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The Happy Prince: A Radio Play

A Christmas adaptation in one act

By

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and

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Based on Oscar Wilde's *The Happy Prince*



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The Happy Prince: A Radio Play

CHARACTERS

(As in the good old radio days, an actor or actress may play several parts, more so than if it were a stage play.)

NARRATOR/HOST (BART DASH).....	principle male
BOOTH ANNOUNCER'S VOICE (SAM).....	principle male
SOUND EFFECTS PERSON #1 (JOE)	male
SOUND EFFECTS PERSON #2 (LIZ).....	female
HAPPY PRINCE	principle male
LITTLE SWALLOW	principle female
MAYOR MUMMER	principle male
A MOTHER	female
DISAPPOINTED MAN.....	male
CHARITY CHILD #1.....	female
CHAIRTY CHILD #2	male
MATHEMATICAL MASTER.....	male
RED SPARROW.....	male
WISE OLD SWALLOW.....	male
SAILOR VOICES #1 – 3.....	male
CITIZEN # 1	female
CITIZEN #2.....	male
CITIZEN #3.....	female
SONGSTERS.....	male/female
MINISTER (ETHAN BLAINE).....	principle male
MINISTER'S WIFE (MADELINE BLAINE)	principle female
BEAUTIFUL GIRL	female
LOVER	male
NURSE (EDWINA).....	principle female
DOCTOR (ADAM REESE).....	principle male
ENGINEER (ERIK REICHER)	principle male
TEACHER (MISS FETZER)	principle female
OVERSEER.....	male
VOICE OF THE LORD.....	male

SET

One set: A radio station.

The three walls (actually, no walls are necessary) are covered with drapes except for one padded door center stage.

There are a couple of tables with microphones and loaded with sound-effects equipment. More equipment is on the floor nearby.

There is a line of three or four standing microphones downstage.

A control booth (if desired).

A sign above the control booth that says “ON THE AIR” should be illuminated on proper cues.

PRODUCTION NOTES

Some of the advantages to producing radio plays:

One simple set

Less wardrobe: no changes of wardrobe are necessary.

Less staging: actors simply stand at microphones most of the time.

Less rehearsal: actors don't memorize lines, they just read them.

Fewer cast members: one actor plays many parts.

Props: minimal—only scripts and sound effects equipment.

AUTHORS' NOTES

Much or all of the accompanying music may be provided by a live piano and/or organ or, most probably, a synthesizer.

Aeolian Theatre of the Air may be substituted with the name of any production entity (e.g., Palm-dale Playhouse of the Air, Ojai Theatre of the Air, The Toledo Repertory Theatre of the Air, etc.).

Station WFKD may be changed to any suitable lettering (W—east or K—west).

The Narrator/Host's name, Bart Dash, may be substituted by any other, including the actual name of the actor playing the part.

The curtain may rise at opening and close at the end of the "broadcast." Or, the "broadcast" set may already be onstage when the doors open for the audience's entrance into the theatre, with 1930s' or 1940s' Christmas music emanating from the speakers onstage or live offstage.

The Happy Prince: A Radio Play

AT RISE: *A darkened stage except for a decorated Christmas tree glowing DR. Lights brighten, revealing the set—a replica of a radio station of the 1930s, 40s or 50s. The three walls (actually no walls are necessary) are covered by drapes except for a padded door at C. CHRISTMAS CAROL MUSIC plays from the speaker.*

A man, the NARRATOR/HOST (BART DASH) enters with script and moves to a table C.

There are a couple of other tables, one loaded with sound-effects equipment. There are mikes on all of the tables. More equipment is on the floor nearby. There is a line of three or four standing microphones downstage. A sign above the control booth says, “ON THE AIR.” It is not lit now.

Over the above, and as the NARRATOR/HOST makes notes on his script at the table, the MUSIC fades. Then a BOOTH ANNOUNCER’S VOICE (SAM) is heard via the speaker from the framed control booth onstage at L.

BOOTH ANNOUNCER’S VOICE. Ladies and gentlemen, we continue our interlude of Christmas music from station WFKD—and stay tuned for the Aeolian Theatre of the Air’s special Christmas adaptation of Oscar Wilde’s immortal story, *The Happy Prince*, brought to you without commercial interruption in just six minutes.

(CHRISTMAS MUSIC plays up to the previous level.)

BOOTH ANNOUNCER’S VOICE (*cont’d*). Hello again, Bart. Thought the rehearsal was terrific. Air time in five minutes.

NARRATOR/HOST. Yeah, it was OK. Thanks, Sam.

(Over the above, SOUND EFFECTS PERSON #1 [JOE] and SOUND EFFECTS PERSON #2 [LIZ] enter and proceed to the effects table.)

SOUND EFFECTS PERSON #1. Any last-minute notes for us?

NARRATOR/HOST. Nope. All OK. Oh, but Liz ...

SOUND EFFECTS PERSON #2. I knew there’d be a “but Liz.”

NARRATOR/HOST. Can you ease up just a trifle on the wind effects? Where’s the cast?

SOUND EFFECTS PERSON #2. Yes, I can—and the cast is now entering Center Door Fancy.

(As the cast enters with scripts in hand, SOUND EFFECTS PERSON #2 continues—so does the CHRISTMAS MUSIC at a low level.)

SOUND EFFECTS PERSON #2 (*cont’d*). You know, I’d never read *The Happy Prince* till rehearsal, never knew it was a Christmas story.

(NOTE: The following banter is done fast, with humor and good-natured ribbing.)

HAPPY PRINCE. It is now—thanks to our eminent writer/producer/director, MR. BART DASH!
Next he'll be making a Christmas story out of *Cleopatra*.

LITTLE SPARROW. Cleopatra was hosting Caesar and Mark Antony long before the baby's birth
in Bethlehem.

HAPPY PRINCE. That's what I mean.

NARRATOR/HOST. Look here, Wilde's story takes place in winter. Why not add a few Christmas
touches?

HAPPY PRINCE. Why not indeed—'specially since it enhances my part.

NARRATOR/HOST *(smiles)*. A typical actor's philosophy.

HAPPY PRINCE. ME? A typical actor?!

NARRATOR/HOST. Besides, in Wilde's version a statue talks to a swallow.

LITTLE SWALLOW. And the Swallow replies.

NARRATOR/HOST. So, anything's possible—to quote the script, “Through a child's window of
imagination—especially just before Christmas.” By the way, Little Swallow, even though you're
a swallow—please, no “tweet” in your voice.

LITTLE SWALLOW. OK, boss, no “tweet.”

HAPPY PRINCE. What about the statue? Do I talk like a statue all right?

NARRATOR/HOST. If I wanted a better talking statue, I'd have gotten a better actor.

HAPPY PRINCE. There's a bit of Christmas spirit!

NARRATOR/HOST *(now serious)*. Speaking of spirit—people, let's give it all we've got. The
spirit of Christmas past, present and future.

BOOTH ANNOUNCER'S VOICE. All right, folks, this is the two-minute warning. Let's check
the mike levels.

(The cast assumes mike positions.)

NARRATOR/HOST *(reading)*. “Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls of all ages ...”

BOOTH ANNOUNCER'S VOICE. Good, Bart.

MAYOR MUMMER *(reading)*. “He is as beautiful as a weathercock.”

BOOTH ANNOUNCER'S VOICE. Very good.

LITTLE SWALLOW (*reading*). "Will you come away with me to Egypt?"

BOOTH ANNOUNCER'S VOICE. Fine, just fine.

HAPPY PRINCE (*reading*). "When I was alive and had a human heart, I did not know what tears were ..."

BOOTH ANNOUNCER'S VOICE. That'll do'er. Twenty seconds.

(As CHRISTMAS MUSIC continues, the cast checks their scripts, clear their throats and generally prepare.)

BOOTH ANNOUNCER'S VOICE (*cont'd*). Twelve seconds.

(The cast looks toward the "ON THE AIR" sign, still dark.)

BOOTH ANNOUNCER'S VOICE (*cont'd*). Niner ... Six! Fiver! Three! Two! ONE.

(The "ON THE AIR" sign lights up! RADIO PROGRAM THEME MUSIC is heard.)

NARRATOR/HOST. Good evening ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls of all ages. Welcome to the Aeolian Theatre of the Air. Tonight's broadcast is a Christmas adaptation of Oscar Wilde's classic story of *The Happy Prince*.

(RADIO PROGRAM THEME MUSIC segues to HAPPY PRINCE THEME MUSIC [suggest "None But the Lonely Heart."])

NARRATOR/HOST (*cont'd*). For just a moment or two—close your eyes—and no matter what your age, look through a child's window of imagination. You too may see and hear things long ago forgotten. You too may cross into that time and place where everything is new, and yet familiar. A wondrous city where anything can happen—especially just before Christmas. And now, open your eyes, as the gates of the city open and bid you enter. This is where, and how, something wondrous did happen.

(HAPPY PRINCE THEME MUSIC slowly fades.)

NARRATOR/HOST (*cont'd*). High above the city, on a tall column, stood the statue of the Happy Prince. He was gilded all over with thin leaves of fine gold. For eyes he had two bright sapphires, and a large red ruby glowed on his sword hilt.

(HAPPY PRINCE THEME MUSIC out.)

NARRATOR/HOST (*cont'd*). He was very much admired, indeed.

MAYOR MUMMER (*thoughtful*). He is as beautiful as a weathercock ...

NARRATOR/HOST. Remarked Mayor Mummer, who wished to preserve a reputation for having artistic tastes.

MAYOR MUMMER. But, then again ... not quite as useful.

NARRATOR/HOST. Mayor Mummer added, fearing lest people should think him unpractical.

A MOTHER. Why can't you be like the Happy Prince?

NARRATOR/HOST. Asked a mother of her little boy, who was crying for the moon.

MOTHER. The Happy Prince never dreams of crying for anything.

DISAPPOINTED MAN. I am glad there is someone in the world who is quite happy ...

NARRATOR/HOST. Muttered a disappointed man as he gazed at the wonderful statue.

CHARITY CHILD #1. He looks like an angel.

CHARITY CHILD #2. Just like an angel.

NARRATOR/HOST. Said the Charity Children as they came out of the church in their scarlet cloaks and white pinafores.

MATHEMATICAL MASTER. How do you know?

NARRATOR/HOST. Asked the Mathematical Master.

MATHEMATICAL MASTER. You have never seen one.

CHARITY CHILDREN (*together*). Ah, but we have ...

NARRATOR/HOST. Answered the Charity Children.

CHARITY CHILDREN (*together*). In our dreams.

NARRATOR/HOST. And the Mathematical Master frowned and looked very severe, for he did not approve of children dreaming.

(HAPPY PRINCE THEME MUSIC in, then fades as the NARRATOR/HOST continues.)

NARRATOR/HOST (*cont'd*). And so, it was as one night there flew over the city a Little Swallow. Her friends had gone away to Egypt six weeks before, but she had stayed behind, for she was in love with the most handsome Red Sparrow. She had met him early in the spring as he was flying down the river after a big yellow moth, and had been so attracted to the Little Swallow and her slender waist that he had stopped to talk to her.

RED SPARROW. Shall I love you?

NARRATOR/HOST. Said the Red Sparrow, who liked to come to the point at once. And the Red Sparrow made a low bow. He flew round and round her, touching the water with his wings, and making silver ripples. This was his courtship, and it lasted all through the summer.

WISE OLD SWALLOW. This is a ridiculous attachment ...

NARRATOR/HOST. Twittered a Wise Old Swallow.

WISE OLD SWALLOW. He has no money. And he has far too many other relations. He is vain and irresolute.

NARRATOR/HOST. Then, when the autumn came, the Wise Old Swallow and all the others flew away.

(FLY AWAY MUSIC.)

NARRATOR/HOST *(cont'd)*. It was not long after, when the Little Swallow realized that what the Wise Old Swallow had said was true.

LITTLE SWALLOW. Will you come away with me to Egypt?

NARRATOR/HOST. The Little Swallow finally asked. But the Red Sparrow, tired of his lady love, shook his imperious head and feathers.

LITTLE SWALLOW. You have been trifling with me.

NARRATOR/HOST. The Little Swallow cried.

LITTLE SWALLOW. I am off to the pyramids ... Goodbye.

(FLY AWAY MUSIC up, then slowly fades.)

NARRATOR/HOST. All day long she flew and at nighttime she arrived at the city. Then she saw the statue.

LITTLE SWALLOW. I will put up there.

NARRATOR/HOST. She declared, and alighted between the feet of the Happy Prince.

LITTLE SWALLOW. It is a fine position. I have a golden bedroom with plenty of fresh air.

NARRATOR/HOST. But just as she was putting her head under her wing, preparing to go to sleep ...

(MUSIC: SOFT STINGER.)

NARRATOR/HOST *(cont'd)*. A large drop of water fell on her and she remarked ...

LITTLE SWALLOW. What a curious thing. There is not a single cloud in the sky, the stars are quite clear and bright, and yet, it is raining. The climate in the north of Europe is really dreadful.

NARRATOR/HOST. Then ...

(MUSIC: Another SOFT STINGER.)