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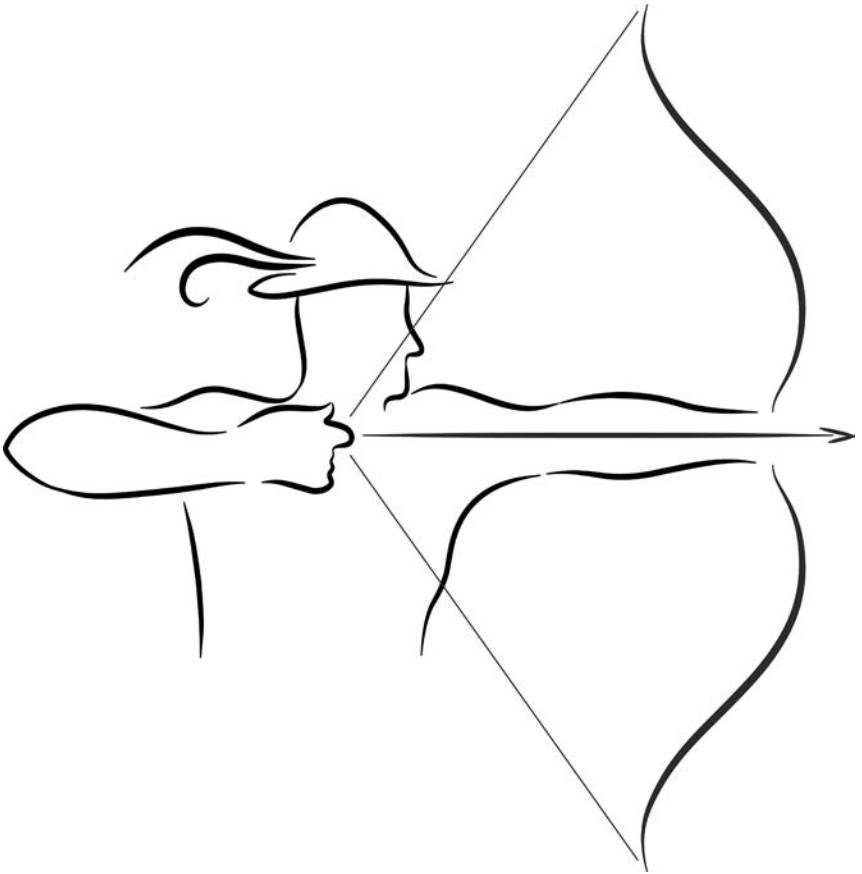
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Family Plays

ROBIN HOOD

By
James Norris



ROBIN HOOD

First produced by Children's World Theatre of New York City, here is a merry play of Medieval England.

Drama. Adapted by James Norris. Cast: 11m., 2w., or 11 (9m., 2w.) with doubling. Robert Fitzooth of Locksley (aka Robin Hood) earns the displeasure of the Sheriff of Nottingham, by defending his home from unlawful seizure, in the king's absence. Declared an outlaw, Robin gathers a few loyal friends about him, and retires to Sherwood Forest, where he trains his men to play pranks on the rich, usurping officials, and wins fame by his prowess as an archer. In an effort to capture him, the sheriff declares a shooting match at the Nottingham Fair. Robin and his men, taking the precaution to wear disguise, enter the town long enough for Robin to win the golden arrow, but escape with difficulty, pursued by the sheriff and his party. In the ensuing duel between Robin and the sheriff, it appears that Robin has lost; and his men are in despair at the tragedy, when the tide is suddenly turned. *Three sets. Medieval costumes.* Code: RA1

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“Produced by special arrangement with
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ROBIN HOOD

by

JAMES NORRIS

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(in the order of their appearance)

ROBIN HOOD'S MOTHER

MAID MARION

CHIEF COLLECTOR OF REVENUES (Can be doubled with Herald)

ROBIN HOOD

SHERIFF OF NOTTINGHAM

SIR GUY OF GISBORNE

FRIAR TUCK

LITTLE JOHN

WILL SCARLETT

ERIC OF LINDEN

TWO HERALDS

ADAM (Can be doubled with Herald)

SYNOPSIS

ACT ONE

Scene 1. Living room of Robin Hood's home

Scene 2. Sherwood Forest

Transition Scene: Before the curtain

ACT TWO

Scene: Nottingham Fair

ACT THREE

Scene: Sherwood Forest

The premiere production of this play was given in 1950 by Children's World Theatre, of New York City, under the direction of Monte Meacham. The picture and production notes used in this book were taken from this production, and are reproduced here by courtesy of Mr. Meacham.

PRODUCTION NOTES

Provided by Children's World Theatre, of New York

SCENERY

In the New York production, the Forest of Sherwood was used as a permanent background, and the living-room of Robin Hood's home was set up in front of it. Flats were built low, so that the trees of Sherwood could be seen over the top of them, and the flats did not connect all the way across the stage, but gave a definite impression of a living room in a styled sort of way.

The flats used in this set were reversed for the Fair scene, where they served as background for the awning-covered booths, with the trees of Sherwood again visible behind them.

The Sherwood Forest setting consisted of wood-wings on each side, and cut-out trees effectively alined, with a practical rock upstage left. The Transition scene was played in front of the proscenium curtain, using one cut-out tree from the Forest scene.

QUARTER-STAFF ACTION

The quarter-staffs found most practical were five to six feet long. A heavy bamboo can be used. The New York production used cedar sticks about an inch and a half in diameter. These are strong and durable, but light to play with. Any strong piece of lumber will do, so long as it is not too heavy to handle easily.

A few basic movements in the quarter-staff are all your actor needs to begin with, and he can improvise new ones in the course of rehearsal. A traditional thrust is just hitting your opponent at right angles, as if you had two match-stick crosses. This can make quite a cracky noise, and give the impression of a good fight, with little danger to the actor. The sticks can also be handled as if they were swords or foils, with clashes and feints.

Music

The source of the tune for the song used in the play was a song entitled: "The Three Sons", taken from FOLK SONGS, CHANTEYS, AND SINGING GAMES, published by H. W. Gray Company, 159 East 48th Street, New York City.

Phonograph records were used for the bag-pipe music required, as well as for the crowd effects indicated in the scene at the Fair.

DANCE

Diagram for Straight Hey for Three



Number 1 faces down, Numbers 2 and 3 up. All simultaneously describe the figure eight, as shown in the above diagram, and return to places, passing along the unbroken line as they move down, and along the dotted lines as they move up. Each dancer moves to his own left, describing a figure eight in wide loops. All three dancers start at the same time.



ROBIN HOOD

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ACT ONE

SCENE 1. *Living room of Robin Hood's home. Down right is the main front door, through which characters enter from outside. Down left is a smaller entry, leading outside the back way. Up center is a practical window, covered with hangings, and up right is a closet, which must be practical for Robin's hiding-place. The room is furnished in the fashion of medieval England, with chests, benches, table and chair of the period. On the wall are a bow and quiver, also a pair of sticks used in quarter-staff.*

When the curtains open, Robin's mother is sitting, sewing. She stops a moment, with worry on her face, picks up a scroll, and starts to unroll it. In the distance, we hear bag-pipe music. (Record). Mother hastily puts down the scroll, goes to the window, and listens intently. Music builds until we hear "His Worship, the Sheriff of Nottingham!" She stiffens for a moment in terror, goes to the wall, and takes down the bow which belonged to Robin's father. She holds it to her breast, and closes her eyes. She controls herself, puts the bow back, and starts slowly to her chair. She

picks up the rolled paper scroll, unrolls it, and reads it in despair. Outside we hear:)

MARION: Bob-White! (*This is a whistle, consisting of two notes, of the Bob-White as we know it today. One note for Bob, the next note an exact octave higher for White. Mother stops in her tracks. Her face brightens, and she starts for the front door and opens it just as we hear another—Bob White! (Same call. Marion enters.)*)

MOTHER: Oh, Marion, I'm so glad you've come.

MARION: Where's Robin? He didn't answer my signal.

MOTHER: He's been gone since early morning. He should be back by now. Something's wrong, Marion.

MARION: But where did he go?

MOTHER: To get help for us, Marion. Read this.

MARION (*reading*): “. . . and unless said taxes are paid in full as of sundown the third Wednesday in August this year of Our Lord, your house and lands will be confiscated and sold to the highest bidder.” Why, that's today!

MOTHER: The Sheriff sent me that notice only last night.

MARION: They can't take your home away from you.

MOTHER: Today is the third Wednesday in August and the sun is low in the West.

(*Offstage: “Make way for the Sheriff of Nottingham!”*)

MARION (*going to door right of window*): The old Sheriff rides through the streets of Locksley as if he were King Richard himself. He'll not be so mighty when the king comes home.

MOTHER: Last night I told the Sheriff's collector that Robin would leave this morning to get help from his Uncle Richard. I was a fool, Marion. They'll stop him! He'll never get through Sherwood Forest.

MARION: They'll NEVER get their hands on your fertile land.

MOTHER: What will prevent them?

MARION: I'll go to the King's deputy as fast as my pony can carry me. He loves the king as I do, and he has the power to get your time extended.

MOTHER: You're a fortunate girl to be the ward of good King Richard.

MARION: I know. He treats me as if I were his own daughter.

(*Offstage: “Make way for the Sheriff of Nottingham!”*)

MOTHER: I pray that no harm has come to Robin.

MARION: As long as he has his stout long bow and a quiver of gray goose arrows, no man can harm him. (*Bag pipes off.*) I'll go out the back way. If I ran into his Honor, the Sheriff, I'd be tempted to knock him off his horse.

MOTHER: You're a brave good girl, Marion. Both Robin and I have always loved you.

MARION: And I have always loved you—both. (*They exit. They have no sooner gone than through the window stealthily comes a young man in tunic and tights and feathered cap—traditional Robin Hood costume.*)

He looks and listens and then calls softly, almost in a whisper. . . .)

ROBIN: Mother! Mother! *(There is no answer. He goes quietly to the exit to the kitchen and calls again.)* Mother!! *(There is a knock at the door. Robin turns in horror. Another knock. Robin runs to the wall and takes down his father's bow and arrow and makes a quick dive for the closet. A terrific knock!)*

MOTHER *(entering)*: Who is there?

OFFICER: Chief Collector of revenues in the service of his honor the Sheriff of Nottingham and keeper of the laws of Good King Richard.

MOTHER *(opening the door)*: No one in this household has broken the King's law.

COLLECTOR: The Sheriff in person will call on you soon. He's in the village now on official business.

MOTHER: Yes, I know.

COLLECTOR: It is my duty to present you with this final and official document requesting you to vacate this house and give up your lands at the earliest possible date. You are to read it carefully before the Sheriff arrives. He is a busy man and his time is limited. *(Mother takes it and starts to read it.)*

COLLECTOR: And now a few official questions that I must have for my records. *(Taking out papers importantly)* Mistress Robert Fitzooth. Given name please.

MOTHER: Martha.

COLLECTOR: Dame Martha Fitzooth. Locksley, England. Husband living?

MOTHER: Well you know he is not.

COLLECTOR: Husband not living. Children?

MOTHER: I have only one son.

COLLECTOR: Name please?

MOTHER: His name is Robert. But most of his friends call him Robin.

COLLECTOR: Robert of Locksley. That name is vaguely familiar.

MOTHER: He has quite a reputation with the long bow.

COLLECTOR: Is that so? *(not interested.)*

MOTHER: Robin's father was a famous archer. *(indicating but not looking.)* His long bow has hung on that wall since the day he died. *(She starts toward it and stops in terror as she sees it is gone.)*

COLLECTOR: Excuse me but I am a busy man, and I have other important calls to make in the village. Make ready to receive his worship, the Sheriff of Nottingham. God save the King. *(Exit.)*

MOTHER *(in an attitude of prayer)*: God save the King! I pray that God will do just that. And bring him some safely to his oppressed people. *(She covers her face with her hands and Robin opens the closet door quietly and stands for a second straight and strong with a firm grip on his father's bow and determination on his face.)*

ROBIN *(Quietly so as not to startle his mother)*: Mother! *(She turns with a gasp . . . completely surprised for the moment then rushes to*

Robin with arms outspread. He puts his arms around his mother and holds her tight. She releases him and looks into his face.)

MOTHER: Oh, my boy. Thank God you're back. Are you hurt, Robin?

ROBIN: I haven't a scratch from top to toe. But you ought to see old horse face.

MOTHER: Robin! What do you mean?

ROBIN: Who is it that wears the hide of a horse and a hood that looks like a horse's head—and who is as crooked as the hind leg of a rabbit hound?

MOTHER: Robin. You haven't fought with Sir Guy of Gisborne?

ROBIN: The same. And I'll wager he won't be able to wear his horse head hood till the bump on his own head goes down.

MOTHER: The great Sir Guy is the closest friend of the Sheriff of Nottingham. He'll stop at nothing to make you an outlaw, so he can get his hands on our house and lands.

ROBIN: I know that, mother. He stopped me in the middle of Sherwood Forest. He wouldn't let me go to Uncle Richard's to get the money for the taxes.

MOTHER: I told the Sheriff's collector where you had gone. I thought it would hold him off. He must have told Sir Guy.

ROBIN: Old Guy accused me of hunting the King's deer. I told him I was only going through the forest and he just laughed and said, "We'll wait here for the head forester, and he can be the judge of that. He'll be back about sundown." Then I knew why he was stopping me.

MOTHER: But Robin. How did you get away from him?

ROBIN: Oh mother, I wish you had been there to see what happened. You would have been proud of me. I can shut my eyes and see it in my mind—just as clear as it really was.

MOTHER: Tell me about it. Make me see it in my mind's eye, too.

ROBIN: Shut your eyes. *(At this point the lights dim around the edges leaving his mother out of the picture and concentrating more on center stage. The lights should be a little out of this world in effect but not startlingly so. Robin walks into the light and his voice continues. Robin himself enacts the following in a sort of slow motion picture-dream effect pantomime. Sir Guy appears in this sequence as he was supposed to have done in the actual scene.)*

ROBIN *(in normal tone as the lights are changing)*: I told him I had to see Uncle Richard and started to walk away from him and he shouted "One more step, Robin Hood—and you'll never live to take another one." *(Here his voice begins to quiet down a little without losing any of its intensity—a sort of loud whisper quality.)*

ROBIN: I stopped in my tracks and turned around . . . and there stood Old Sir Guy. *(at this point Guy walks into the center circle of light . . . just to the edge of it and stands with bow drawn, looking like a horse on two legs with his bow drawn ready to shoot.)*

MOTHER: I think I can see him Robin.

ROBIN I pre t ~~e~~nd to give u pand c o ~~er~~bac k (*Robin comes into light and over to Sir Guy.*) Whe n l go tc lo ~~se~~ dim he o r d ~~e~~ me totur n ar on d .(*Sir Guy pantomimes a turning motion with his hand—Robin turns.*) He lifte dmy quiver o farr oswfro mar on d my nec kand t h e w ~~e~~h mbehind him. (*He does so.*) He t h ~~u~~ght he was safe no w and put his o w n ar r oaway—and h ~~s~~i bo wo vrehis should e and t n ne rde to fac ~~h~~im. (*Pantomime follows description through this.*) He pulled my t w ~~o~~rist ~~s~~ ~~e~~g telhand t o s ~~e~~ ~~n~~e heavy thongs fro m his poc k ~~e~~ard star t ~~e~~d ~~e~~ ei my hands to g e h e r .

MOTHE R: Oh, Robin I c a' loo k. E v ~~n~~ wit lmy e ~~y~~ sshut.

ROBIN (*his voice speeding up a bit but still unreal*) B e fo heec old get my wrist ~~s~~ ght I j re k dmy r ght hand o u ~~and~~ hit him u n ~~e~~ the c ~~h~~n wit lmy fist as har das I c o ~~d~~. l His head fle wbac kand healmo st fel bac k ~~aw~~ d sWhile he was get ing an ar r oawd drawing his bow, I j mped behind a great tre e (*He moves some distance away from Guy—makes a circle with his arms to indicate a big tree.*) Shoo ~~t~~ o ld hor s ~~fac~~ eand st ci kyour ar r ointo t h s i r e And mo her he was so mad hec a m r ght aft e r me. (*Guy starts toward Robin.*)

MOTHE R: Oh, Robin I c anhar ~~ly~~ wat c. h

ROBIN (*pantomiming the following*): It was a big t re and I kept c lo se to it ~~and~~ he kept moving ar o ~~u~~ n loest che t r , eand following me ar o ~~u~~ it. Fir st o n way and the nthe o t e h r and all o fa su d de In t u r ~~r~~ead and sur psied him fro mbehind and c r ~~ae~~d him o ~~er~~ the h e ~~ad~~it hall my might. (*We see him do this with his bow.*)

MOTHER: Run, Ro b n . . r n!

ROBIN: Sir Guy loo k das if he w o d u b l u r s t He t m e d o n m e l i k e a blown u p g o i l l a . I was sc ar e m b , t e h r I too k m y go o ~~h~~ow—gave him a pok ~~e~~ n t ~~e~~ belly and j ~~l~~abe ~~h~~im so har de fell right o ~~er~~ bac k - war d . He t o o n k y go o ~~h~~ow wit ~~h~~im. I j u m p e d o the edge o fa nar r ~~de~~ ~~e~~ g t h ~~at~~k newwo u d l l e a d me to the bo to t m o f t h e c i f f . (*he jumps to the shadows out of the light*) Whe n l loo k ~~e~~ bac k o d hor se fac ewas sc r m b l i n g to his f e e t and t y i n g to d r a w i s bo w . (*Guy gets to his feet and draws his bow on the opposite edge of the light*) I d ~~u~~ k d o ~~u~~ o s f i g h t and ran lik ea r ~~h~~abit all t ~~e~~ way home. (*Guy starts after Robin in a rage. Takes about three steps, then grabs his stomach in pain . . . stops, rubs his head . . . looks off towards Robin, then shakes his fist. He turns abruptly and exits in the opposite direction as the lights fade. The lights come up again on Robin and mother as they were before the flashback.*) I c o l d n' go o n w i t h o m y bow, mother.

MOTHE R: Don' wo r r s y n Yo ue sc a ~~p~~ and ~~y~~ u d i d n' t get h u t . That' a l l t ~~h~~at mat t r e n o w .

ROBIN: We' ~~l~~et the tax mo n y mother. Yo ~~u~~ ~~l~~ee.

MOTHE R: Yo u r' a brave boy to fac Sir Guy o f G i s b o r n e Yo u fat ~~h~~ r would be pro ~~u~~ o fyou, Robin.

ROBIN: They think bec au s m y fathe ris dead it wil be easy t o ake

our home away from us. They have a few surprises coming, mother.
MOTHER: Sir Guy and the Sheriff have the law in their hands, Robin.

What will they do next?

ROBIN: Hang me mother—if they can. . . .

MOTHER: Don't say such things. . . .

ROBIN: I am an outlaw mother. But I am not alone. Four of us have made a secret pact on solemn oath to band together and live—under cover, and fight the evil laws that govern our land, till King Richard comes home to change them.

MOTHER: The Sheriff will be here any minute. He must not find you here.

ROBIN: We leave tonight for Sherwood forest.

MOTHER: May God protect you, Robin. Only He can help us now.

ROBIN: God and ourselves, mother. We'll be far from Locksley when the sun rises tomorrow morning. (*Horses hooves*) Who's that?

MOTHER (*remembering*): Oh, Robin it must be the Sheriff. His collector said he was coming. . . .

ROBIN (*runs to window and peeks through curtain*): Old horse face is with him.

MOTHER: Oh, Robin, it's too late.

ROBIN: I'll get back into the closet. (*gets bow again*) And if one of them opens that door, he'll find one of my father's swiftest arrows right in his face. (*Knocking.*)

MOTHER (*She embraces Robin*): Thank God you have your father's bow. You'll need it now. (*He goes into the closet and she closes it from the outside. Louder knocking. Controlled . . .*) Just a moment, I'm coming. (*She opens door to Sheriff and Guy with a bandage around his head.*)

MOTHER: Good evening, Sheriff. Won't you come in please?

GUY (*booming*): Where is Robin Hood?

MOTHER: My son Robert left early this morning for the home of his Uncle Richard.

GUY: You don't say.

MOTHER: Yes, I do say.

GUY: Well, isn't that interesting.

MOTHER: Interesting?

SHERIFF: I'm afraid Sir Guy is a little upset.

GUY: OHHHHHHH! (*bellowing*)

SHERIFF: Your son cracked his head. (*Sir Guy puffs*)

MOTHER: Oh NO!

GUY: OH? NO?

MOTHER: There must be some mistake.

GUY: Mistake—Mistake! This knot on my head is a mistake. But it's there just the same. Look. (*shows knot*)

MOTHER: Oh dear—did Robin do that?

SHERIFF: And poked Sir Guy in the stomach besides.

GUY: Quiet!

SHERIFF: Sorry, Sir Guy. I was only trying to tell Mistress Fitzooth that—

GUY (*pacing*): When I get my hands on that rapscallion I'll tie him to a horse's tail and drag him through the streets of Nottingham for all to see what happens to anyone who dares to defy Sir Guy of Gisborne.

SHERIFF: His head hurts him.

GUY (*booming*): Where is Robin Hood? (*this hurries he and he sits with a quiet groan.*)

SHERIFF: It is my painful duty to inform you that the sun is setting in the west and when the last of that circle of fire has disappeared behind yonder hill—this property and all the land with it will come into my possession to be sold to the highest bidder. And I might add that I already have an interested party, (*Sir Guy looks unpleasant*) who is more than willing to take it off your hands.

MOTHER (*quietly*): I know. (*Offstage—whistle. BOBWHITE . . . two notes. Mother tense, alert. Sir Guy and She sniff listlessly*)

GUY: What's that?

MOTHER: It must be a bird. We have so many around the house—all kinds from early spring to . . . (*Again . . . BOBWHITE' . . . two notes.*)

SHERIFF: There it is again.

GUY: I never heard a Bob White so near a house.

ROBIN (*from close to . . . whistle . . . OLD BOBWHITE . . . three notes. Old Bob is the same note while White is same note on a higher pitch*)

GUY: What's that?

MOTHER: I didn't hear anything.

GUY: I heard a bird in this house.

MARION (*offstage*) . . . OLD BOB WHITE.

ROBIN: BOB WHITE . . . BOB WHITE.

GUY: What's going on here?

MARION (*coming through the kitchen door*): Oh Robin, I'm so glad you . . . (*she sees Sheriff and Sir Guy and starts horrified*) Ohhh . . .

SHERIFF: Young lady, was that you making that bird call?

MARION: Yes, why?

GUY: Your honor, I ask permission to search this house from one end to the other.

SHERIFF: Granted. (*They start*) Do you think that?

GUY: Yes.

SHERIFF: To make it official I'll search too. You go that way and I'll go this. (*The separate entrances stage. Sir Guy goes left, Sheriff goes right. . . they're offstage.*)

MARION (*whispering*): Isn't Robin here? I would have sworn he answered my signal. (*Mother points close to Marion goes and opens door.*)

MARION: Oh, Robin, why did you answer my signal. They'll find you.

ROBIN: I had to see you before I left. I was afraid you wouldn't come if I didn't answer.

MARION: Left? Where are you going?