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*Dramatic Publishing*

**SARA CREWE**  
or  
**What Happened at Miss Minchin's**

by  
**R. N. SANDBERG**

from the story by  
**FRANCES HODGSON BURNETT**



**Dramatic Publishing**

Woodstock, Illinois • London, England • Melbourne, Australia

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SEATTLE CHILDREN'S THEATRE

The Seattle Children's Theatre presented the world debut of *SARA CREWE*, in September, 1994 at the Charlotte Martin Theatre, Seattle, Washington. Directed by John Dillon, it included the following artists:

### THE PLAYERS

Sarah Baskin . . . . . Sara Crewe  
Alyson Bedford . . . . . Salesgirl / Jessie  
Kate Brickley . . . . . Cook / Baker  
Anne Marie Cummings . . . . . Lavinia / Urchin  
Hiromi Dames . . . . . Lottie  
Terry Edward Moore . . . . Captain Crewe / Thomas Carrisford  
Chris San Nicolas . . . . . Salesman / Ram Dass, a Lascar  
Amy Salloway . . . . . Ermengarde  
Faye B Summers . . . . . Miss Minchin

Artistic Director . . . . . *Linda Hartzell*  
Managing Director . . . . . *Thomas Pechar*  
Set Design . . . . . *Jennifer Lupton*  
Costume Design . . . . . *Catherine Meacham Hunt*  
Light Design . . . . . *Greg Sullivan*  
Sound Design . . . . . *Dave Pascal*  
Puppet Design . . . . . *Scott Ramirez*  
Wig & Hair Design . . . . . *Joyce Degenfelder*  
Millinery . . . . . *Barbara Embree*  
Dialect Coaches . . . *Deena Burke, Regina Santore, Nathan Scott*  
Production Manager . . . . . *Silas Morse*  
Technical Director . . . . . *Sherman Mark Hoffman*  
Production Stage Manager . . . . . *Linda-Jo Brooke*  
Stage Manager . . . . . *Mo Chapman*  
Assistant to the Stage Manager . . . . . *Heather McLaughlin*

# SARA CREWE

A Full-length Play

For 3-4 men (with doubling, 2; 1 Indian)

3-4 women (with doubling, 2)

5-6 children (5 girls or 5 girls/1 boy), extras as desired

## CHARACTERS

SARA, 11

CAPTAIN CREWE, her father, about 30

A SALESMAN

TWO SALESGIRLS

MISS MINCHIN

LAVINIA, 14

JESSIE, 13

ERMENGARDE, 12

LOTTIE, 8

COOK

LASCAR

CARRISFORD

URCHIN

BAKER

TIME: The 1880s.

PLACE: London. In and around Miss Minchin's Select Seminary for Young Ladies.

SET: A unit set with pieces for additional scenes.

Suggested doubling:

SARA

CREWE / CARRISFORD

SALESMAN / LASCAR

MISS MINCHIN

FIRST SALESGIRL / LAVINIA

SECOND SALESGIRL / JESSIE / URCHIN

ERMENGARDE

LOTTIE

COOK / BAKER

#### PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTE

1) A professional production can work extremely well with 9 actors (2 men, 7 women/girls) as the Seattle Children's Theatre production did. A school production, wishing to use a larger cast, could easily use 20-25 actors. Extras could be added to the opening dress shop scene, some of the classroom scenes and particularly the street scenes in Act Two. The judicious addition by the director of a line or two for these extras is perfectly acceptable.

2) An important character not mentioned in the cast list is the Lascar's monkey. The Seattle Children's Theatre production used a puppet (actually a number of puppets) to good effect. The use of a live monkey is impractical for both financial and logistical reasons.

**SARA CREWE**  
or  
**What Happened at Miss Minchin's**

SCENE ONE

*AT RISE: A dashing, energetic BRITISH OFFICER is swinging around, almost dancing with a young GIRL. She has wide, mysterious eyes and a striking waif-like appearance. He is laughing. She is trying to maintain her dignity.*

MAN. Velvet, silk, brocade! You shall dazzle them! You shall bewitch the populace! All the people shall see you as the highest of the high, grandest of the grand!

GIRL. Papa!

*(An elegant SALESMAN has appeared. He is followed by a SALESGIRL holding a dress.)*

SALESMAN *(to the OFFICER, referring to the dress)*. Sir?

MAN. We'll take it.

SALESMAN. Very good, sir.

MAN *(to the GIRL)*. C'est magnifique, eh, mademoiselle?

SARA. It's Emily I want, Papa.

MAN. Emily?

SARA. The doll you promised.

*(A SECOND SALESGIRL with a dress has whisked on as the first exited.)*



SALESMAN. I don't know if you're looking for more than one, sir. But this is very smart.

MAN. We'll take it.

SALESMAN. Excellent.

*(The FIRST SALESGIRL is crossing the stage with another dress.)*

MAN. And that one, too, the velvet. We must have velvet, shan't we, Sara?

SARA. It is lovely.

SALESMAN. That's not really for a schoolgirl, sir.

MAN. This isn't a schoolgirl. This is a princess!

SALESMAN. Yes, sir, very good, sir. And perhaps, a hat? *(Showing an outrageous plumed model.)* The latest thing. I sold one exactly like it to Lady Sinclair, just yesterday.

MAN *(grabbing the hat)*. Yes! Fantastic! And send the rest to Miss Minchin's Select Seminary for Young Ladies!

SALESMAN. Yes, sir!

MAN. For Miss Sara Crewe! *(The MAN, Captain CREWE, has put the hat on the GIRL, SARA, and is spinning her around as the SALESMAN exit. SARA and CREWE are both laughing now.)* They won't mistake you for someone ordinary! You'll be prepared for anything London has to offer! *(They have spun right in front of a sign: "MISS MINCHIN'S SELECT SEMINARY FOR YOUNG LADIES.")* SARA sees it. Her laughter dies. CREWE sees it as well.) Here we are, then. It's a fine school, Sara. Better than all the ones in Paris. I'm glad you're going to be in London.

SARA. I'd rather stay with you.

CREWE. Sh-sh-sh. One last present before you go in. *(Going to a large box.)* I've been saving it. Very special. *(He holds out the box to her.)* Open it. *(She does not respond.)*

Then, I shall just have to open it for you. (*As he tears off the paper.*) You know, I could keep this for myself. It's one of my favorite things in the whole world. (*He takes out a large, beautiful doll. SARA stares at it. He beams.*) Well, aren't you going to hold her?

SARA. She looks like Mother.

CREWE. Sara.

SARA. That picture by your bed.

CREWE. This is Emily. She'll be your guardian spirit. Always with you. (*She throws herself into his arms. He drops the doll as he embraces her.*) What am I going to do without my solemn little girl? Who's going to break my foul moods? Who's going to keep me on the straight and narrow?

(*MISS MINCHIN enters.*)

MISS MINCHIN. Captain Crewe?

CREWE. Miss Minchin. How do you do. This is my daughter, Sara. This is Miss Minchin, Sara.

MISS MINCHIN. What a beautiful little girl. I'm most pleased to meet you, Sara. I'm certain you shall be happy, here. Our girls are from the most select families.

SARA. Our family isn't select.

CREWE. You just give her a pile of books, Miss Minchin, and she'll be happy. She spent half her days in India reading. All of Kipling and half-way through Sir Walter Scott.

MISS MINCHIN. A most promising little girl, Captain Crewe. She will be a favorite pupil. Quite a favorite pupil.

CREWE. She is special. (*Hands MISS MINCHIN a wad of money.*) You'll take good care of her, won't you?

MISS MINCHIN. Rest assured, Captain, she will have my fullest and most personal attention.

CREWE (*to SARA*). You see, it's going to be fine. Just like in one of your stories. A beautiful princess goes off to a foreign land, braving the cold and dangers until she finds friends who help her.

SARA. I don't have to go off. I can go back with you.

CREWE. And spoil the adventures you're about to have?

SARA. We'll have them together, back home.

CREWE. When I'm off in the jungle, out on the march, exploring the new diamond mines? You've been alone far too much, Sara. You need friends. Good English girls like yourself. You'll be happier here than you've ever known. (*They hold each other. Their eyes are filled.*) We'll write. Letters sprinkled with flowers and spices. And before you know it, we'll be back in each other's arms again. (*He breaks away from her. In his best play-acting voice.*) So, Your Royal Highness, it is time for me to do my duty. (*He salutes her.*) I shall vanquish all your enemies and save all your friends back in India, or my name is not Captain Ralph Crewe. And therefore, Your Highness, I bid you my fondest and most loyal adieu. (*He bows, then rushes off without looking back. SARA starts to run after him. MISS MINCHIN holds her.*)

SARA. Papa! Papa!...I can't see him anymore.

MISS MINCHIN. Shall I show you to your room, now? It's quite marvelous. I'm certain you'll be pleased with it. Or would you rather see your classmates first? They are so looking forward to meeting you. (*SARA has closed her eyes tightly. She holds her hands up in the air in front of her in a strange, meditative way.*)

SARA (*almost chanting*). Papa, Papa, Pa—

MISS MINCHIN. Sara. You're in proper society, now, dear. Young ladies don't stand in the street. It's fortunate you've been brought to me. You shall learn a great deal, here.

Now, pick up your doll and go in. (*SARA looks down at the doll, then off after her father and runs in crying. MISS MINCHIN picks up the doll and carries it in as the lights fade.*)

## SCENE TWO

AT RISE: *The parlor/classroom in Miss Minchin's. LAVINIA and JESSIE, the two oldest students, are getting ready for class. LAVINIA is arrogant and cutting. JESSIE enjoys the power she and LAVINIA wield but occasionally is uneasy with the damage that is done. JESSIE is holding SARA's doll. She carefully sets it down.*

JESSIE. Do you think she'll be in class today, Vin? I can't imagine she'll still be crying.

LAVINIA. It's only been three days. I suspect she might have a full week of tawdry Indian Ocean to get out.

JESSIE. It's not the voyage that's made her ill, is it?

LAVINIA. I meant the tears, Jessie. Saltwater?

JESSIE. Oh, yes, of course. (*She looks off toward the girls' rooms.*)

LAVINIA (*trying to win her back*). She's an ugly little thing, isn't she?

JESSIE. Do you think so?

LAVINIA. Like a jungle monkey. (*She laughs.*)

JESSIE. Yes. I suppose.

(*ERMENGARDE, a flaccid, dumpy girl, enters. She is eating a piece of breakfast pastry.*)

LAVINIA. You ought to take a cue from the new girl, Ermengarde. She's been here three days and hasn't touched a bite. Think what that would do for you. (*ERMENGARDE tries to ignore them.*)

JESSIE. Mind where you go with that. I don't want my place all sticky.

ERMENGARDE (*noticing SARA's doll*). I say, what a beauty. Is it one of yours?

JESSIE. New girl's. Minchin asked me to bring it in. None of us are to touch it.

LAVINIA. You needn't worry. It's not edible.

*(She and JESSIE laugh. SARA enters, tentatively. She wears the black velvet dress which is slightly too big for her. With her red eyes and over-sized fancy dress, she looks even more unusual than in the first scene.)*

LAVINIA. Is it true your mother's dead and your father's off in the jungle? (*SARA just stares at her.*) Well, is it? (*SARA still stares.*) I believe she doesn't understand English. Been brought up by the natives, have you? Eaten too much monkey meat? (*She and JESSIE laugh.*)

ERMENGARDE (*very tentatively, as she motions to the doll*). This is a real beauty you've got. (*SARA stares at the doll.*)

LAVINIA. Yes, and Ermengarde should know. She's the expert on beauty, here. (*Referring to SARA.*) What do you think, Ermie, isn't that monkey face of hers the ugliest one we've ever had in the school?

SARA (*picks up the doll*). My father gave her to me. She's my guardian spirit. (*LAVINIA and JESSIE can barely contain themselves.*)

LAVINIA (*managing to get it out through the giggles*). Perhaps, you ought to put her by your plate when Ermen-  
garde's next to you.

SARA. Perhaps, I should. Then, she could protect us both  
from anything evil that might be around.

LAVINIA. Oohh, you'll certainly need protection looking as  
ridiculous as you do.

(*SARA retreats to a corner as MISS MINCHIN enters.*)

MISS MINCHIN. Good morning, ladies.

ALL (*except for SARA*). Good morning, Miss Minchin.

MISS MINCHIN. I'm glad to see you here this morning,  
Sara. This is Sara Crewe, ladies. Sara, this is Ermengarde  
and Jessie and Lavinia and—Where is Lottie? Where is she?

JESSIE. I believe she's in her room, Miss Minchin.

MISS MINCHIN. Lavinia, fetch her for me.

LAVINIA (*starts to go*). Of course, Miss Minchin.

MISS MINCHIN. No, wait. I have an announcement which I  
want you to hear. (*Calling off.*) Cook? Cook?!

(*COOK rushes on.*)

COOK. Yes, miss.

MISS MINCHIN. Lottie is absent again. Bring her down.

COOK. As soon as I take the biscuits out, miss.

MISS MINCHIN. At once, Cook.

COOK. Yes, miss. (*She rushes off.*)

MISS MINCHIN. Please join us, Sara. We are very fortunate  
to have Sara among us, ladies. She is a quite special young  
lady, and, today, when we take our promenade on the  
square, Sara shall lead us. (*SARA is taken aback. MISS  
MINCHIN smiles at her.*)

LAVINIA. But I'm the leader, Miss Minchin. I'm the eldest. I always lead.

MISS MINCHIN. Today, Sara shall. She has read all of Kipling.

ERMENGARDE. Who's Kipling?

LAVINIA. I've read things, too, miss.

MISS MINCHIN. You shall lead, tomorrow, Lavinia. It's Sara's first day in class and she's dressed so elegantly. With Sara leading us, everyone will be able to see the quality of Miss Minchin's students.

*(LOTTIE's screams are heard. COOK drags her on. LOTTIE is a child given to whining.)*

LOTTIE. Noo! Nooo!

COOK. Shut up! You're in class, now.

LOTTIE. I won't! I won't!

COOK. Show some respect for Miss Minchin.

MISS MINCHIN. Cook!

COOK. She's a devil.

MISS MINCHIN. And you are a servant. Etch that indelibly on your brain and act as such.

COOK. Yes, miss. *(Under her breath to LOTTIE.)* You make me get you again and I won't be nearly so kind. *(COOK exits. MISS MINCHIN goes to LOTTIE and puts her arm around her.)*

MISS MINCHIN. I am glad we are all here, today. *(LOTTIE is not quite sure how to take MISS MINCHIN's solicitude but smiles back at her. MISS MINCHIN motions for LOTTIE to go to her place which LOTTIE does.)* Today, ladies, we shall begin with French. *(ERMENGARDE groans and the smile disappears from LOTTIE's face.)*  
Etes-vous pretes, mesdemoiselles?

ERMENGARDE, JESSIE & LAVINIA. **Oui, mademoiselle.**

SARA. **Oui, mademoiselle.**

MISS MINCHIN. That was not everyone. **Etes-vous pretes, mesdemoiselles?**

ALL (except LOTTIE). **Oui, mademoiselle.**

MISS MINCHIN. Lottie, **etes-vous prete?**

LOTTIE (throwing herself on the floor in a furious tantrum).

No, no, no!!! (MISS MINCHIN calmly goes to her, grabs her by the wrist and yanks her up.) Ow, you're hurting me.

That's hurting.

MISS MINCHIN. When I hear screaming, my hand automatically tightens. (LOTTIE screams louder and louder as MISS MINCHIN tightens. Finally, MISS MINCHIN lets her go. LOTTIE catches her breath for a moment, then continues to pound on the floor, furiously. SARA goes to her and lies down on the floor, staring into LOTTIE's face. LOTTIE is startled and stops momentarily.)

SARA. I used to feel like that a great deal, but whenever I'd start to scream, the monkeys would scream louder. (LOTTIE calms slightly.) Well, since I can't bear monkey noise, I'd start thinking of things. Like suppose I was a princess who ruled from an ivory castle. All the populace would come to me when they were unhappy, and I'd give them food and clothes and jobs that they liked to do. Picking fruit, making furniture. And, of course, in turn, they'd bring me the most beautiful divans and the most delicious treats. And I'd lie on those couches and eat all day long, feeling so at peace with my entire kingdom. (LOTTIE has forgotten her tantrum and has listened eagerly to SARA's supposing. In fact, everyone, including MISS MINCHIN, has been transfixed. When SARA finishes, she smiles at LOTTIE who returns the smile. SARA then turns to MISS MINCHIN and speaks in perfect, fluent French.) **Excusez**



**moi de vous interrompre, mais raconter une histoire peut etre reconfortant—***(With a gesture toward LOTTIE.)*  
**pour les petites.** [I beg your pardon for interrupting but a story can be quite soothing—for the little ones.] *(MISS MINCHIN is taken aback by SARA's French.)*

ERMENGARDE. Gosh, where did you learn all that?

SARA. From my papa. He always spoke French with me in India. My maman was French.

ERMENGARDE. No, I mean the castles and princesses.

SARA. Oh. It's just supposing. I like to suppose I'm a princess. Don't you? *(They all just stare at her. Neither they nor SARA know quite what to make of each other.)*

MISS MINCHIN. Yes. Well. Let us begin our lessons, now, ladies. *(The GIRLS, except for LOTTIE, turn back to MISS MINCHIN.)*

LOTTIE *(tentatively as she smiles at SARA)*. **Je suis prete.**  
*(She turns and smiles at MISS MINCHIN. MISS MINCHIN is not sure if she should be pleased and just stares at SARA. Fade to black.)*