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*Dramatic Publishing*

# NATHAN THE NERVOUS

Comedy by O.B. Rozell



# NATHAN THE NERVOUS

"My seventh-grade drama class's production of *Nathan the Nervous* went very well—everybody really enjoyed it."

(Lite and Life Christian School, Phoenix, Ariz.)

**Comedy. By O.B. Rozell.** *Cast: 4m., 5w., flexible.* Here is another imaginative play from the author of the very popular *Of Winners, Losers and Games*. Queen Augustus the Anguished is a powerful, domineering person with the kind of voice that makes lions crawl back into their dens and thunder retreat into the clouds. Her son, King Nathan the Nervous, is a meek, mild little fellow who faints at any noise louder than the flutter of butterfly wings. This contrast of characters produces chuckling humor and titillating suspense. The possibilities for comedy are endless, and the author takes full advantage of them. The play's a scream (literally) for children's theatre or for performance by children. *Nathan the Nervous* is suitable for any age group. It can be performed by children or adults for audiences made up of children and/or adults. It has the qualities of a good contest play, and it is ideal for experimental theatre and workshops. Among the many charms of O.B. Rozell's plays is their adaptability to almost any type of staging. *Equally suitable for proscenium, thrust, or arena staging,* *Nathan the Nervous may be played on a virtually bare stage decorated with an arrangement of platforms, pylons, step units and screens, or it may be mounted with an elaborate throne room, replete with columns, draperies, gilt thrones and royal banners. Costumes may be traditional medieval fairyland garments, modern clothes, or fantastic, stylized array. Approximate running time: 25 to 30 minutes. Code: N75.*

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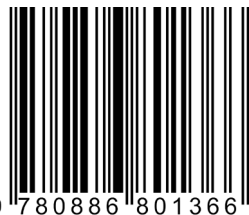
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Nathan the Nervous

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**A Comedy in One Act  
by  
O. B. ROZELL**

**Family Plays**

311 Washington St., Woodstock, IL 60098

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## ABOUT THE PLAY

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## *CAST*

**THE MINSTREL**

**LADY GERALDINE**

**THE WIZARD**

**QUEEN AUGUSTUS, THE ANGUISHED**

**THE JESTER**

**A MESSENGER**

**KING NATHAN, THE NERVOUS**

**KING FREDERICK, THE FEARLESS**

**PRINCESS FELECIA**

**Time:** One day in the history of . . .

**Place:** Marshmoore, a kingdom with a questionable future.

### **The Throne Room**





## NATHAN THE NERVOUS

*[The setting is the throne room of the castle of Marshmoore. At center is a platform with steps leading up to it. On the platform are two thrones, with a small table between them. Behind each throne is a curtain or screen. Two columns, pillars, or screens are evenly spaced between the right side of the platform and the stage right exit, and two more are similarly spaced between the left side of the platform and the stage left exit.]*

*No one is on stage when the curtain opens, but almost immediately the MINSTREL enters (dancing, tumbling, or leaping) and bows to the audience.]*

MINSTREL. *[Joyfully]* Welcome to Marshmoore . . . *[sadly]* a kingdom with a questionable future. As has been the custom here for centuries, our young king was elevated to the throne after the untimely death of his father, King Allen, The Agile, who stumbled and fell to his death from the castle basement. *[Removes his hat and places it over his heart for a moment of mourning]* His widow, Queen Augustus, The Anquished, has quite lost her sanity attempting to find a bride for our new ruler, King Nathan, The Nervous. *[LADY GERALDINE enters left. She is a pretty, young lady-in-waiting to the Queen. She seems to be looking for something with a great deal of anxiety.]*

GERALDINE. Minstrel?

MINSTREL. Yes, Lady Geraldine?

GERALDINE. Have you seen His Majesty?

MINSTREL. Why, yes. I just saw him creeping from his room.

GERALDINE. He forgot his cape. You know he always takes his morning creep before tea, and it is rather nippy this morning.

MINSTREL. You had best overtake him before he ventures outdoors. *[Fearfully]* You know what would happen if our dear King should become too chilled.

GERALDINE. Mercy, yes. The Queen would have me boiled in oil. *[She starts off left.]*

MINSTREL. Remember, he hides or faints at the sound of footsteps — so you must use the magic words.

GERALDINE. *[Bored]* Oh, yes, the magic words . . . . “Nathan, Nathan, come thee here . . . the Queen requests your presence, dear.” How silly . . . oh, well . . . . *[Exits calling:]* Nathan, Nathan, come thee here . . . the Queen requests your . . . *[Her voice trails off as she disappears. The WIZARD enters from right. He is deep in thought. It is difficult to tell whether he is exceedingly intelligent or exceedingly stupid.]*

WIZARD. Minstrel? Have you seen the Jester?

MINSTREL. No, I haven’t, sir. He usually sleeps in on Tuesday.

WIZARD. Is it Tuesday already?

MINSTREL. Why, yes. That’s what usually follows Monday.

WIZARD. Oh, my goodness, was yesterday Monday?

MINSTREL. Yes, the day after Sunday and the day before Tuesday is always Monday . . . unless it’s leap year.

WIZARD. You know? You’re absolutely correct. What a brilliant deduction.

MINSTREL. Yes, of course, sir. Why do you need the Jester so early this morning?

WIZARD. *[Thinking about it]* Actually, I’m not sure.

MINSTREL. If you don’t know, who does?

WIZARD. The Queen.

MINSTREL. The Queen?

WIZARD. Yes, the Queen. *[Keeping track on his fingers]*

She asked the chamber maid to tell the nurse to tell the cook to tell the West Wing Guard to tell the East Wing Guard to tell the Dungeon guard to tell me to tell the Jester to tell you . . . *[pause, as he thinks very hard]*

MINSTREL. What?

WIZARD. I've forgotten, exactly. It had something to do with His Majesty . . . King Nathan.

MINSTREL. What about King Nathan?

WIZARD. I don't remember, actually. It seems she mentioned Lady Geraldine.

*[The QUEEN is heard from off right. Her voice is somewhat comparable to a volcano erupting or a tornado coming in for a landing.]*

QUEEN. Nathan, Nathan, come thee here . . . Mommy requests your presence, dear.

MINSTREL. Here's the Queen, now. Perhaps she can freshen your memory.

WIZARD. Oh, no!!! *[Starts racing off]* She'll scream and carry on like a swamp woman and she'll threaten to have my head. *[Exits left just as the QUEEN enters. She is a large, domineering woman with a powerful voice.]*

QUEEN. Minstrel? Have you seen His Majesty?

MINSTREL. *[Bowing abjectly]* Yes, Your Majesty. He was creeping through the West Wing of the castle only a few moments ago.

QUEEN. *[She means to be friendly and conversational, but she gives the impression of a dragon breathing fire, or a vengeful gladiator condemning an enemy to death.]* He's always creeping about someplace. It's all his father's fault. If he hadn't been so prone to accident, our precious little boy wouldn't be so frightened of moving about in a normal manner.

MINSTREL. *[Bowing more abjectly]* Yes, Your Majesty.

QUEEN. Did you get my message?

MINSTREL. *[On the verge of a heart attack, quivering]* What message, Your Majesty?

QUEEN. I thought not. I told the chamber maid to tell the nurse to tell the cook to tell the West Wing Guard to tell the East Wing Guard to tell the Dungeon Guard to tell the Wizard to tell the Jester to tell you to tell Lady Geraldine to make certain King Nathan dressed properly for his morning walk.

MINSTREL. That's the same message you send every morning.

QUEEN. *[Thundering]* Sir!!! *[The MINSTREL prostrates himself.]* One cannot be too careful with royalty.

MINSTREL. I know, Your Majesty. Lady Geraldine just went to overtake His Majesty to give him his cape. I don't believe he had begun his morning creep just yet.

QUEEN. Nonetheless, I want you to go and fetch him. I have an important matter to discuss with him and the Wizard.

MINSTREL. *[Bows and backs off, continuing to bow]* Very good, Your Majesty.

QUEEN. Remember . . . be very careful . . . *[roaring]* and for heaven's sake, don't happen upon him by surprise. You might just frighten him to death. And then I would be left with this ghastly kingdom. *[The MINSTREL awaits further orders.]* WELL??? *[The MINSTREL collapses to his prostrate position.]* Go! Go! *[He crawls out backward. The QUEEN moves to the throne. She sits as the JESTER races in.]*

JESTER. Oh, good morning, Your Majesty. *[Bow]* What a lovely morning. *[Bow]* Isn't it a lovely morning this morning? *[Bow]*

QUEEN. NO!!! *[The JESTER reacts with violent fear, falling to his knees.]*

JESTER. Oh, no, no, no . . . what a ghastly morning this morning. Isn't it a ghastly morning this morning?

QUEEN. I didn't say it was a ghastly morning this morning. I simply disagreed that it's a beautiful morning this morning.

JESTER. Of course, Your Majesty.

QUEEN. Did you get my message, Jester?

JESTER. [*Barely whispering, terrified*] What message, Your Majesty?

QUEEN. I told the chamber maid to tell the nurse to tell the cook to tell the West Wing Guard to tell the East Wing Guard to tell the Dungeon Guard to tell the Wizard to tell you to tell the Minstrel to tell Lady Geraldine to make certain King Nathan dressed properly for his morning creep . . . WALK!!!

JESTER. I haven't seen the Wizard or the Minstrel this ghastly morning. But, I did see King Nathan.

QUEEN. Good . . . where?

JESTER. He was creeping through the castle rose gardens . . . with Lady Geraldine close behind. Is there some kind of romance between the Lady Geraldine and His Majesty? [*He chuckles.*]

QUEEN. CERTAINLY NOT!!! [*He perishes.*] How crude!!! Lady Geraldine hasn't so much as a corpuscle of royal blood in her entire person. My son will marry a real, one hundred per cent princess, just as I was.

JESTER. Yes, Your Majesty. But I thought the last one was lovely and so smart.

QUEEN. Smart, indeed!!! She arrived late, she overslept, she missed lunch entirely, and she had to be physically led to the throne room for introductions.

JESTER. [*Scratching his head*] That's right. She didn't have much sense of time or direction, did she?

QUEEN. And her mother!!! The Queen . . . of . . . wherever . . . . What a dolt. She laughed at everything and everybody. She even had the nerve to laugh when dear Nathan screamed.

JESTER. You must admit, Your Majesty, it was rather humorous to see our King leap upon his throne and scream when the castle knights raised their swords to salute him. [*He can hardly hold his laughter to the end of the line. The QUEEN joins him in laughter – momentarily.*]

QUEEN. [*Regaining control*] HOW DARE YOU!!! [*The*

*JESTER perishes again./* How dare you make jest of your King.

JESTER. Yes, Your Majesty.

MESSENGER. *[Rushing in]* Your Majesty?

QUEEN. Yes?

MESSENGER. Word has just arrived concerning the new Princess.

QUEEN. She can't make it?

MESSENGER. Oh, no, Your Majesty . . . she will arrive at any moment.

QUEEN. *[With dejection]* Ohhhh.

MESSENGER. Her carriage approached the border of our kingdom at dawn.

QUEEN. Oh, mercy, I don't think I'm quite up to another one of those. Jester! Go with him and find the Wizard. Bring him to me. *[They start to bow.]* AT ONCE!!! *[She waves and they quickly exit left, bumping each other and then colliding with LADY GERALDINE, who enters from left.]*

GERALDINE. Your Majesty?

QUEEN. Yes, Lady Geraldine? What is it?

GERALDINE. *[She is not quite as terrified of the Queen as the others are.]* The Minstrel asked me to bring a message to you.

QUEEN. Very good. But, before we get to that, might I ask; did you receive *my* message?

GERALDINE. What message, Your Majesty?

QUEEN. How disgusting!! I have the most unreliable servants in the world. I told the chamber maid to tell the nurse to tell the cook to tell the West Wing Guard to tell the East Wing Guard to tell the Dungeon Guard to tell the Wizard to tell the Jester to tell the Minstrel to tell you to make certain King Nathan dressed properly for his morning . . . walk!

GERALDINE. Oh . . . that message?

QUEEN. Well???

GERALDINE. Yes, Your Majesty?

QUEEN. Was he dressed properly?

GERALDINE. Oh yes, Your Majesty . . . [*nervously*] for a walk.

QUEEN. Well, thank goodness at least for that. Now, what is the message the Minstrel sends?

GERALDINE. He told me to tell you that he had found King Nathan.

QUEEN. Good.

GERALDINE. He was creeping about the castle grounds.

QUEEN. Good.

GERALDINE. *All* about the castle grounds.

QUEEN. Good.

GERALDINE. [*Hesitant*] Near the castle walls.

QUEEN. Good.

GERALDINE. And far from the castle walls.

QUEEN. Oh, very good.

GERALDINE. [*More hesitant*] Far from the mote.

QUEEN. Ooooo, good!

GERALDINE. [*Most hesitant*] And very near to the mote.

QUEEN. Bad! Don't tell me the Minstrel happened on him by surprise.

GERALDINE. Oh, no, Your Majesty. In fact, the Minstrel asked me to tell you expressly that he began whistling at fifty yards, humming at twenty-five yards, and he sang his way right up to the spot where the King had stood.

QUEEN. Well? What happened then? I shudder to think.

GERALDINE. [*Biting her nails*] I said, to the spot where the King had stood . . . *had* stood. His Majesty screamed and leaped into the mote at the sound of the very first whistle. The poor Minstrel didn't realize the King had gone over until he had finished two verses of "Lady Marian's Lament."

QUEEN. Ohhhh, mercy.

GERALDINE. He'll be right down as soon as he changes and the nurse gives attention to his wound.

QUEEN. Oh, yes, his wound. HIS WOUND????



GERALDINE. Why, yes, Your Majesty . . . from the alligator.

QUEEN. THE ALLIGATOR??? *[She gasps.]* The alligator??? *[LADY GERALDINE drops to her knees.]* My son has been attacked by an alligator? A green, slimy, wet, awful alligator?

GERALDINE. Yes, Your Majesty. That's what usually swims about in the mote . . . except for an occasional duck . . . or King.

*[The MINSTREL enters from left.]*

MINSTREL. *[Wishing he were dead]* Your Majesty?

QUEEN. WHAT???? *[He dies.]*

MINSTREL. The King, Your Majesty . . . . He . . . he . . . .

QUEEN. *[Covers her face]* I know . . . I know . . . the poor thing . . . my precious little boy . . . *[NATHAN enters nervously, creeping slowly like a complete coward. He hides behind each pillar or screen and peeks out from behind it. He is much smaller than the Queen.]* Attacked by a horrible . . . alligator. Ohhhh, I must gain control of myself so that I might go to him. *[She wipes a tear, raises her head and sees Nathan.]* MY BABY!!!! *[NATHAN screams, drops to his knees, and covers his head with his arms. The QUEEN quickly crosses to him.]* Nathan? Darling? *[There is no answer or movement from Nathan.]* OH, MERCY!! HE'S DEAD!!! The wound was fatal. *[She faints. The MINSTREL catches her just in time.]*

MINSTREL. Your Majesty? YOUR MAJESTY!!!! Would His Majesty like to help me with his mother?

NATHAN. *[Looking up]* What's happened to her?

MINSTREL. She's fainted, again. *[NATHAN rises and moves toward his mother as the WIZARD and JESTER enter.]*

WIZARD. Oh, my goodness, what's happened?

NATHAN. Mother has fainted . . . again.

WIZARD. Why, I just happen to have some smelling salts on my very person.

JESTER. Around here, one *needs* to have some smelling salts on his very person. [*The WIZARD administers the smelling salts.*]

GERALDINE. She's coming around. [*The QUEEN slowly regains consciousness. Everyone is silent and waiting fearfully.*]

QUEEN. [*Looks up and sees Nathan*] MY BABY!!!!  
[*NATHAN screams and faints. The MINSTREL catches him.*]

JESTER. [*Sings:*] "Here we go again . . . about to take that ride again."

MINSTREL. Oh, mercy!

QUEEN. Oh, my goodness!!! Do something . . . do something!!!

WIZARD. I just . . .

WIZARD & JESTER. . . . happen to have some smelling salts on my very person. [*The WIZARD holds the smelling salts under Nathan's nose.*]

QUEEN. He's coming around. Now, everyone must remember . . . be completely calm and absolutely silent . . . AND! . . . under no circumstance make any sudden moves.

NATHAN. Wha . . . wha . . . what happened?

QUEEN. [*Calmly*] Oh, nothing, Darling. You're just tired . . . that's all . . . just very tired. [*They help him to the throne.*] Now, show Mommy where that awful alligator bit my precious little boy. [*She surveys his body. NATHAN holds up a bandaged index finger.*] OH . . . WELL! [*As NATHAN is on the verge of fainting again, she controls herself.*] I was led to believe you had been half devoured.

NATHAN. Oh, no, Mother. It was just a little alligator . . . no longer than that . . . . [*He holds his hands about ten inches apart.*] Actually, I thought he was rather cute . . . except that he was terribly slimy and awfully wet.

MINSTREL. [*Laughing*] So was His Majesty.

QUEEN. CERTAINLY!! [*MINSTREL cowers.*] Any idiot could see that. The interesting thing about moles is the simple fact that they are usually filled with water.

JESTER. Or alligators.

GERALDINE. Or occasional kings.

QUEEN. SILENCE!!!! enough of this. We must get on with my new plan. Take your proper places. *[NATHAN and the QUEEN sit on the thrones; GERALDINE and the MINSTREL stand to the right; the JESTER and WIZARD stand to the left.]*

QUEEN. Very good.

NATHAN. *[Meekly]* Mother? What plan?

QUEEN. Darling, the Wizard and I thought of a marvelous plan by which you might be able to go right out and select your bride . . . by yourself.

NATHAN. *[Sadly]* Oh, no, Mother.

QUEEN. Why, Precious, it would mean no more having them parade through our kingdom. You could select the perfect bride . . . someone beautiful and intelligent who could bring some sort of order to this ghastly Kingdom.

MINSTREL. Tell us about it, Your Majesty.

JESTER. Oh, yes, Your Majesty.

GERALDINE. Do tell us.

NATHAN. Oh, yes, Mother.

*[Speaking simultaneously and excitedly]*

QUEEN. SHUT UP!! . . . and I will. *[They all cower and become silent. She leans over and glances in the direction of the Wizard.]* Do you have the tonic?

WIZARD. Yes, Your Majesty.

NATHAN. Yuck! Not another one of those. Ohh, Mother.

MINSTREL. What is this one supposed to do?

GERALDINE. Does it reveal the name of the bride?

JESTER. Don't be ridiculous. It turns a frog into a Princess.

QUEEN. Tell them . . . go ahead and tell them.

WIZARD. This elixir is a combination of ingredients I just happen . . .

JESTER. . . . to have on your very person.

WIZARD. Not on my very person. In my very laboratory.

JESTER. Oh, I'm so sorry . . . in his very laboratory.

WIZARD. Who has ever heard of anyone going about with such a large number of magical ingredients on his very person?

QUEEN. SILENCE!!!! Stop bickering and get on with it.

WIZARD. [*Gives the Jester an angry glance and clears his throat.*] These numerous ingredients were simmered together for six full days to create a tonic that is guaranteed to completely erase any sign of fear. [*They all laugh.*]

QUEEN. QUIET!!!! [*They all cower and are silent.*] How rude!!

GERALDINE. But, Your Majesty, his tonics have seldom worked in the past.

QUEEN. I know . . . I know . . . . BUT!!!! He has promised this one will achieve our purpose.

WIZARD. Oh, yes, Your Majesty.

QUEEN. [*Calmly, quietly*] Because . . . in the event it doesn't, he will lose something . . . dear to his very person.

JESTER. Oh, really? His smelling salts??

QUEEN. [*Leaps to her feet. NATHAN does the same.*] No . . . HIS HEAD!!!! [*They all cower. NATHAN screams and faints.*]

MINSTREL. Not again!!!! [*Catches Nathan*]

JESTER. [*Sings:*] "Here we go again . . . about to take that ride again." There's no need for alarm, actually. The Wizard just happens to have some smelling salts on his very person.

GERALDINE. Use it, then!

QUEEN. Yes, use it! [*The WIZARD uses the salts and revives the King. He and the MINSTREL assist NATHAN back to the throne.*]

NATHAN. Wha . . . wha . . . what happened?

QUEEN. Oh, nothing, dear . . . you're just tired . . . again.

JESTER. Tell us about the tonic, Your Majesty.

NATHAN. Yuck! No, don't!