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**Dramatic
Publishing**

The Clock That Went Meow

A Play for Children
by
BETTY MARRAPODI

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(THE CLOCK THAT WENT MEOW)

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THE CLOCK THAT WENT ME-OW

Characters

MR. HANS, *an old and not very successful clockmaker*

MRS. DOLINKA, *his housekeeper*

FITZPATRICK, *a mischievous cat*

KING LEONARDO, *a very powerful monarch*

KING'S MESSENGER

PAGE, *or escorts for the King, as desired*

BIRD, *a toy bird perhaps*

THE CLOCKS

BELINDA, *Mr. Hans's newest creation, a cuckoo clock*

BRENDA, *a clock with a heart*

TIMOTHY, *a clock with a heart-throb*

GRAMPS, *a grandfather clock*

OTHER CLOCKS, *as desired*

Place: The workshop of Mr. Hans

Once upon a time



Story of the Play

Mr. Hans has nearly completed his masterpiece, the most perfect cuckoo clock ever made. He has named the clock Belinda, and all that remains is to teach her to cuckoo.

Word about this very special clock reaches King Leonardo. Since it is the Queen's birthday and she is very fond of cuckoo clocks, the King decides the new clock would make a magnificent gift for the Queen.

Mr. Hans is overwhelmed when his beloved King visits his humble shop . . . but his happiness suddenly turns to despair—something has gone wrong with Belinda—instead of going “Cuckoo,” she goes “Me-ow”!

NOTES ON STAGING

One of the most delightful aspects of “The Clock That Went Me-Ow” is the colorful clock costumes. They may be made of large cardboard boxes, with holes for the actor’s head, arms, and legs (see photo, page 27).

The boxes may be painted or covered with brightly colored paper. Numbers and hands may be painted or glued to the face. Fanciful shapes and designs for the clocks add to the charm of the production (Brenda, for example, may be a heart-shaped clock). The “people characters” may be dressed in modern or period clothing.

The set is very simple, primarily a window set in stage curtains or flats. Drawings and details of costumes and set may be found in the Director’s Production Script for this play.

The Director’s Script also contains simple treble-clef scores for the songs. The songs may be spoken rather than sung, however, for a non-musical play.

Children who have seen this play found it to be truly stage magic, as this note to the Wetumpka Players from the minister of the Munn Avenue Church in East Orange, New Jersey, indicates: “It was a great pleasure to have the Wetumpka Players on our summer series of community entertainment here. I am certain that you could tell from the audience response that ‘The Clock That Went Me-Ow’ was a success. Our school children are still ‘winding up the clocks’.”

Playing time is about 30 minutes.

THE CLOCK THAT WENT ME-OW

By Betty Marrapodi

[The scene is a clock shop. Clocks of many shapes and sizes are lined up on a shelf at Up Center and on the walls. At Up Right Center is a small table with various clock-making tools. Near the table is a hall tree bearing Mr. Hans's hat and topcoat. At Up Left Center is a window, and beneath the window is another small table, on which one or two clocks stand, as if for sale. An entrance at Up Right leads into Mr. Hans's house, and an entrance at Up Left leads to the street. There is a small bench at Right Center and a small stool at Left Center. TIMOTHY, a ruggedly handsome clock, stands Down Left; BRENDA, a pretty, heart-shaped clock, stands Down Right; and BELINDA, a beautiful cuckoo clock, stands at Stage Center. MR. HANS is using an oil can on Belinda. His movements are happy and dance-like as he puts the finishing touches on his masterpiece.]

When the curtain is fully open, all the clocks except Belinda strike nine. It is a melange of sound.]

MR. HANS. A little oil here . . . little oil there. Good! That should do it. No more squeaking, I hope! *[Moves clock hands and finds they are loose]* I guess I'd better tighten your hands a bit. *[Trots to table, URC, returns with a screwdriver and tightens her hands, then stands back to admire her]* There now! Aren't you a fine work of creation! What a masterpiece you will be when you're finished. You will surpass any work I've ever done. You've taken a lot of my time, but you're worth it. Ah! My dear Belinda, you should be so lucky as to find yourself in King Leonardo's royal chambers! But that is not our luck. No one ever comes by this part of

town any more. This shop is but a hole in the wall . . . who would see it if they did come? No, my dear Belinda, I'm afraid your charm will be wasted here. Such is our luck. *[Picks up broom leaning against UC shelves, and begins to sweep]* I had dreams for you when I first designed you. I said to myself, "Hans, you've made thousands of clocks . . . all sizes, all shapes. They have kept perfect time. People all over the world have bought clocks from you. Yet! You're not completely happy. And you don't even know why. Hans," I said, "what is it you want?" To do something different That's it! Something different. Then *you* became an idea, Belinda. I dreamed of you night and day. For years I worked on my plans. You had to be the most beautiful, perfect clock in all the world. I spent so much time working on you that I lost contact with the outside world. No one has come in here to buy a clock for the past . . . 10 years . . . Now your charm will be wasted here with no one to appreciate it but me If only King Leonardo would hear of you! The Queen is very fond of cuckoo clocks. But that is out of the question. How would the king know of your existence when no one ever comes this way? Oh well, at least you have me and your clock friends . . . we're a family. *[Sweeps a bit; puts broom down, then returns to work on Belinda.]* You're almost finished, my dear. Soon you'll be able to cuckoo to your heart's desire. *[A white BIRD appears at window]*

BIRD. TWEET! TWEET!

MR. HANS. Oh! You beautiful bird! You've come to visit us. You see, Belinda, someone has come to admire your charm. *[Pats bird]* You lovely, lovely bird. If only you could carry a message to our beloved king, then you could tell him about our dear Belinda. What a magnificent gift she would make for our Queen! That is foolish . . . but it is good to wish. Wait here! I have something good for you. *[Calls off Right]* Mrs. Dolinka! MRS. DOLINKA!

MRS. DOLINKA. *[Enters. She is a plump, cheerful housekeeper.]* Yes, Mr. Hans! What can I do for you?

MR. HANS. Will you please bring some bread crumbs for our little feathered friend here? He is the first creature to visit us in a long time. We must be hospitable.

MRS. DOLINKA. I'll be right back. *[Exits]*

MR. HANS. You see, Belinda, how he looks at you? *[Indicating the bird]* You do have an admirer. So come, dear Belinda, let's show him that we're happy to see him. *[Whispers to her]* We have no other friends. *[Aloud]* Someday you'll coo for him, when I have taught you to speak, and he will tweet for you.

MRS. DOLINKA. *[Enters with a bowl of bread crumbs]* Here are the bread crumbs, Mr. Hans.

MR. HANS. *[Takes the bowl and gives some to the bird]* Thank you, Mrs. Dolinka. We all thank you. *[Bird nods, "Thank you" and says "Tweet, tweet" as he eats.]*

MRS. DOLINKA. My! Look at him eat those crumbs! He sure is hungry. Should I get some more?

MR. HANS. I don't believe so, Mrs. Dolinka. I think he's satisfied. Thank you. *[Mrs. Dolinka exits.]* You see, my feathered friend, when Belinda is finished, she will have the most beautiful voice you have ever heard. Please come back to visit. Then she will be ready to cuckoo for you. She just needs a little more work. She's just about ready. *[Returns to work on Belinda]*

BIRD. *[Flies away]* TWEET! TWEET!

MR. HANS. There he goes! I hope he comes back. He was such a nice bird!

MRS. DOLINKA. *[Enters with a bowl of water]* Excuse me, sir, but I thought maybe our feathered friend would like some water.

MR. HANS. He's gone! I think he will return. Why don't you place that water dish on the window sill?

MRS. DOLINKA. *[Places water dish on window sill, then admires Hans' special clock]* Looks like you've finished working on Belinda! May I hear her cuckoo, sir?

MR. HANS. Not just yet, Mrs. Dolinka. I'm not quite fin-

ished. Just a little more work to do. Please hand me that screwdriver.

MRS. DOLINKA. [*Gives Mr. Hans screwdriver*] One more clock to add to your collection! What do you plan to do with all these clocks, sir? No one seems to know we exist. It's been ages since anyone was in here to buy a clock. I wish you'd take my advice and close your shop, Mr. Hans. I hate to see you working so hard day after day, when no one ever stops in to buy anything. Maybe you should try selling pots and pans!

MR. HANS. [*Angry*] POTS AND PANS? My dear Mrs. Dolinka, I appreciate your concern, but this is my love . . . my life . . . I don't care if no one ever comes this way ever again. I am doing what I love to do. I still have a little money left. When that is gone, I will worry . . . until then, I shall be happy working on my clocks. Now go and let me work in peace. I must test my Belinda Call me when dinner is ready. [*Returns to his work*]

MRS. DOLINKA. [*Shakes her head in a helpless gesture, then speaks or sings (music may be found in Production Script)*]

My dear Mister Hans,
 You're working too hard;
 You must stop this pace—
 It shows on your face.
 So come, Mister Hans,
 I'll make you some tea;
 It'll help you relax—
 You need it, you see!
 I see you working night and day—
 You never stop to rest.
 I wish you'd listen when I say
 Tomorrow is another day.
 The clocks all know you need a rest—
 They see you working hard;
 I say you must put off your test . . .
 Tomorrow is another day!

MR. HANS. NO! I must work!

MRS. DOLINKA. [*Shakes head in hopeless gesture . . . takes feather duster from shelves, dusts clocks; notices something missing*] Where is Gramps, sir?

MR. HANS. [*Absentmindedly, concentrating on his work*] Huh? What did you say?

MRS. DOLINKA. [*Pointing to Gramps' vacated spot*] Our Grandfather Clock . . . what has become of him?

MR. HANS. Oh! Gramps! He's getting old. I had to take him to the back room for a while. His timing is off. He needs a little rest.

MRS. DOLINKA. [*Sighs*] This room doesn't seem the same without him. He has stood in that corner for so many, many years. It's sad to think he may never be in that corner again.

MR. HANS. [*Defensively*] I didn't say *never*, Mrs. Dolinka. I said he needs a little rest. After I'm finished working on Belinda, I will take a look at him. I'll get him going again. He still has some good years left.

MRS. DOLINKA. [*Smiling*] That's good, sir! I'll call you when dinner is ready. [*Exits*]

[The sound of horses is heard off stage. A MESSENGER enters.]

MESSENGER. Are you Hans the clock maker? [*MR. HANS nods.*] I have a message for you from the King.

MR. HANS. The King?

MESSENGER. [*Reads from scroll*] "His Majesty, King Leonardo, has heard of your very special cuckoo clock. Tomorrow is the Queen's birthday and he wishes to surprise her with this special clock you have created. You are hereby asked to have it ready by tonight. The King will honor you with his presence at six o'clock this evening." [*Rolls up scroll*] Six o'clock this evening . . . promptly! [*He turns to leave*]

MR. HANS. [*Recovering*] Wait a minute, please! Tell me, how did the King hear of my special clock?

MESSENGER. Just let us say that a little bird told him.

[*Exits. The sound of horses departing is heard.*]

MR. HANS. [*Excitedly*] MRS. DOLINKA! MRS. DOLINKA!

MRS. DOLINKA. [*Enters, wiping hands on apron, worried*] Sir, what's wrong! Are you all right?

MR. HANS. It's happened! It's happened! The king has heard about my Belinda!

MRS. DOLINKA. Please calm down and tell me about it, sir.

MR. HANS. The King has sent a messenger here to announce that he is coming tonight at six o'clock to buy my Belinda for the Queen's birthday.

MRS. DOLINKA. How did the King hear of your special clock, sir?

MR. HANS. I don't really know . . . I was so excited, I half fainted. I was speechless. [*To the children in the audience*] Who did the Messenger say told the King? A bird? That's right! He did say that a bird told him.

MRS. DOLINKA. A BIRD! It must have been our little feathered friend. Ha! Ha! And you said birds couldn't talk. Ha! Ha!

MR. HANS. So I did! We will treat him very special if he comes back to visit us.

MRS. DOLINKA. Sir, you said the King is coming here at six o'clock? Will you have her ready by then?

MR. HANS. She is finished now! I just have to test her. But, I am famished. This has been quite a day! Is dinner ready yet?

MRS. DOLINKA. Yes sir! I was about to call you when you called me.

MR. HANS. You go on ahead. I must make sure everything is ready for the King. [*MRS. DOLINKA exits.*] I

must not forget anything. It will be a glorious moment for us all. *[Looks out window as he takes off apron]* I wonder where Fitzpatrick is? *[Calls out to Mrs. Dolinka]* Mrs. Dolinka, have you seen Fitzpatrick?

MRS. DOLINKA. *[Sticks head onstage]* No, sir! I haven't seen him all day. I called him, but he didn't answer. Don't worry, Mr. Hans, he'll come around when he gets hungry.

MR. HANS. *[To Belinda]* I know you'd want Gramps to be here to bid you farewell, Belinda. He has been with us for so many, many years. He'll be glad to hear you've found such a grand home. Imagine living in a palace! And when you cuckoo, kings and queens and princes will hear you, and you'll make them happy! You'll make many new friends, my dear, but please remember us. We'll think of you and miss you—but we'll be glad that you're where you belong. *[He takes her hand and kisses it tenderly.]* I'll go get Gramps, Belinda. *[Hangs apron on clothes tree as he exits. The other clocks strike 12. He enters with GRAMPS, a gray-haired grandfather clock]* Here you are, old man! Back in your own little corner. *[Stands Gramps below URC table; talks to Belinda]* See, Belinda, I've brought Gramps in here to be with you for a while before you go. *[Talks to all the clocks]* Now, if you'll all excuse me, I'll go and eat my dinner. When I return, I shall be ready to test Belinda's beautiful cuckoo voice. That is the last thing I must do. *[Looks out window again]* I wonder where that Fitzpatrick is? He's a naughty boy to stay away from home so long. *[Exits R]*

FITZPATRICK. *[Appears at the window]* Me-ow! Me-ow! Me-ow! *[Jumps in]* Hello, clocks! Hello! You dumb clocks. Hans thinks you're so special. Well . . . I think you're goofy. I can sing better than you any day. Hey, pops! How are you today, old boy?

GRAMPS. I may be old, Fitzpatrick, but I can still sing pretty well . . . Bong . . . Bong . . . Bong!

FITZPATRICK. Boy! Gramps! Can't you do better than that? That's a dumb sound.

BRENDA. You think you're so smart, Fitzpatrick. I happen to think your me-ow is silly.

FITZPATRICK. Well, well! Sweet Brenda! Don't you get sarcastic with me! You're not so special any more. Belinda has taken over. Mr. Hans doesn't fuss over you any more does he? . . . neither does Timothy. Have you seen him making eyes at Belinda? Well, I have! Ask him how he feels about Belinda?

BRENDA. Fitzpatrick, you're mean! I know Timothy still likes me best. Don't you, Timothy?

TIMOTHY. [*Looks at Belinda defensively*] Well . . . well . . . we . . . uh . . . of course! I like you both!

BRENDA. But you *must* like one of us better, and it is me . . . isn't it?

TIMOTHY. [*Annoyed*] Oh, Fitzpatrick! Why don't you go find something else to do—like chase a ball down a rattlesnake hole!

FITZPATRICK. I have nothing else to do today. Besides, I like it here. [*Laughs mischievously*]

BELINDA. Tell her, Timothy. She has to find out before I leave.

BRENDA. [*Curious*] Tell me what, Belinda?

BELINDA. [*Proudly*] Timothy likes me best!

BRENDA. [*Upset*] I don't believe it! Timothy, tell me this is not true!

TIMOTHY. Well . . . I . . . I . . . like I said! [*Guilty*] I like you both.

BRENDA. You said that before. I want to know which of us you like better?

BELINDA. [*Hurt*] Yes, Timothy! Tell us!

TIMOTHY. Brenda, you've got to understand. Belinda is a very special clock.

BRENDA. [*Hurt*] But you thought I was special, too . . . once upon a time. Didn't you mean it?

TIMOTHY. Yes, Brenda! You are special, too, but special only to me. Belinda will be special for all to see. That is why I like her—best!

BRENDA. [*Upset*] How could you do this to me? I was here before her. Besides . . . she's not so pretty. She can't even sing yet. You know I have a beautiful voice. You said so yourself . . . [*Catty*] Besides, she's square!

BELINDA. [*Upset*] And you . . . you . . . look like a heart! . . . and . . . [*sobs*] boo-hoo! You're right! I don't even know how to sing yet!

TIMOTHY. Don't worry, dear Belinda! You'll learn. See what you've done, Brenda? You've made her so unhappy. I hope you're satisfied!

GRAMPS. Now, now, children! This will never do! We musn't fight amongst ourselves. Brenda, you must apologize to Belinda. It's not her fault if Timothy likes her best. She is a very special clock. Besides, she will be gone soon and we musn't let her go with hurt feelings. We will miss her!

TIMOTHY. Yes, Gramps! You're right! Belinda is a very special clock and belongs in the King's palace. She is fortunate to have found such a wonderful home. We must be happy for her, although we will miss her! [*Cross to Brenda*] Come, Brenda! Apologize to Belinda! [*Sings or speaks to musical background as he leads BRENDA to Belinda.*]

The love I feel for both of you
 Has made my life so full and true;
 If only I could make you see
 How precious both of you are to me.
 Come, let me hear you say we're friends;
 That will help to make amends.
 I've love enough for both of you—
 Let's all be friends and start anew!

[As music fades, he hugs them both.]

BRENDA. [*Shyly*] I'm sorry, Belinda. I don't think you're so square. I am glad Timothy likes you best . . . [*catty again*] but, he'll like me again once you've gone!

BELINDA. But I have to learn to sing before the King takes me.

FITZPATRICK. Don't worry, Belinda! I'll help you. We'll surprise Mr. Hans. I'll teach you to sing.

GRAMPS. What a nice thing to do, Fitzpatrick! You are a nice cat after all. *[To the other clocks]* While Fitzpatrick teaches her to sing, let's take a nap so we'll be fresh and alert when the King arrives.

TIMOTHY. That's a good idea, Gramps. Thank you, Fitzpatrick. *[Clocks return to their original positions and nap.]*

FITZPATRICK. Now, Belinda, the first thing you must learn to do is to me-ow. Listen carefully . . . Me-ow! Me-ow! Me-ow! Think you can do it?

BELINDA. Sure I can! Me . . . me . . . me . . .

FITZPATRICK. No! No! No! It's Me-Ow! Me-Ow! Me-Ow!

BELINDA. Ow . . . Ow . . . Ow . . . Ow!

FITZPATRICK. Dear dear . . . you are a dumb clock after all. Here, let me explain again. *[Sings or speaks]*

The name of my song is "Me-ow"—

First you go *me* and then *ow*.

Let's put it together and then

You go *me-ow . . . me-ow . . . me-ow . . . me-ow!*

It's not so hard to *me*;

It's not so hard to *ow*;

If only you could learn to *me*,

You could not miss the *ow*—

Me-ow . . . me-ow . . . me-ow . . . me-ow!

Now let's see what you have learned, Belinda. Take your time.

BELINDA. Me . . . me . . . me . . . ow . . . ow . . . ow . . . *[sobs]* I can't, Fitzpatrick!

FITZPATRICK. You are dumb, Belinda. Gee! I don't know what to do . . . *[Talks to children in the audience]* Audience, do you think you can teach Belinda to sing? . . . Good! Did you hear that, Belinda? The children are going

to help me teach you to me-ow. *[To audience]* We are going to sing our “Me-Ow” song again. You will join in when we go, “Me-ow! me-ow! me-ow! me-ow! me-ow!”

The name of our song is “Me-ow”–

First you go *me* and then *ow*.

Let’s put it together and then

You go *[waves to audience to join in]* me-ow!
me-ow! me-ow! me-ow!

It’s not so hard to *me*;

It’s not so hard to *ow*;

If only you could learn to *me*

You can not miss the *ow*–*[motions to audience]*

Me-ow . . . me-ow . . . me-ow . . . me-ow!

You’ll be very rare, they’ll say;

You’ll be very special, you’ll see;

The king will want you to be

His very own me-ow . . . me-ow! me-ow! me-ow!

Now, Belinda, take your time.

BELINDA. Me . . . me . . . me . . .

FITZPATRICK. One more time boys and girls *[to the audience]*: Me-ow! me-ow! me-ow! me-ow! me-ow!

BELINDA. Me! Me! . . . I can’t, Fitzpatrick; *[sobs]* I just can’t. I guess I’m not so special after all. I can’t even learn to sing. I tried. I really tried. *[Sobs]* Boo-hoo! Boo-hoo!

FITZPATRICK. You are a dumb clock, Belinda. Oh! stop your bawling. I can’t stand crying females. I’m getting out of here. Good-bye! *[Exits out window]*

BELINDA. I can’t help crying. I feel just awful.

MR. HANS. *[Enters rubbing his stomach]* Ah! That was a good meal! I feel just great. *[Takes apron from clothes tree and puts it on]* Now, my dear Belinda, for the great test. You must have the most beautiful cuckoo voice anyone has ever heard. Now! *[Takes a look around at the other clocks]* Are we all ready? *[To the audience]* Are we all ready? *[Turns her on—waits with delighted anticipation]*