picture! Now you will excuse me. I must return to my practicing.

(*He climbs up.*)

BRUN: You miserable Crow! The King shall hear of your insolence!

YSENGRIN: If you had a little more meat on your bones, I should have a nice fat crow's wing for my supper!

TIECELIN: Caw!

BRUN: Save us from that deafening noise!

*(Exit, holding his ears.)*

TIECELIN: Caw!

YSENGRIN: Take care, Crow, that the Fox does not trick you.

*(Exit, limping. Reynard enters, unseen by TieceLin.)*

TIECELIN: Ho, ho, ho! The Fox trick me? What a joke! I am too smart for that. Caw! Caw! Caw!

REYNARD: *(groaning with pain)* Oh-h-h-h-h!

TIECELIN: Can I never practice in peace? Caw-w-w-w — Good Heavens, it is the Fox himself!

REYNARD: *(weakly)* TieceLin, my friend — Oh-h-h-h!

TIECELIN: What is your tale of woe? Do you wish to summon the King too?

REYNARD: No. I wish only to die in peace.

TIECELIN: To die?

REYNARD: TieceLin, I have been poisoned.

TIECELIN: Poisoned?

REYNARD: Oh-h-h-h! It was an oyster I found. Sing me one of your sweetest songs, so that I may die with your music in my ears.

TIECELIN: You are not serious?

REYNARD: Sing, my good fellow

TIECELIN: Like this? Caw-w-w-w-!

REYNARD: Thanks, old friend.

*(He gasps, then falls quiet.)*

TIECELIN: Reynard? Reynard! Don't act the sleeping beauty. I know you. You are only faking. Oh, very well. I will rouse you. Caw! Caw! Caw! Nor a wince. Not a quiver. He is very smart. Reynard? Is he really faking?

*(He climbs down to look.)*

My word, he sleeps like the dead. I can't even see him breathe. Good Heavens, he isn't breathing! Could he really be dead? What a release, Lord, if this is so!

*(He moves Reynard's tail, which drops back, limp.)*

But how could he be dead? This is too much to hope. He said an oyster. It is possible.

*(He pokes the Fox with a long stick. Reynard rolls over, a dead weight.)*

It's true! Brun! Ysengrin! No, I am the one who found him. It will win me the gratitude of the whole kingdom if I hint that I am a tiny bit responsible for this — oh, just a very tiny bit — just enough to make them think I am the one who liberated the world from this rascal. I should be hailed as a hero. I shall have my portrait painted in triumphant attire, crushing my vanquished enemy, and I shall sell his skin for a fur.

*(He rests his foot upon Reynard, in a conqueror's pose.)*

REYNARD: *(grasping his ankle)* Dear TieceLin!

TIECELIN: Help! Help! He is not dead!

REYNARD: You had better learn, dear friend, never to sell Reynard's skin before you have killed him.

TIECELIN: What I said about it was only in fun. I — I only wanted to give you a laugh.

REYNARD: Well, you see, you succeeded. I am laughing. I am laughing with all my teeth, which in a few moments are going to gobble you up.

TIECELIN: You are not going to kill me like a simple chicken?

REYNARD: Why not?

TIECELIN: I am the Royal Registrar. And besides I am your friend.

REYNARD: Yes?

TIECELIN: Only a minute ago, I saved you from a Court trial.

REYNARD: I am very grateful, believe me. And because of that I'll swallow you in one gulp, without chewing.

TIECELIN: Let me go!

REYNARD: *(plucking a feather from TieceLin's tail)* And moreover, I'll keep this to remember you by

TIECELIN: Aie! You have ruined my beautiful tail!

REYNARD: Never mind, TieceLin. You will not be needing it any more.

TIECELIN: Oh-h-h, you monster! I am going to be eaten, and I can see no escape.

REYNARD: None whatever

TIECELIN: Then at least grant my last wish. If I have to be eaten, don't just gobble me down like a piece of cheese. Treat me as a delicacy, and prepare your stomach for this feast.

REYNARD: My stomach is always prepared.

TIECELIN: Oh, no. To enjoy a dainty morsel fully, it is necessary to warm your stomach and your head — like this.

*(He rubs his stomach and his head.)*

REYNARD: Why your head?

TIECELIN: To eat intelligently.

REYNARD: And why your stomach?

TIECELIN: To warm your appetite.

REYNARD: It is an odd method.

TIECELIN: But it works, I assure you.

REYNARD: Like this?

*(He lets go of Tieceelin, to rub head and stomach.)*

TIECELIN: Oh, harder than that.

REYNARD: It certainly does warm me up.

TIECELIN: *(clambering up to his perch)* The best way to digest well is to eat nothing.

REYNARD: Why, Tieceelin!

TIECELIN: You savage! Did you think I was going to let you eat me for lunch?

REYNARD: Eat you for lunch? I would have to be starving.

TIECELIN: I am going to denounce you to the King.

REYNARD: *(laughing)* Oh, Tieceelin, you take yourself so seriously.

TIECELIN: The King also will take me seriously. Trumpets!

*(Trumpets.)*

REYNARD: Caw! Caw! Caw! *(Mimicking)* Oh, Tieceelin, sing me one last song before I die.

*(Exit, laughing. Returns immediately.)*

By the way, keep this to remember me by.

*(Tosses feather. Exit.)*

TIECELIN: My feather! Monster! Thief! Cannibal!

*(He climbs down to retrieve the feather.)*

My beautiful feather! But this is evidence. Now we have him! Brun! Ysengrin! Bring the fox to trial! I have the evidence! Trumpets!

*(Trumpets. Epinard enters quietly.)*

EPINARD: My dear fellow, what are the trumpets all about?

TIECELIN: Reverend Epinard. Stand there. I am about to make a proclamation. Trumpets!

*(Trumpets.)*

We, Tiecelin the Crow, Royal Registrar, announce a great Court of Justice meeting, to put on trial the most infamous of all criminals, His Majesty's Own Knight —

*(Drum roll.)* Reynard the Fox!

EPINARD: Reynard, on trial? But will you explain —

TIECELIN: One moment. Whoever wishes to accuse the Fox is requested to give his name to the Registrar. I am the Registrar. Trumpets!

*(Trumpets.)*

EPINARD: What is this all about?

TIECELIN: It means, Reverend, that we are at last going to put Reynard on trial, and punish him for his misdeeds. Don't you yourself have some complaint to make against the Fox?

EPINARD: I?

TIECELIN: Yes, you. Has your religious robe protected you from his tricks?

EPINARD: Oh, no. Only last week, he got a duck-egg away from me.

TIECELIN: Well, then. You will lodge a charge against him?

EPINARD: Ahem! I should not wish it made public how I — ah — came by the duck-egg.

TIECELIN: As you wish. Sit over there. Here come two who will testify.

*(Epınard sits and reads in his Bible. Brun and Ysengrin enter.)*

YSENGRIN: You are bringing him to trial?

TIECELIN: I have the evidence.

BRUN: Where is the King?

*(Noble the Lion enters, majestically, theatrically.)*

NOBLE: Since when do the trumpets not greet my arrival?

TIECELIN: *(bowing)* Sire — your Majesty — I think — I thought — Trum — Trumpets!

*(Trumpets.)*

NOBLE: Let my arrival be announced to the Court.

TIECELIN: Yes, Sire. Trumpets!

*(Trumpets.)* Gentlemen, the King!

*(All bow, as Noble seats himself.)*

NOBLE: I declare the Court of Justice open. Now, Tiecelin, why have you assembled us all in Court?

TIECELIN: To hear charges against your Majesty's Knight, Sir Reynard the Fox.



NOBLE: Reynard? What charges?

YSENGRIN: I have been attacked!

BRUN: I have been beaten!

TIECELIN: My very life has been threatened!

NOBLE: Brun! Ysengrin! Where have you received these terrible injuries?  
Have you been fighting again?

BRUN: Sire, it is Reynard!

YSENGRIN: We are the victims of Reynard's trickery!

TIECELIN: This is Reynard's doing!

NOBLE: If this is true, Reynard is a dangerous criminal indeed. Bring  
him in.

TIECELIN: But your Majesty —

BRUN: We do not require his presence to recite his crimes.

YSENGRIN: We can tell you —

NOBLE: Where is Reynard?

TIECELIN: Knight Reynard thinks — he does not know — actually, I  
think he thinks —

NOBLE: Enough thinking. Where is Reynard?

TIECELIN: He th — I mean, he believes — your Majesty, I will have him  
brought before you.

NOBLE: Let this insolent character be called at once.

TIECELIN: Y-y-yes, Sire. S-s-s-sir Reynard the Fox! Trumpets!

*(Trumpets, resembling a hunter's call, ending with drum roll. During  
this fanfare, each animal makes his own preparations for Reynard's en-  
trance, reflecting his attitude toward this dangerous criminal.)*

YSENGRIN: Here comes the villain!

*(Reynard enters, smiling, confident. Bows to the King.)*

NOBLE: I greet you, Knight Reynard.

REYNARD: Good evening, Sire.

NOBLE: Just answer our questions.

REYNARD: Allow me, Sire, to wish that this day may not go by without  
being the best one of your life.

NOBLE: Quiet. We have assembled the High Court of Justice, for the  
express purpose of putting you on trial.

REYNARD: On trial? Me? The most devoted and faithful of all your  
subjects? But why, Sire? What have I done to be tried for?

NOBLE: You shall know this very minute. TieceLin, announce the first accuser.

TIECELIN: Master Ysengrin the Wolf.

NOBLE: We are listening, Ysengrin.

YSENGRIN: I accuse —

REYNARD: Cousin Ysengrin, you, my accuser?

YSENGRIN: I accuse! Do you deny that you led me into a farm-yard under the pretext of showing me a flock of nice, plump ducks?

REYNARD: Not at all. I did show you a flock of nice, plump ducks, Cousin. Is that a crime?

YSENGRIN: And do you deny that you fastened me in, and roused the dogs, so that I was so cruelly bitten, I barely escaped alive?

REYNARD: Oh, my dear Cousin, is that how you suffered those grievous wounds? Those dreadful dogs!

NOBLE: So you admit luring him into a trap where he almost lost his life?

REYNARD: Oh, no. Excuse me, Sire. I only took him to the farm-yard to show him nice, plump ducks, as he says. But when he saw them, he began to drool and slobber and lick his lips at the sight, and even started to chase them. I could not stay for this. I fled, and cried out for help. Was it my fault if the gate shut behind me, and locked Ysengrin in with the dogs?

NOBLE: If the story is as you tell it —

YSENGRIN: Allow me —

NOBLE: And I am inclined to believe you — the Marshal Ysengrin is as guilty as you are, and by the same token, deserves the same punishment. It is up to you, Lord Wolf, to fix Reynard's fate, since that fate shall be yours also. What punishment would you suggest?

YSENGRIN: Ah — uh — in that case — yes, in that case, I think it is better — and wiser — not to punish Reynard.

REYNARD: Thanks, dear Cousin, for your generous intervention.

NOBLE: This case is settled. Who is next, TieceLin?

TIECELIN: Seigneur Brun.

NOBLE: It is your turn, Master Brun.

BRUN: I accuse!

REYNARD: You, my Uncle?

BRUN: Be quiet!

NOBLE: We are listening, Seigneur Brun.

BRUN: Your Majesty, I was taking a peaceful nap under an apple tree, when this creature —

REYNARD: Uncle.

BRUN: This mongrel —

REYNARD: Uncle.

BRUN: This rascal —

REYNARD: Uncle!

BRUN: For Heaven's sake, will you let me speak?

NOBLE: Proceed, Seigneur Brun.

BRUN: I was only sleeping, your Majesty, doing no harm to anyone —

REYNARD: He means, Sire, he was resting, after a large lunch. He had just stripped the apple tree, bare.

BRUN: It is not true! But this scoundrel found me there, and screamed for the farmer. Can you deny it?

REYNARD: No, not at all. I thought he was stricken, Sire. His belly was swollen till it looked like a barrel. I cried out in my grief. Could I help it if the farmer heard me? Uncle Brun heard me too, and tried to run away, but he was so full of apples, he couldn't even get to his feet.

BRUN: This is slander! He yelped for the farmer, your Majesty, and the farmer attacked me with a pitchfork. Before I could move from the spot, he gave me a black eye and four loose teeth, not to mention the hair and skin I lost in the fray.

NOBLE: If you had stolen his apples, Brun, it seems to me the punishment you received was justified. What do you think?

BRUN: I think — I think it was a very high price to pay for a few apples.

NOBLE: Forget it. Next one.

TIECELIN: The next one is myself: Master Tiecelin the Crow, Man of Law, and Royal Registrar.

NOBLE: What is your complaint against Reynard?

TIECELIN: I accuse!

REYNARD: Come, now.

TIECELIN: Yes! I accuse Reynard of trying, just a minute ago, to twist my neck and gobble me up, as simply as if I had been a chicken.

NOBLE: This is more serious. What have you to reply, Master Reynard?

REYNARD: One thing only. Look at this piteous carcass, and judge for yourself, Sire. Who would wish to gobble him up, skinny and emaciated as he is? And even if I did, am I any more guilty in this matter than my Cousin Ysengrin?

YSENGRIN: I protest!

REYNARD: Or my Uncle Brun?

BRUN: I deny it!

REYNARD: Or the cat, the dog, the sparrow, the vulture — or you yourself, Sire Lion, our very beloved King, as well?

*(Laughter.)*

NOBLE: Silence!

*(Nobody laughs any more.)*

Tiecelin, you over-estimate yourself. None of us wishes to eat crow.

TIECELIN: Reynard did. And here is the evidence. He pulled out one of my tail-feathers — this very feather.

REYNARD: Pouf! The wind plucks your feathers all the time.

TIECELIN: The wind!

*(General laughter.)*

NOBLE: Let's file this ridiculous case. Has anybody else any complaints against Reynard?

TIECELIN: Yes! The Reverend Epinard!

*(He prods Epinard, who has appeared immersed in his Bible.)*

EPINARD: Uh? Yes?

NOBLE: We are listening, Reverend Epinard.

EPINARD: You are listening to me? This doesn't happen every day.

*(He opens his Bible, and prepares to preach.)*

NOBLE: What charge do you wish to lodge against the red-haired Fox?

EPINARD: I?

TIECELIN: Remember — that duck-egg.

EPINARD: Duck-egg?

NOBLE: Look now, Reverend, has the Fox ever tried to harm you?

EPINARD: He wouldn't dare, Sire. My quills, you see.

NOBLE: If you have nothing to say, sit down. Is there any other accuser?

TIECELIN: Yes, Sire. There are countless ones. But they are not present.

NOBLE: Where are they?

TIECELIN: They are dead, Sire.

NOBLE: Dead?

TIECELIN: Yes, Sire. The rooster Chanticleer, and his four hens. The drake, Halbran-des-Mares, and his three ducks. The guinea-fowl, Hupette. The turkey, Gloussard. And thousands of other winged creatures. All have met death and burial in the stomach of Reynard the Fox. Let's hang him, Sire.

YSENGRIN: Let's hang him upside down!

BRUN: Yes, he must hang!

NOBLE: That is a harsh judgement. Knight Reynard, can you think of any reason against it?

REYNARD: As many reasons as you have subjects, Sire. Doesn't my cousin Ysengrin himself devour innocent lambs and peaceful sheep? Doesn't my Uncle Brun treat himself to the honey he robs from the bees? Doesn't the Registrar Tiecelin eat the wheat and the grapes he steals from men? And you yourself, Sire, didn't you only yesterday have a gentle kid and half a deer for your supper?

YSENGRIN: We must hang him!

BRUN: Hang him!

TIECELIN: Hang him at once!

NOBLE: Do you hear?

REYNARD: I hear, Sire, and I don't worry too much, because I know there is more wisdom under a great King's crown than in the little brains of his courtiers. A very great King can forgive when need be.

NOBLE: A very great King can forgive when need be.

REYNARD: Mighty and gallant Majesty, I trust my fate to your hands.

NOBLE: I am a very great King, Reynard.

REYNARD: Without question, Sire.

NOBLE: You shall not hang.

REYNARD: Thank you, Sire.

TIECELIN: This is insane!

NOBLE: Who said that?

YSENGRIN: Sire, it is a mistake.

NOBLE: I pray you —

BRUN: If you will allow me, Sire —

NOBLE: I allow nothing! Silence, everybody, and let me render my sentence. You will not hang, Master Reynard. I grant you mercy for one more year.

TIECELIN: Mercy for one more year?

NOBLE: But this will be your last chance. In that year a record will be kept of your every crime.

BRUN: Of what use is a record, if he is left free to continue his crimes?

NOBLE: Twenty-four crimes we shall forgive you, without punishment.

YSENGRIN: Twenty-four crimes?