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Dramatic Publishing

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THE STORIES ARE ABOUT ALL OF US."

National Public Radio

ROBERT FULGHUM'S
ALL I REALLY
NEED TO KNOW
I LEARNED IN
KINDERGARTEN

Comedy/Drama/
(optional)Musical
conceived and adapted
by
ERNEST ZULIA
music and lyrics
by
DAVID CALDWELL

"A refreshingly intimate combination of theatre and storytelling. Gentle... funny... joyous. Sparks of recognition ignited the audience."
The Chicago Sun-Times

"Eighteen thought-provoking and snifle-provoking vignettes left the audiences searching for hankies."
The Los Angeles Times

"A lighthearted, beautifully styled dramatization of Fulghum's writings."
Syracuse Herald Journal

ROBERT FULGHUM'S
ALL I REALLY
NEED TO KNOW
I LEARNED IN
KINDERGARTEN

Based upon the best-selling books by Robert Fulghum.

Conceived and adapted by Ernest Zulia. Music and lyrics by David Caldwell.

Cast: 3 men, 2 women, 1 pianist (may be greatly expanded). Based on Robert Fulghum's best-selling books (over 15 million copies in 96 countries), *Kindergarten* takes a funny, insightful and heartwarming look at what is profound in everyday life. This tightly woven stage adaptation is an evening of theatrical storytelling that utilizes a revue format, with monologues, dialogues, and multiple voice narration. It can be performed as a play or as a musical with up to seven original songs. Both versions are enhanced through the use of live piano underscoring, which provides fluidity, charm, and emotional texture. The many delightful stories feature colorful characters such as: a shy little boy who insists on playing the "pig" in his class production of *Cinderella* and steals the show; a man whose dream of flying carries him 11,000 feet over Los Angeles...in an aluminum lawn chair lifted by 45 helium-filled surplus weather balloons; a "mother of the bride" who brilliantly orchestrates the perfect wedding until the bowling ball of fate rolls down the aisle; and a modern-day Greek philosopher who finds the meaning of life in a piece of broken mirror from World War II. These stories are about all of us and celebrate our very existence, from the whimsy of childhood to the wisdom of old age. *Kindergarten* has earned standing ovations at theaters worldwide and is a sure hit for almost any theater, including professional, community, church, and high school groups. The musical can be performed with solo piano or optional five-piece orchestration. *Unit set (bare stage possible).*

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**Conceived and Adapted by
ERNEST ZULIA**

**Music and Lyrics by
DAVID CALDWELL**



Dramatic Publishing
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Script created and adapted by

ERNEST ZULIA

Music, lyrics, musical arrangements, and orchestration by

DAVID CALDWELL

Based upon the essays by

ROBERT FULGHUM

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Check out the *Kindergarten* website for:

- the most recent discoveries and insights on ways of presenting *All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten*, including authorized script and score changes, effective staging devices, and alternate story and song sequences.
- information on recordings of songs, sound effects and piano accompaniment for rehearsal and performance.
- information on the sequel, *Uh-Oh, Here Comes Christmas*.

allireallyneed.com.

The following notice and list of books should appear on the title page or in another prominent location in the playbill.

“This production includes material from Robert Fulghum’s books:”

All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten

It Was on Fire When I Lay Down on It

Uh-Oh

Maybe, Maybe Not

From Beginning to End

* * * *

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The original production of *All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten* premiered in July 1992 at Mill Mountain Theatre, Roanoke, Va. It was directed by Ernest Zulia, designed by John Sailer, and featured the following cast:

Kathleen	.....	KATHLEEN BUTLER
Jill	.....	JILL JANE CLEMENTS
Ed	.....	ED SALA
Branislav	.....	BRANISLAV TOMICH
Fred	.....	FREDERICK WALTERS
Narrator/Stage Manager	.....	RACHEL HOHN
Pianist/Singer	.....	DAVID CALDWELL

The play was later produced at Ford's Theatre in Washington D.C., directed by Ernest Zulia, with the following cast:

Jill	.....	BONNIE FRANKLIN
Ed	.....	GARY HOLCOMBE
Kathleen	.....	LIZ SHERIDAN
Branislav	.....	LARA TEETER
Fred	.....	JAMES WHITMORE
Narrator/Conductor	.....	DAVID CALDWELL

Author's Notes

About the Script

This stage adaptation is primarily a storytelling piece which is intended to be performed with simplicity, honesty, and humor. It is comprised of stories from Robert Fulghum's first five best-selling books, which sold over 15 million copies in 93 countries, and have been translated into 27 languages. These entertaining stories are primarily about ordinary people. The author's comic style delivers an insightful and heartfelt perspective on everyday life, and the profound echoes that reverberate through it.

The show, as presented in this published script, has been developed in front of a variety of audiences, in the United States and abroad, and is felt to be the optimal way to perform *Kindergarten*. However, it can be adjusted to suit specific situations and audiences. It can be presented as a full musical (with seven songs), or in a "reduced-musical" version (which is more like a play with music, and has also been referred to as the "non-musical version." See Appendix A for details.) The show can be shortened or lengthened; the cast can be expanded; and some stories, lines, or songs can be reassigned. There are author's notes in the appendix that will assist in some of these choices, and there is a section devoted to a special high-school version of the script. There is a full piano/vocal score under separate cover with cues and notes for all versions. In spite of all the variations and options offered throughout this script, the show as presented in the table of contents ("full musical" or "reduced musical"), and executed by a five-person cast, is considered the most effective way to present *All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten*.

About the Cast

The five actors should have strong comedic and dramatic skills, as well as natural storytelling ability. A variety of different personalities within the cast can be valuable. A generosity of spirit helps communicate the essence of the material, and keen wit keeps them from becoming patronizing, pious, or cloying. They present the stories as if they were occurrences out of their own lives.

In the musical version of the show, the sung material assigned to Branislav, Jill, and Ed requires strong singing voices; the material covered by Kathleen and Fred is less demanding. For the non-musical version, at least one fairly strong singer (an actor, the narrator, or the pianist) is required to cover the title song, and possibly "Reflect the Light."

The character names listed on the following page and throughout the script are those of the actors who created the roles in the original workshop. It is expected that each production will utilize the names of its own cast members in the script and in the playbill.

The ages of these characters are appropriate to the material assigned to each, and the age range is extremely valuable to the resonance of the material. However, in certain situations, age ranges could be adjusted, and/or the size of the cast could be expanded.

ALL I REALLY NEED TO KNOW I LEARNED IN KINDERGARTEN

A Comedy

For 3 Men, 2 Women, 1 pianist

(may be expanded—ages somewhat flexible)

CHARACTERS

FRED late 50s to late 60s

ED late 40s to early 50s

BRANISLAV mid-30s to 40

JILL mid-30s to early 40s

KATHLEEN late 50s to 60s

NARRATOR a voice over the sound system
(Can also be performed by a separate actor or by the
pianist/singer.)

DAVID . . (optional onstage character) pianist/singer (m or f)
(Can also function as Narrator. In the reduced-musical
version, this character can play and sing the title song.)

Note: See p. 112 in Appendix A for more in-depth character descriptions.

ACT ONE

(Lights go to black—PIANO TRANSITION.)

YES! OF COURSE I CAN!

(Lights come up on the five actors seated in plain wooden school chairs facing the audience. They are kindergartners but remain very quiet and still until the first explosion of enthusiasm after the narrator's first line. There is a free-standing chalkboard behind them with a large question mark drawn on it. The narrator is heard over the sound system and never seen. If the pianist serves as narrator, a microphone should still be used, giving the same effect of a disembodied voice. Even though the audience may be able to see him/her, the actors should not acknowledge his/her physical presence. The actors start as enthusiastic five-year-olds, then transform into cautiously "cool" college students and finally into reticent adults. Their focus is on an imaginary person out front.)

NARRATOR. Ask a kindergarten class, "How many of you can draw?" and all hands shoot up.

ALL *(actors as kindergartners vocalize with tremendous enthusiasm as their hands shoot up indicating "pick me." A variation of this gesture is repeated every time the word "Yes!" is spoken throughout the show).* Oooo Oooo Oooo Oooo!

FRED (*as kindergartner speaking above the others*). Oooo

Ooo Ooo Ooo Ooo! ... Yes, of course we can draw!

KATHLEEN. All of us!

NARRATOR. What can you draw?

ED. Anything!

NARRATOR. How about a dog eating a fire truck in the jungle?

BRANISLAV. Sure! How big do you want it?!

NARRATOR. How many of you can sing?

ALL (*again an enthusiastic vocal and physical reaction*).

Oooo Oooo Oooo!

JILL (*speaking above the others*). Yes! Of course we can sing!

NARRATOR. What can you sing?

KATHLEEN. Anything!

NARRATOR. What if you don't know the words?

JILL. That's OK! We'll make them up.

BRANISLAV & JILL. Let's sing!

NARRATOR. Now?

BRANISLAV. Why not? (*They each improvise a song.*)

NARRATOR. How many of you dance?

ALL (*hands shoot up with the same vocal and physical enthusiasm*). Ooo Ooo Ooo Ooo!

NARRATOR. What kind of music do you like to dance to?

ED. Any kind. Let's dance!

NARRATOR. Now?

ED. Sure, why not? (*Spontaneously does a brief improvised dance.*)

NARRATOR. Do you like to act in plays?

ALL (*hands shoot up. BRANISLAV and JILL rise and remain up*). Yes!

NARRATOR. Do you play musical instruments?

ALL (*hands shoot up. ED rises, remains up*). Yes!

NARRATOR. Do you write poetry?

ALL (*hands shoot up. KATHLEEN rises, remains up*). Yes!

NARRATOR. Can you read and write and count?

ALL (*hands shoot up*). Yes!

FRED (*rising with great enthusiasm and pride*). We're learning that stuff now.

NARRATOR. Try those same questions on a college audience. (*Short PIANO TRANSITION.*)

(There is a moment of panic as the college students realize how "uncool" they must look with hands in the air and enthusiastic body postures. As inconspicuously as possible, their hands come down, and they sit, assuming the posture and attitude of self-conscious college students trying to be cool.)

NARRATOR (*after transition is complete*). A few students will raise their hands when asked if they can draw or dance or sing or paint or act or play an instrument. More often than not, those who do raise their hands will want to qualify their responses with their limitations.

BRANISLAV. I play piano—but not very well—my mother made me.

ED. I only dance to rock and roll.

JILL. I only sing in the shower.

FRED (*topping the others with a wisecrack*). I only draw conclusions. (*All laugh with audience.*)

NARRATOR. When asked why the limitations, college students answer:

KATHLEEN. I don't have any talent.

ED. I haven't done any of that stuff since about the third grade.

FRED. Who's got the time?

BRANISLAV. That's not my major.

NARRATOR. You can imagine the response to the same question asked of an older audience. (*Short PIANO TRAN-SITION.*)

(There is a stunned moment of silence while they all transform to adults. Each is mortified that they will be asked to dance or sing or act. After the moment sinks in, all attempt to escape, ad-libbing, but clearly heard by the audience as they cross U.)

ALL (*ad-libbing*). "Oh gee. Is that the time?" "Gotta run," "I don't think so," "You've got to be kidding," "Maybe after about three martinis," etc. (*All freeze U. PIANO INTRO begins for "The Kindergarten Song."*)

NARRATOR. What went wrong between kindergarten and now? Whatever happened to "Yes! Of course I can"? (*SOUND CUE: School bell rings.*)

"THE KINDERGARTEN SONG"

JILL.

(*VERSE 1*)

I'VE BECOME SO CAUGHT UP IN MY
GROWN-UP STUFF
IT SEEMS I'VE LOST MY SPONTANEITY,
NOT TO MENTION PERSPECTIVE ON LIVING
LIFE,

**EVERY DAY, AT MY JOB, WITH MY FAMILY.
BUT I'M DISCOVERING**

ALL.

**ALL I REALLY NEED TO KNOW I LEARNED IN
KINDERGARTEN,**

ED.

ABOUT HOW TO LIVE,

FRED.

WHAT TO DO,

BRANISLAV.

HOW TO BE.

JILL.

**IT'S THE SANDBOX CODE OF ETHICS, NOT
SOME GRAD SCHOOL MUMBO-JUMBO
THAT'S HAD THE GREATEST IMPACT ON ME.**

(KATHLEEN flips the chalkboard to reveal the Kindergarten Creed. See Appendix F for exact text.)

(CHORUS)

JILL.

I LEARNED: SHARE.

KATHLEEN.

PLAY FAIR.

FRED.

DON'T HIT PEOPLE.

ED.

**DON'T TAKE THINGS THAT DON'T BELONG TO
YOU.**

BRANISLAV.

IF YOU HURT SOMEONE, SAY YOU'RE SORRY—

JILL.

**TO NAME JUST A FEW.
CLEAN UP YOUR OWN MESS,**

KATHLEEN.

AND WASH YOUR HANDS BEFORE YOU EAT.

ALL.

**HOLD HANDS AND STICK TOGETHER WHEN
YOU CROSS THE STREET.**

BRANISLAV.

FLUSH.

ED.

**LIVE A BALANCED LIFE—LEARN SOME, THINK
SOME, WORK AND PLAY,**

BRANISLAV.

AND SING AND DANCE AND DRAW,

FRED.

AND TAKE A NAP EACH DAY.

ALL.

BE AWARE OF WONDER.

KATHLEEN.

**THINK OF THE SEED IN THE PAPER CUP—
WHO KNOWS WHY THE ROOT GOES DOWN
AND THE PLANT GOES UP?
BUT WE'RE ALL LIKE THAT;
AND JUST AS THE SEED, THE
MOUSE, THE BEE,
AND THE GOLDFISH, WILL ALL
DIE SOME DAY, WELL, SO WILL WE.**

ALL.

**REMEMBER THE FIRST WORD YOU LEARNED
IN YOUR DICK-AND-JANE BOOK—
THE BIGGEST, MOST IMPORTANT WORD OF ALL:
LOOK...**

BRANISLAV (*referring to the written Creed*).

(*VERSE 2*)

**EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW IS IN
THERE SOMEWHERE,
FROM THE GOLDEN RULE TO BASIC
SANITATION.
REALLY I HAVE KNOWN THESE THINGS ALL
MY LIFE.
LIVING THEM—WELL, THAT'S ANOTHER
CONVERSATION.**

ED.

**APPLY ANY OF THESE ITEMS TO YOUR
GOVERNMENT,**

**YOUR WORLD, YOUR FAMILY LIFE OR YOUR
CAREER;
TRANSLATE THEM INTO SOPHISTICATED
GROWN-UP TERMS,
AND THEY WILL ALL HOLD TRUE AND FIRM
AND CLEAR.**

FRED.

(VERSE 3)

**IF WE ALL STOPPED TO TAKE A NAP EACH DAY,
THINK HOW MUCH BETTER OUR WORLD
WOULD BE.
AND WHAT IF CLEANING UP THEIR OWN MESS
WERE A MATTER OF OUR GOVERNMENT'S
POLICY?**

ALL.

**AND IT'S STILL TRUE, WHEN WE GO OUT INTO
THE WORLD
IN THESE UNCERTAIN TIMES, UNCERTAIN
WEATHER—
IT DOESN'T MATTER IF YOU'RE SIX YEARS
OLD OR SIXTY—
WE SHOULD ALL HOLD HANDS AND STICK
TOGETHER.**

**REMEMBER THE FIRST WORD YOU LEARNED
IN YOUR DICK-AND-JANE BOOK—
THE BIGGEST MOST IMPORTANT WORD OF ALL:**

LOOK...

(The actors form a line across the stage as KATHLEEN passes out four placards, careful not to reveal what is

printed on one side. Just as they begin to sing the word LOOK, the actors lift the placards over their heads, revealing the letters that should have spelled the word "LOOK," but they were scrambled up and spelled "LOK." They catch their mistake just before they attempt to sing the word LOOK. They scramble around, arrive at new positions, and once again they start to sing the word LOOK, only to discover that they have now spelled "LOKO." One more scramble, and they are finally in the correct positions, spelling the word "LOOK," which they now finally sing. On the last note of the music, just before the cut-off, the two "O"'s make one final switch, as though it made a difference which "O" is right or left. The fifth actor [KATHLEEN] serves as director of this whole fiasco, and joins in the final picture with a placard revealing an exclamation point. Note: The above antics are set to specific music cues which are noted in the score.)

CINDERELLA

(JILL erases question mark, and writes "CINDERELLA" on chalkboard.)

ED. Cinderella was the title on the chalkboard marquee.

FRED. Given the task of dramatizing a fairy tale for a teacher's conference, the kindergarten class decided on the classic old rags-to-riches story, "Cinderella."

BRANISLAV. You know how it goes: "Shy agreeable protagonist, victimized by abusive step-parent, waits for

wise matriarchal figure to rescue her, and deliver her transformed from co-dependency to bliss.”

KATHLEEN. In other words; if you're good-looking, good at heart, and have a fairy godmother... you got it made.

JILL. It was a good choice from the teacher's point of view, because there were so many characters and every child in the class could be in the play.

ED. A list of characters was compiled as the class talked through the plot of the drama.

KATHLEEN. There was the absolutely ravishing Cinderella,

FRED. the evil stepmother,

ED & BRANISLAV. the two wicked but stupid stepsisters,

JILL. the beautiful and wise fairy godmother,

BRANISLAV. the pumpkin,

ED. mice,

KATHLEEN. coachmen,

FRED. horses,

BRANISLAV. king,

JILL. all the people at the King's ball,

ED. generals,

FRED. admirals,

BRANISLAV. knights,

KATHLEEN. princesses,

ED. and, of course, that ultimate object of fabled desire (*Strikes a cocky pose.*) ...the Prince.

FRED (*referring to ED*). Who, if you recall, was really only a salesman interested in pushing his inventory of glass slippers.

JILL. The children were allowed to choose roles for themselves. As the parts were allotted, each child was labeled with felt pen and paper, and sent to stand over on the

other side of the room while casting was completed. Finally, every child had a part.

FRED (*could also be spoken by an actor not playing Norman*). Except one. One small boy. Who had remained quiet and disengaged from the selection process. Norman. A kid who was somehow different—not weird, just different—in the way he looked at things. Norman was always thinking. And like so many misunderstood, but great thinkers, Norman was teased a lot by his classmates, causing him to live on the fringe of kindergarten society. (*He has transformed himself into Norman—a deeply earnest and serious individual.*)

JILL (*as the teacher*). “Well, Norman,” said the teacher, “what are you going to be?”

FRED. “Well, I am going to be the pig.”

JILL. “Pig? There is no pig in the story of Cinderella.”

FRED (*after a long pause, matter-of-factly*). “Well... There is now.”

BRANISLAV. Norman did not relate to being a footman or a mouse or a pumpkin.

ED. He knew his character. Pig.

KATHLEEN. And he was not about to give up his part in the play and go over and stand against the wall where a loser would stand.

ED. He intended to participate wherever pigs fit into the scheme of things. Without giving up dignity or identity. He took it for granted that there was a place for pigs, and that the teacher would know that.

BRANISLAV. So what do you say to a kid who is already thinking up a costume of pink long underwear, pipe-cleaner tail, and a paper cup for a nose?