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Family Plays

"A fast-paced, rollicking romp. Pisarski has developed some delightfully human characters."

(B.Y.U. Children's Book Review)

ROBIN HOOD

Drama by

Cathryn Pisarski

from the tales of Robin Hood

With optional music by

Phil Smith



ROBIN HOOD

This show was commissioned by Main Street Theater in Houston when a good quality *Robin Hood* dramatization was nowhere to be found, repeated the next season because of its popularity, and then repeated frequently.

Drama with optional music. By Cathryn Pisarski. Optional music by Phil Smith. Cast: 7 to 10+ actors, extras. The "Merry Men" have become the "Merry Persons" in this retelling of the Robin Hood tales. Alan à Dale is now Alana Dale, and she plays the guitar and sings a ballad or two. Some of the Sheriff of Nottingham's "men" are also women. Here is a play every bit as merry and happy as the inhabitants of Sherwood Forest. Easily staged with a few stools and a ladder, it combines some exciting theatrical devices with the cherished traditions of the Robin Hood stories. The play takes Robin Hood from Sherwood Forest to Nottingham Castle, where he poses as a minstrel as a ploy to woo the beautiful Maid Marian. The tales have survived through the centuries because Robin Hood is the eternal underdog relying on his wits and his skill to stand up against the brute strength of political power and governmental corruption. Audiences delight in the merry outlaw's ability to outwit the pompous Sheriff of Nottingham, his skill as an archer, and his tenderness toward Maid Marian. Cathryn Pisarski has given the theatre a lively romp through 12th-century England, embellished with a few 20th-century flourishes. For example, Robin Hood's followers are now the "Merry Persons." The humorous characters, fast-moving plot and famous story make an enjoyable theatrical adventure for audiences of all ages. *Set: the original production used six small stools (cubes will do nicely), a stepladder and two moveable screens. Costumes: medieval and Sherwood Forest attire. Approximate running time: 50 to 60 minutes. Piano-guitar-vocal score available. Demo/accompaniment CD available. Code: RCA.*

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Robin Hood

ROBIN HOOD

A Play With Music

Dramatized by

CATHRYN PISARSKI

from the tales of Robin Hood

(with a musical score by **Phil Smith**)

Family Plays

311 Washington St., Woodstock, IL 60098

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CATHRYN PISARSKI

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(ROBIN HOOD)

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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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ROBIN HOOD

Characters

[May be played by 3 women and 4 men]

Robin Hood
The Sheriff of Nottingham
Maid Marian
Friar Tuck }
Scarlet } **Robin Hood's**
Little John } **Merry Persons**
Alana Dale }
Mortimer }
Anabelle } **The**
Rodrigo } **Courtiers**
Clarissa }
The Widow
Tobias the Tax Collector
The Hangman
Guards
Soldiers

• Δ •

The play was first produced by Main Street Theater, Houston, Texas, under the direction of Pam Gray, with the following cast:

Robin Hood.....Arthur Chavez
Sheriff.....Bill O'Rourke
Marian.....Susan Mays
Friar Tuck/Mortimer.....Chad Edwards
Scarlet/Anabelle.....Barbara Sims
Little John/Rodrigo..... Will Hines
Alana Dale/Clarissa..... Ginger Kile

The last four performers also played the Widow, Tobias the Tax Collector, the Hangman, Guards, and Soldiers.

ABOUT THE PLAY

Here is a play every bit as merry and happy as the inhabitants of Sherwood Forest. Easily staged with a few stools and a ladder, it combines some exciting theatrical devices with the cherished traditions of the Robin Hood stories. It may be performed by as few as seven actors or as many as the producer wants to put on stage.

The tales have survived through the centuries because Robin Hood is the eternal underdog relying on his wits and his skill to stand up against the brute strength of political power and governmental corruption. Audiences delight in the merry outlaw's ability to outwit the pompous Sheriff of Nottingham, and at his skill as an archer, and with his tenderness toward Maid Marian.

There is always the danger when relating the adventures of Robin Hood that children will be misled into believing that it's okay to steal—especially if “I rob the rich (you) to help the poor (me).” It's a good idea in preparing study guides and in conducting pre- or post-performance discussions to point out that Robin Hood and his followers were carrying on a kind of guerilla warfare against Prince John and his followers, who have usurped the throne of the good and noble King Richard the Lion-Hearted. John's unfair and excessive taxation led to economic slavery for many of the nation's peasants. When Robin Hood “stole from the rich and gave to the poor,” he was really stealing from the rich usurpers to aid the cause of the oppressed serfs.

Cathryn Pisarski has given the theatre a lively romp through twelfth century England, embellished with a few twentieth century flourishes: Robin Hood's followers are now the “Merry Persons,” for example. The humorous characters, fast-moving plot, and famous story make an enjoyable theatrical adventure for audiences of all ages.

Ms. Pisarski wrote the script on consignment when Houston's highly regarded Main Street Theater decided to do a Robin Hood play but couldn't find a suitable dramatization. Her script was so successful, it was presented twice in extended runs—March 18 to May 20 and again from Nov. 4 to Dec. 30.

PRODUCTION NOTES

Properties

Bags of gold coins—Sheriff
 Bows and arrows—Robin Hood and Merry Persons, archery contestants
 Swords—Sheriff, Robin, Merry Persons, guards
 Mandolin or guitar—Alana, Robin
 Wine bottle and wine goblets—Friar Tuck
 Gold coins—tax collector
 Arrows with suction cups (or other method of adhering) to be stuck on the target. One arrow must have another arrow splitting its shaft—Sir Mortimer
 Trophy arrow (gold tip with silver shaft)—Sheriff

Costumes

Traditional medieval and Sherwood Forest costumes are recommended. For the doubling and quick costume changes necessary for a minimum cast, the author recommends a reversible tunic: One side is purple with gold fleur-de-lis, indicating that the wearer is a courtier. The other side is Sherwood Forest green; thus, when the tunic is reversed, the actor becomes a Merry Person. To play the other roles, the actor may remove the tunic and add a characteristic accessory.

Lights, Sound, and Special Effects

Blackouts with musical transitions can cover the quick (5 seconds or less) set changes, or the changes can be made by the actors in full view of the audience without blackouts.

Many of the sounds (such as the "twang" of the released arrow) are made vocally. A wood block or coconut shells may represent the sound of horses' hooves.

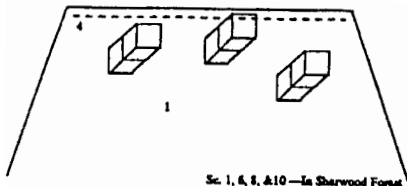
The author recommends miming the horses. She describes the trick of tying the sheriff and throwing him over the back of his horse thus: "Tuck, Alana and John bind the Sheriff's hands with mimed rope and throw him face down over the side of his mimed horse. His feet are on the ground, but his torso hangs over the imaginary saddle and his hands and head hang over the other side of the mimed horse. John whacks the horse on the behind and laughs as the horse and Sheriff gallop away."

Music

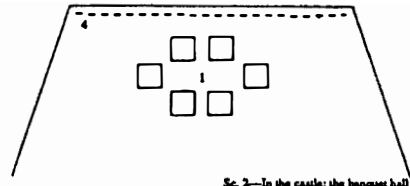
The musical accompaniment may be guitar or mandolin. A musical score with piano and guitar chords is available from I. E. Clark, Inc. Also available is a demonstration/accompaniment tape, with music and vocals on one side and instrumental accompaniment only on the other.

The Set

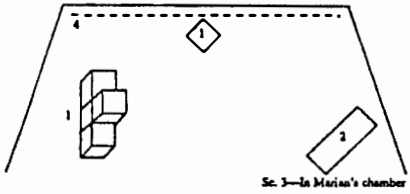
The original production used six small stools (cubes will do nicely), a stepladder, and two screens. The stools and ladder were quickly rearranged for each scene, something like this: (See next page for floor plans)



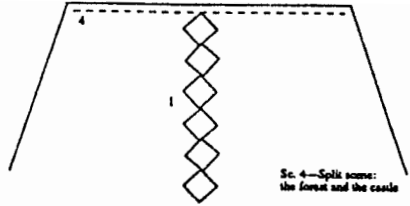
Sc. 1, 6, 8, & 10—In Sherwood Forest



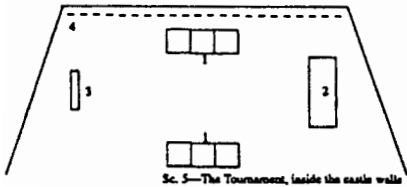
Sc. 2—In the castle: the banquet hall



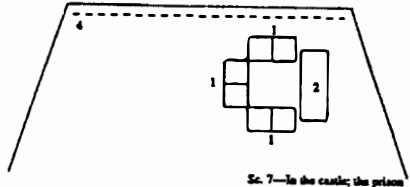
Sc. 3—In Marian's chamber



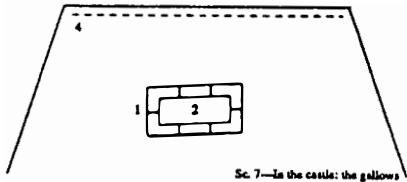
Sc. 4—Split scene:
the forest and the castle



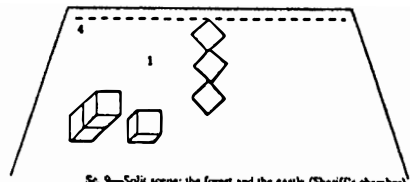
Sc. 5—The Tournament, inside the castle walls



Sc. 7—In the castle: the prison



Sc. 7—In the castle: the gallows



Sc. 9—Split scene: the forest and the castle (Sheriff's chamber)

- 1—Cubes
- 2—Stepladder
- 3—Target for archery contest
- 4—Screen

ROBIN HOOD

Scene 1

In Sherwood Forest

[Enter SHERIFF, MAID MARIAN, ANABELLE, RODRIGO, CLARISSA, and MORTIMER. They trot through the forest on mimed horses (woodblock accompaniment is suggested)]

CLARISSA. *[Seeing something in the woods]* Look! Over there!
[She screams. There is general panic and confusion]

MARIAN. Calm down, everyone.

CLARISSA. I thought I saw someone behind that tree.

SHERIFF. It was your imagination.

MORTIMER. *[Admonishing Clarissa]* Listen to the Sheriff, Clarissa.

RODRIGO. After all, he is in charge of security. He should know.

CLARISSA. Well, I'm not so sure. This is Sherwood Forest, and we are carrying a lot of gold, and they say that Robin Hood lives here—

MORTIMER. They say that he steals from the rich and gives to the poor.

CLARISSA. They say that he has over a hundred followers, all armed with bows and arrows—

RODRIGO. They say that he is the finest archer in all of England—

ANABELLE. They say that he is extremely handsome!!!

SHERIFF. Enough! The tax money I have collected is completely safe. Robin Hood would never dare to attack the Sheriff of Nottingham.

MARIAN. *[Sarcastically]* What a relief. Just think, if anything happened to the tax money that you collected from those poverty-stricken peasants, Prince John might have to cancel one or two of those enormous banquets he has every week. *[The COURTIERS are disturbed and try to shush Marian]* Some people feel it would be better to spend the money on the ransom of King Richard the Lion-hearted.

SHERIFF. Marian—

MARIAN. Now I didn't say that I felt that way, but some people—

SHERIFF. Enough! This talk is disloyal.

MARIAN. I am completely loyal to his majesty King Richard.
Long live the King!

ALL. *[Except the SHERIFF: enthusiastically]* Long live the King!

SHERIFF. Long live Prince John!

ALL. *[Very half-heartedly]* Long live Prince John . . . *[They trot on in silence for a bit]*

MORTIMER. *[Seeing something in the woods]* Help! Look!

MARIAN. If everyone would try to relax, I don't think—

MORTIMER. I was sure I saw Robin Hood lurking behind that berry bush.

SHERIFF. Nonsense, nobody is there.

CLARISSA. I heard that he steals from the rich and gives to the poor—

MORTIMER. I heard that he never troubles an honest laborer or a noble knight.

RODRIGO. I heard that he only robs corrupt officials and tax collectors—

ANABELLE. I heard that he is always very courteous to the ladies!

MORTIMER. I heard that it's best to hide before he sees you—
[He hides, and the others, except MARIAN, do likewise as the Sheriff delivers the following lines. If the play is done with minimum characters, the COURTIERS may, while they are hiding, flip their tunics (see "Costumes," p. 23) and become Robin Hood's MERRY PERSONS]

SHERIFF. Enough! Robin Hood is not worth talking about. The man is a criminal and a coward. After breaking the laws of the land, he skulks in the forest evading just punishment for his crimes. He would never come near a party of our size . . . At this moment he is probably hiding up in the tallest tree in the forest, trembling with fear—

[There is a blast from a HORN. ROBIN HOOD and ALANA, SCARLET, and JOHN swoop down upon the SHERIFF, who vainly tries to escape. The SHERIFF pulls his sword, which is promptly taken from him. Finally he is surrounded with three arrows pointing at his throat and ROBIN HOOD standing before him laughing. MARIAN is at a distance. FRIAR TUCK runs in panting heavily and adds his arrow to make four]

ROBIN. Well, if it isn't the Sheriff of Nottingham. What a pleasure to see you again . . . *[The SHERIFF is silent]* Tell me, is it true that you are in charge of security for the realm?

SHERIFF. You know that I am.

ROBIN. I want to commend you on the fine job you're doing. I for one feel very secure. So do we all. [*MERRY PERSONS agree heartily*] But, one moment, is that Maid Marian? . . . the fairest lady in the kingdom . . . [*All MERRY PERSONS nod in a friendly manner. ROBIN rushes over to her and kneels*] I beg your forgiveness, if we have disrespected you in any way.

MARIAN. [*Disdainfully*] No, not particularly . . .

ROBIN. I am happy to hear that, for . . . [*MARIAN smothers a yawn*] Hmmmm. [*ROBIN returns to the Sheriff*] Since we have inconvenienced the Sheriff, we must do him some favor. I know, we shall relieve him of those heavy gold coins that are weighing down his horse. [*MERRY PERSONS agree cheerfully and take the bags of gold coins from the Sheriff*]

SCARLET. Robin, there must be more than a thousand pounds here! [*She begins to count*] One hundred, two hundred, two hundred and fifty, three hundred . . .

JOHN. He has some fine rings, Robin.

ROBIN. Oh, let him keep them.

SHERIFF. [*Sarcastically*] You are most generous.

ROBIN. Thank you, your lordship. Considering the fact that you spend most of your time plotting my death, I think I am . . . Now, time for dinner. You will dine with us this evening, won't you, Sheriff?

TUCK. And a fine menu we have. Venison, roast duckling, quail, boiled potatoes, carrots, and greens, all served with a hearty ale. And fresh baked bread with raisins and cinnamon. And for dessert—

SHERIFF. No thank you. I have lost my appetite.

ROBIN. I believe that if I ate with the Sheriff, I might lose my appetite too. Send him home. [*TUCK, ALANA, and JOHN bind the Sheriff's hands with mime rope, throw him over the side of his horse, whack the horse on the behind, and laugh as the SHERIFF rides away*]

SHERIFF. You'll regret this, Robin Hood!!!

SCARLET. One thousand pounds, seven guineas, two shillings, and thirty-nine pence.

ALANA. [*Sings:*] Oh Robin Hood took the Sheriff's gold,

To give it to the poor.

But he never dined with Nottingham,

Because the man's a bore!

ALL. Because the man's a bore!

JOHN. Let's celebrate!

SCARLET. Let's dance!

TUCK. Let's eat!!! *[As the MERRY PERSONS talk among themselves, ROBIN goes over to Marian]*

ROBIN. I hope you will join us for dinner, milady.

MARIAN. Frankly, I don't find robbing someone a cause for celebration, and I'd rather dine at home. That is if I have a choice.

ROBIN. You mistake me. I would never detain a lady against her will. If you wish to leave, I could escort you to the edge of the forest.

MARIAN. I can find my way back by myself, thank you.

ROBIN. But it might be dangerous—

MARIAN. Oh, I know. At any moment I might be surrounded by thieves and bandits. *[She trots off on her mime horse]*

ROBIN. I don't think I made a good first impression.

TUCK. Have something to eat. It will make you feel better. *[They all start to exit. ALANA and ROBIN are at the end]*

ALANA. One day through Sherwood Forest

Rode a man called Nottingham.

He swore he'd capture Robin Hood,

Who did not give a—

ROBIN. Alana.

ALANA. Yes?

ROBIN. You must teach me to play your mandolin.

ALANA. But that would take months.

ROBIN. And teach me to sing.

ALANA. That would take years.

ROBIN. What do you mean? People tell me I have a pleasant voice.

ALANA. You should beat them for being liars and knaves!

ROBIN. Come on. Anyone can play and sing. *[He plucks a note and sings. The combination is rather sour]* Hmmm. Practice makes perfect. You must give me lessons, for I want to be good when I entertain the Sheriff of Nottingham.

ALANA. What are you talking about? *[They exit together]*

BLACKOUT

Scene 2

In the castle

[Enter the SHERIFF and his evil henchman, RODRIGO]

SHERIFF. I shall have my revenge. Before the week is out that outlaw Robin Hood shall hang from the tallest tree in England. Rodrigo!

RODRIGO. Sir?

SHERIFF. How shall we capture this scoundrel?

RODRIGO. Perhaps if we could go into Sherwood with five hundred men—

SHERIFF. No, no, he knows the forest too well.

RODRIGO. Perhaps we could lure him from the forest by deceit and trickery.

SHERIFF. I like you, Rodrigo.

RODRIGO. Don't mention it, your lordship.

SHERIFF. But how— *[Enter CLARISSA and MORTIMER followed by a masked minstrel. It is ROBIN in disguise]*

CLARISSA. Sheriff, we are celebrating tonight; you must join us.

MORTIMER. Look, we have a new minstrel from the South. A song my good man. *[ROBIN plays a song. Enter MARIAN and ANABELLE]*

ANABELLE. Marian, you must tell me all about Robin Hood.

MARIAN. We have a new minstrel, I see.

CLARISSA. Yes, he tells fine stories. *[Sotto voce]* Although he only seems to know one song.

MORTIMER. He has journeyed all the way from London town. *[They all ask for news of London]*

ROBIN. But first, a dance. *[They dance as ROBIN again plays the one song he knows, a bit faster this time. And, unnoticed by the others, he occasionally manages to trip the SHERIFF]*

SHERIFF. *[After being tripped for the third time]* Enough dancing! Let us eat! *[They all sit down]*

MORTIMER. Let our new minstrel tell us a story as we eat.

ROBIN. No, I would rather hear the Sheriff's story. For I understand he met with that famous outlaw, Robin Hood. *[They all agree and ask to hear the story]*

SHERIFF. As you know, I was riding through Sherwood Forest when I was set upon by that scurvy knave, Robin Hood . . . *[a SOUR*

NOTE is heard in the music] and his gang of thugs. Although I was vastly outnumbered, I put up a fierce battle. With great trouble they disarmed me.

MARIAN. I don't remember it taking that long—

SHERIFF. Marian, I'm telling this story. As I was saying, he ordered his many followers to surround me—obviously he was afraid to face me alone. [*Another SOUR NOTE*] And even then he shook and trembled.

MARIAN. I didn't notice any shaking or—

SHERIFF. Marian, I'm telling this story if you don't mind. This lowly, cowardly outcast [*another SOUR NOTE*] threatened me with certain death, but I was unafraid. And in the end, I rode home with dignity.

MARIAN. Only because I caught up with you and untied you.

SHERIFF. Marian!!! [*Pause*] As I was saying, I rode home with dignity, and now I know that that criminal trembles in his sleep, for I will have my revenge! [*His audience has been following his story with oos and aaahhs, fies, and occasional puzzled looks. Now they gasp in excitement*]

MORTIMER. What will you do?

SHERIFF. Rodrigo and I have a plan. [*The MUSIC stops*]

RODRIGO. We do?

SHERIFF. [*With a dirty look toward Rodrigo*] Yes . . . It is a secret, naturally. But mark my words, before the week is out Robin Hood shall be within these castle walls.

MARIAN. I for one believe the Sheriff completely. Indeed, I feel almost as if Robin Hood were already here. [*With mock innocence*] But why is there no music? [*ROBIN starts to play the same song again*]

ANABELLE. Marian has not yet told us of *her* meeting with Robin Hood. Was he as handsome as they say? [*There is another pause in the MUSIC*]

MARIAN. I suppose some women would call him handsome. I found his looks plain, his company dull, and his motives questionable. [*The MUSIC begins again with many SOUR NOTES*]

SHERIFF. Hear, hear! Marian speaks sensibly . . . for once. [*He rises*] And on that note— [*He pauses because ROBIN has hit an exceptionally SOUR NOTE*] As I was saying, on that note . . . let us retire. [*All exit except MARIAN, SHERIFF, and ROBIN*]

MARIAN. Still, I do wonder if you will be able to capture him.