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## **Family Plays**

# How Things Happen In Three!

Book and lyrics by  
Tom Behm

Music by  
Rose Marie Cooper



# How Things Happen In Three!

*Musical. Book and lyrics by Tom Behm. Music by Rose Marie Cooper. Cast: 3m., 3w., extras optional. Can be easily expanded to a much larger cast. Seven all-time favorite stories are dramatized in a fast-paced musical comedy. "Funny, isn't It? How Things Happen in Three?" sings the company in an opening number which traces the recurring "three" through nursery rhymes and poetry. The Three Billy Goats Gruff dispose of the ugly troll, and Goldilocks sings "I Want To Know" as curiosity leads her to the house of the Three Bears. The song "Everyone Should have the Chance to Make Three Wishes" introduces the playing of three tales: *The Fisherman and His Wife*, *The Three Wishes* and *The Evergreen Who Wishes for Leaves*. There is high-spirited audience participation in "What Fun We Had at the Fair," interrupted by the arrival of the big bad wolf. *Unit set. Simple costumes with masks and add-on pieces. Ideal for K-3 audiences. Approximate running time: 50 minutes. Code: HB4.**

## Family Plays

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**HOW THINGS HAPPEN IN THREE!**  
was written in part with support  
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**HOW THINGS HAPPEN IN THREE!**  
is dedicated to my wife, Karen, and son  
Chris, who have been ever encouraging.



UNCG SUMMER REPERTORY THEATRE  
presents

# HOW THINGS HAPPEN IN THREE!

Words and Lyrics by  
Tom Behm

Music by  
Rose Marie Cooper

Directed by Trisha Dee  
Music Director — Rose Marie Cooper  
Choreographer — Ruth Martinez Tutterow  
Scenic Designer — Jeff Gillis  
Lighting Designer — R. Mitchell Fore  
Costume Designer — Tina Harrelson  
Stage Manager — Wilson Boggs Cain

## ENSEMBLE

Jeffrey Dillard  
Matthew Will Giehl  
Joseph Sturgeon

Elizabeth Cox  
Ruth Martinez Tutterow  
Dana McCain

June 12-16, 1990

**PRODUCTION NOTE:** The play is written for a cast of six and touring. But it can be expanded to a much larger cast easily. The original production featured an environmental playground setting with swings, a jungle gym, a bridge, a slide, a see-saw, and several tires to roll about. Some use of these elements appear in the stage directions. But if a lighter touring format is needed, it can certainly be found. It is important that minimal scene shifting occur so the stories flow swiftly from one to another.

# HOW THINGS HAPPEN IN THREE

**Words and Lyrics by Tom Behm  
Music by Rose Marie Cooper  
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*(The cast enters excitedly as the music starts. The opening song is a game between the cast to see who can think of the most "three" nursery rhymes. Actor #3 is unsuccessful at coming up with his contribution until the end of the play.)*

Opening Song: HOW THINGS HAPPEN IN THREE!

Funny isn't it? How things happen in three?  
Good news, bad news, catastrophe!  
Some say it's superstition, some say it's just tradition,  
How things just happen in threes.  
Come hear our stories - they're told just for you.  
Come hear our stories - (none of them true).  
Come hear our stories - they're told just for fun.  
Come hear our stories - we'll tell more than one.  
Funny, isn't it? How things happen in threes,  
With pigs and goats and sillies and  
Funny, isn't it, funny, isn't it, how things happen in  
three. . .

**ACTRESS 1:** *(Spoken)* Like the three little kittens who lost their mittens, and they began to cry,  
"Oh, mommy dear, see here, see here, our mittens we have lost."  
"What, lost your mittens, you naughty kittens, then you shall have no pie."  
"Meow, meow, meow; and we shall have no pie."

- ACTRESS 2: *(Spoken)* My Turn!  
Three little monkeys, sittin' in a tree, teasin' "Alligator,  
alligator, can't catch me." Along came the alligator, jaws  
open wide - - - *(Snap)* Three little monkeys, deep inside!
- ACTRESS 3: *(Spoken)* How about!  
Three minnows left school one day - - to see the seven  
seas, but the sight of a whale with a gigantic tail sent  
them home as quick as can be! (as quick as can be!)
- ACTOR 1: *(Spoken)* My Turn!  
Three blind mice, three blind mice; see how they run,  
see how they run; they all ran after the farmer's wife; she  
cut off their tails with the carving knife; did you ever see  
such a sight in your life, as three blind mice?
- ACTOR 2: *(Spoken)* Oh, I got one!  
Three wise men of Gotham, they went to sea in a bowl;  
and if the bowl had been stronger, my song would have  
been longer.
- ACTOR 3: *(Spoken)* All right, how about - -  
As I was going to St. Ives, I met a man with just three  
wives; each wife had just three sacks; each had just  
three cats; each cat had just three kits; kits, cats, sacks,  
and wives, how many were going to St. Ives?
- ACTRESS 1: *(Spoken)* I thought it was seven wives, sacks, cats, and  
kits!
- ACTOR 3: *(Spoken)* Give me a break! All the other three rhymes  
were taken!
- ACTOR 1: *(Spoken)* *(Who's been adding on the floor)* It's 13 -  
there were 13 people going to St. Ives.
- ACTOR 3: *(Spoken)* Wrong! There was only one.
- ACTOR 1: *(Spoken)* I never was any good at math.

ACTOR 3: *(Spoken)* Math has nothing to do with it. Here - you act it out as I sing it; acting things out is a good way to solve problems!

*(The five act it out as Actor 1 plays the man going to St. Ives.)*

As I was going to St. Ives, I met a man with just three wives, each wife had just three sacks; each had just three cats; each cat had just three kits; kits, cats, sacks, and wives, how many were going to St. Ives?

ACTOR 1: *(Spoken)* I get it! There was just one - I was going to St. Ives and met you going to some place else!

ACTOR 3: You're absolutely right!

ACTRESS 1: *(Spoken to Actor 3)* You could have used *(in "rap" style)* Give me a beat! Rub-a-dub-dub

ACTRESS 2: (I say)

ACTRESS 1: Rub-a-dub-dub

ACTRESS 3 (You say)

ACTRESS 1: Rub-a-dub-dub, three men in a tub

ACTOR 1: (you don't say!)

ACTRESS 1: and who do you think they be?

ACTOR 2: (now, how would I know?)

ACTRESS 1: The butcher

ACTOR 3: (butcher)

ACTRESS 1: and the baker

ACTOR 2: (baker),

ACTRESS 1: And the candlestick maker

ACTOR 2: (carrin' matches),

ACTRESS 1: An' who else did they see in the water?

ACTRESS 2: There were three little ducks that I once knew: a short one, a fat one, a skinny one, too; but the one little duck with the feather on his back - he ruled the others with a quack, quack, quack! (quack, quack, quack; quack, quack, quack;) he ruled the others with a quack, quack, quack!

ACTRESS 1 & 3: Three young rats in black felt hats,  
Three young ducks with white straw flats,  
Three young dogs with curling tails,  
Three young cats with demi-veils  
Went out to walk with two young pigs  
In satin vests and sorrel wigs,  
But suddenly it chanced to rain,  
and so they all went home again.

ACTORS 1 & 2: Old King Cole was a merry old soul, and a merry  
old soul was he.  
He called for his pipe, and he called for his bowl,  
And he called for his fiddlers three . . .  
Ev'ry fiddler, he had a fiddler, and a mighty fine fiddler  
was he.  
Twee-twiddle-dee, twee-twiddle-dee, twee-twiddle-dee.  
O' there's none so rare as can compare with the king  
and his fiddlers three.

*(It is Actor 3's turn again and they all look at him for his contribution.)*

ACTOR 3:       *(Spoken)* All right! Enough! Let's finish this song so we can get on with the show!

ALL:             Funny, isn't it? How things happen in three? Not one, not two, but - - - - - THREE WISHES FOR ME!

**"THE THREE BILLY GOATS GRUFF"**

*(The actors take positions for the first story.)*

NARRATOR:    Once upon a time there were Three Billy Goats named Gruff - -

CLYDE:         The biggest billy goat was named Clyde.

GAIL:          The middle-sized billy goat was named Gail.

BERT:         And the smallest billy goat was called Bert.

NARRATOR:    They lived in a mountainous country where they ate and ate all they could eat.

Song:   BILLY GOATS' EATING SONG

*(The goats mime eating throughout the song.)*

CLYDE:         This is the b-b-b-best grass I've tasted all year

GAIL & BERT:   When they heard that, the others came near

ALL THREE:    So they ate and they ate for half of the night,  
And they finally stopped when their stomachs were tight.

GAIL:         One day the grass began to disappear.

CLYDE & BERT:        When she said that the others did fear - -

ALL THREE: And they thought and thought all through the night and the thought of starving did not go down right!

BERT: What are we g-g-g-going to do?

CLYDE: We must go and search for m-m-m-more clover and grass in the pasture further up the mountainside.

GAIL: But to do that we have to cross the narrow bridge - -

BERT: *(Fearfully they gather together)* and living under that bridge - -

ALL THREE: . . . is a big, ugly, smelly troll!  
*(The Troll appears.)*

NARRATOR: But the three billy goats had an idea - -

BERT: The smallest billy goat went first - - *(He approaches the bridge with misgiving three times but is generally encouraged by the others and when he begins to cross softly, the Troll speaks.)*

TROLL: Who's that tripping over my bridge?

BERT: *(In a high voice)* It is I, the babiest bil-l-l-y goat.

TROLL: *(Crawls up on the bridge)* I am going to eat you all up!

BERT: No, please, Mr. Troll, I'm such a teenie-weenie morsel of a baby billy goat - - just wait a few minutes and my big sister will be coming along.

TROLL: Your big sister you say?

BERT: Yes, Mr. Troll.



- TROLL: Very well, be off with you! *(He goes back under the bridge and the little billy goat scampers off the bridge and slides down the slide.)*
- BERT: *(singing)* Look at the grass that's just waiting for me, I'll eat, and I'll eat till I'm full as can be!  
*(Gail approaches the bridge.)*
- TROLL: Who's that trapping over my bridge?
- GAIL: It is I, the middle-sized billy goat.
- TROLL: *(Climbs up on the bridge)* I am going to eat you all up!
- GAIL: Please, no, Mr. Troll. You see, I'm not really a billy goat at all - - I'm a nanny goat.
- TROLL: A nanny goat? *(She nods.)* Makes no difference to me - a meal is a meal! *(He starts to crawl toward her.)*
- GAIL: Wait! My big, Big, Big brother is coming right behind me and he'd make a bigger meal for you.
- TROLL: A bigger meal you say? *(She nods.)* All right! but this is the last time I am putting off my lunch! I won't give in a third time! *(He crawls back under the bridge.)*
- GAIL: *(Sings as she joins her brother at the bottom of the slide.)*  
  
Look at the grass that's just waiting for me.  
I'll eat and I'll eat till I'm plump as can be!
- CLYDE: *(Approaches the bridge with a swagger and perhaps even a superhero cape or pose.)*
- TROLL: Who's that tramping over my bridge?

CLYDE: It is I, the biggest billy goat!

TROLL: I am going to eat you all up! *(Troll crawls onto the bridge.)*

CLYDE: Just try it, you cross-eyed sour-puss!

*(They struggle on the bridge with two narrow escapes for the troll before Big Billy Goat knocks him from the bridge. He strikes a triumphant pose!)*

CLYDE: *(Joining his brother and sister.) (Sings.)* This is the best grass we've tasted all year!

ALL: *(Sing.)* We'll eat and we'll eat and give a big cheer!  
We fooled that troll three times out of three,  
And now from his threats we are forever free!

Nah-a-a-a-a-h!

*(They bow and the troll gets up to join them for a second quick bow and they all exit.)*

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### “THE THREE BEARS”

ACTRESS: Once there was a little girl *(Goldilocks enters and poses)* who went for a walk in the woods and met “The Three Bears.”

GOLDILOCKS: *(Sings.)* I want to know what makes the flowers grow?  
I want to see a partridge in a pear tree - -  
I want to hear the song of the whip-poor-will - -  
I want to feel the sting of an electric eel!

**MOTHER:**       *(Enters)* Why, why, why? How do I know, Goldilocks? I have a million things to do and I haven't got time to answer your endless questions.

**GOLDBLOCKS:** *(Sings)* I want to know where the winding path will go - I want to see - - what's hiding behind that tree. I want to explore the wide world that's just next door, I want to find a place that will stretch my mind.

**MOTHER:**       Goldilocks, why carry on like this when everything you need is right here?

**GOLDBLOCKS:** Mama, may I go for a little walk?

**MOTHER:**       Fine, Dear. But don't go beyond sight of the house, understand?

*(Exits)*

**GOLDBLOCKS:** Yes, Mama. *(Aside.)* How can I explore and have adventures if I don't ever get beyond sight of the house? *(She walks about.)* What a pretty flower over there! Wow! What a giant tree trunk! I wonder what's on the other side? *(She starts around the tree.)* Oh, oh! If I go around there I will be out of sight of the house. I'd better not go - - well, maybe for just a minute - - just to see the other side. Why am I so curious? *(She disappears around behind the tree.)*

**BABY BEAR:**   *(Enters fanning tongue)* OOOH! I burnt my tongue on the porridge!

**MOMMY BEAR:** *(Follows)* I'm sorry, Darling - - but your father likes it very hot!

**PAPA BEAR:**   *(Follows)* But not that hot! I burnt my whole mouth, Mama Bear.

**BABY BEAR:**   Let's go down to the river and stick our heads underwater.