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Dramatic Publishing

THE FIR TREE

by
James Engelhardt

Music and Lyrics
by
Carol Weiss



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CAROL WEISS
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(THE FIR TREE)

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THE FIR TREE

A Musical in Two Acts

CHARACTERS

HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN

the storyteller and the **FIR TREE**

ERICthe boy who grows up

FREYA his mother, a widow

OSCAR the family's aging servant

INGRIDthe family's aging cook

The **RABBIT**, the **SUN**, the **RAT**: played by **OSCAR**

The **STREAM**, the **FIRST MOUSE**: played by **INGRID**

BIRCH TREE, **WIND**, **SECOND MOUSE**: played by **FREYA**

The **MUSICIAN**

THE FIR TREE was first presented by The Theatre School Playworks of DePaul University (formerly the Goodman School of Drama) for the subscription series at the First Chicago Center Theatre, on October 12, 1985.

“We don’t have the eyes yet that can see into all the wonders that God has created, but we shall have them one day; and that shall be the best fairy tale in the world, for we, ourselves, shall be in it.”

Hans Christian Andersen

The Musical Numbers

Act One

1. A GIFT TO YOUHans
2. HAPPY TREEFreya, Oscar, Ingrid
3. TALL Eric, Tree
4. FREYA'S PRAYER Freya
TALL-PRAYER Freya, Eric
5. BIRTHDAY SONGFreya, Oscar, Ingrid
6. THE BEST PART OF THE HOLIDAY .Freya, Oscar, Ingrid
7. THE BEST PART OF THE HOLIDAY-reprise ...Eric
8. THE STORY OF EGGBERT Freya, Eric

Act Two

9. COMPANY Tree
10. THE STORY OF EGGBERT-reprise Tree
11. THE LARDERRat, 1st Mouse, 2nd Mouse
12. BIRTHDAY SONG-repriseFreya, Oscar, Ingrid
13. WAKE UP, BOY Tree
14. A GIFT TO YOU-finale reprise .. Hans and Company

ACT ONE

AT RISE: *The MUSICIAN(S), appropriately dressed in clothes of the last century, enter and begin to play: Music Cue 1: "A Gift To You."*

During the opening bars, HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN enters. He is dressed rather elegantly, in nineteenth century Danish costume. He is a dashing, versatile storyteller, capable of playing the VOICE OF THE TREE and acting as its puppeteer.

HANS (*singing*).

LET MY STORY BE A GIFT TO YOU,
LET IT FILL YOU WITH A POUND OF
PLEASURES.

LET ME TAKE YOU TO A LAND THAT'S NEW,
HEARING DIFF'RENT SOUNDS
AND FINDING HIDDEN TREASURES.

IF YOU'LL GIVE ME BUT AN HOUR OR TWO,
COULD BE WE CAN MEET A FEW SURPRISES.

I CAN TELL A TALE OF LONG AGO,
OR, MAYBE, JUST A SONG AGO.

SO, LET MY STORY BE A GIFT TO YOU,
MY HOLIDAY GIFT TO YOU.

(*Speaking.*) My name is Hans, and my holiday story takes place long ago. How long ago? As old as you are, plus a hundred years! We're going deep into the forest,

in Denmark, for the story of the Fir Tree. (*HANS crosses to the little FIR TREE.*) Such a pretty little tree. Every day he could feel the wind blow through his boughs. (*Music Cue 2: "Happy Tree."*)

(*FREYA enters, carrying WIND—a set of long silver streamers on a wand. She dances around TREE, drawing the streamers past its boughs.*)

FREYA (*singing*).

THE WIND MAKES A MERRY AND A
PLAYFUL SOUND,

HERE AND THERE, IN AND OUT,
UP AND DOWN, ALL AROUND.

THE WIND MAKES A MERRY AND A
PLAYFUL SOUND,

HERE AND THERE, IN AND OUT,
ALL AROUND. (*FREYA exits with WIND.*)

HANS (*speaking*). And every day, the Fir Tree watched the bright sun come up!

(*OSCAR enters, carrying SUN—a pole with a large covered hoop atop, painted with spirals.*)

OSCAR (*singing*).

THE SUN BEATS DOWN ON THE GROUND
BELOW.

A STEADY, BRIGHT AND WARMING GLOW.

(*OSCAR exits, carrying SUN.*)

HANS (*speaking*). The Fir Tree grew near a blue stream that ran through the forest.

(INGRID enters, pulling a long blue cloth behind her, attached to a rod. She winds through the forest, past FIR TREE.)

INGRID *(singing)*.

THE STREAM SINGS A SWEET, FLOWING
MELODY.

A LULLABY TO SOOTHE A LITTLE TREE.

(HANS bends down, dipping his hand in the "water," as INGRID crosses to the opposite side of the stage from where she entered.)

(FREYA and OSCAR reenter, joining INGRID.)

FREYA *(trio)* .

THE WIND MAKES A MERRY AND A
PLAYFUL SOUND,

HERE AND THERE, IN AND OUT,

UP AND DOWN, ALL AROUND.

THE WIND MAKES A MERRY AND A
PLAYFUL SOUND,

HERE AND THERE, IN AND OUT,

ALL AROUND.

INGRID *(trio)*.

THE STREAM SINGS A SWEET, FLOWING
MELODY.

A LULLABY TO SOOTHE A LITTLE TREE.

OSCAR *(trio)*.

THE SUN BEATS DOWN, ON THE GROUND
BELOW.

A STEADY, BRIGHT AND WARMING GLOW.

(OSCAR, solo).

EVERYBODY KNOWS WHY THE WIND
BLOWS,
THE WIND BLOWS PETALS OFF THE
AUTUMN ROSE.

EVERYBODY KNOWS WHY THE WIND
BLOWS,
TO MAKE THE LITTLE TREE HAPPY.
EVERYBODY KNOWS WHY THE WIND
BLOWS,

THE WIND BLOWS AND THE—(Continuing.)

INGRID (joining OSCAR).

—STREAM FLOWS.

THE STREAM FLOWS COLDER THAN A
PUPPY-DOG'S NOSE,
TO MAKE THE LITTLE TREE HAPPY.

OSCAR.

EVERYBODY KNOWS WHY THE WIND
BLOWS,
THE WIND BLOWS AND THE

INGRID (joining OSCAR).

—STREAM FLOWS,

THE STREAM FLOWS AND THE —

FREYA (joining OSCAR and INGRID).

—SUN GLOWS.

THE SUN GLOWS BRIGHT ENOUGH TO
MELT THE WINTER SNOWS,
TO MAKE THE LITTLE TREE HAPPY.

FREYA/OSCAR/INGRID.

LA LA LA, LA LA LA
LIFE IS WONDERFUL IN THE FOREST.
LA LA LA, HA HA HA,
LIFE IS HAPPY FOR A TREE.

OSCAR.

BASKING IN THE SUN.

INGRID.

FROLICKING IN THE BREEZE

FREYA.

REVELING IN THE COMPANY
OF ALL THE OTHER TREES.

ALL.

LA LA LA, LA LA LA.

LIFE IS WONDERFUL IN THE FOREST

LA LA LA, HA HA HA

LIFE IS HAPPY FOR A TREE.

OSCAR.

THINK HOW FORTUNATE OUR LITTLE TREE IS.

INGRID.

NO TREE COULD BE HAPPIER THAN HE IS,

FREYA.

ALL DAY LONG HE'S GENTLY SWAYING,
ALL DAY LONG HE'S SWEETLY SAYING—

HANS (*speaking as FIR TREE, operating it like a puppet*). I...Am...Miserable! (*Music stops abruptly. EVERYONE freezes in astonishment. To AUDIENCE.*)

Can you imagine that?

WIND. Why, Hans Christian Andersen!

SUN. We've never heard of a tree talking this way before!

STREAM. Just what kind of a fairy tale is this?

HANS. This is the story of an *unhappy* fir tree.

WIND/SUN/STREAM. Oh, we see! (*FREYA, OSCAR and INGRID exit.*)

HANS. The little Fir Tree grew in a deep forest of happy trees. But he was always discontented. (*Music Cue 2a: "Sun Theme."*)

(OSCAR re-enters, carrying SUN.)

SUN. Every day I bring light and warmth! *(Music Cue 2b: "Wind Theme.")*

(FREYA reenters, carrying WIND.)

WIND. Every day I soothe your boughs!

TREE. These things don't make me happy.

SUN. Why are you unhappy, little tree?

WIND. Tell us why, little tree?

TREE. *Little tree!* That's why I'm unhappy—I'm just a little tree!

SUN. Look for happiness in my sunshine!

WIND. And in my soothing breezes!

TREE. I won't be happy until I'm tall! *(Lights change to nighttime. A string of white lights represent stars.)*

HANS. The Sun set and the Wind died away into nighttime, because they had nothing left to say. *(OSCAR exits with SUN. FREYA exits with WIND.)* But the tree was just as unhappy at night. He cared nothing for the peacefulness of darkness, nor for the stars above that twinkled like Christmas lights. *(Lights change to daytime.)* Then one day a stranger came into the forest.

(ERIC enters, carrying a small bucket. He looks about six, and he wears short pants. As the play progresses he'll age three years.)

ERIC. I...Am...Miserable!

HANS. They had something in common.

ERIC. When will I ever get to come to the forest alone?

OSCAR *(calling from off-stage)*. Master Eric!?

ERIC. Never ever! I'll hide. (*ERIC looks around for a place to hide. He ducks behind FIR TREE.*)

(*OSCAR enters, carrying a big bucket. He is tall, slender, wearing formal servant's clothes, including white gloves—quite out of place in the forest. He's a bit slow and bumbling.*)

OSCAR. You haven't run off again, have you? (*Looks around, panting.*) I suppose you have. Why must you always run off? Why can't you make it easy on Oscar and just walk off? (*He looks around, right past ERIC who is obviously not hidden well behind TREE. OSCAR begins to investigate ridiculous hiding places, such as under rocks or even children's seats.*) You're obviously hiding from me. I've served your family for many years with loyalty and dignity. Now look at me—scrounging under fallen logs! Eric!?

ERIC (*standing up*). Here I am.

OSCAR. Ah, ha! Haven't lost my touch at finding you, have I?

ERIC. It's downright cruel to hide from you when I can do it so easily.

OSCAR (*embarrassed*). Oh, is that so? Well, isn't it beautiful here in the forest? I mean, it's so full of trees.

ERIC. Yes, Oscar.

INGRID enters with STREAM, running through the forest.)

OSCAR. And this lovely stream. So full of, er, water.

ERIC. Yes, Oscar. (*INGRID exits with STREAM.*)

OSCAR. Doesn't it fill you with happiness?

ERIC. No, Oscar.

OSCAR. You're so right! (*Realizing.*) How's that?

ERIC. I'm not happy.

OSCAR. What? You have everything to be happy for.

ERIC. I'd be happy if I had a big bucket, like yours.

OSCAR. You're too little for a big bucket. Be happy with your bucket and enjoy it to the hilt. Tra, la!

ERIC. Then I'd be happy if I could come to the forest by myself.

OSCAR. You're too little for that, too. You're mother says so. Be happy you have a friend for company while we—while we what?

ERIC. We're supposed to pick raspberries.

OSCAR. What fun! We'll pick them and our cook, Ingrid, will make a raspberry pie for your mother. She'll be proud of you. Won't that make you happy?

ERIC. No. But if she gave me a popgun, then I might come to the forest alone! (*A string of red lights represent raspberries.*)

OSCAR. You've just had a birthday. A popgun will have to wait for Christmas. Look here, Master Eric! Raspberry bushes! I'll pick from the high bushes, and you pick from the low bushes.

ERIC. But the best ones are up there!

OSCAR. But you can't reach them yet. You're simply going to have to wait until you're (*Reaching up high to pick a berry.*) taller! (*Music Cue 3: "Tall."*)

(*OSCAR and ERIC begin to mime picking raspberries.*)

ERIC (*singing*).

THE BIGGEST BERRIES SIT ON TOP OF THE
BERRY BUSH,

BUT I CAN ONLY PICK THE LITTLE ONES
BELOW.
AND EVERY TIME I BRING MY LITTLE
BUCKET TO THE BERRY BUSH,
IT JUST REMINDS ME HOW MUCH I NEED TO
GROW.

INSIDE THIS FOUR-FOOT BOY
IS A TWELVE-FOOT GIANT,
SCRUNCHED—IN A TINY SPROUT.
AND EVERY DAY I HEAR,
HE'S YELLING IN MY EAR
AH—AH,
LET ME OUT!

INSIDE THIS PUNY ARM
THERE ARE BRAWNY MUSCLES
STUCK—IN A STATE OF WOE.
THEY'RE STRUGGLING WITHIN
THIS SCRAWNY LITTLE SKIN,
OH—OH
LET ME GROW!

INSIDE THIS PINT-SIZED HEAD
IS GREAT ADVENTURE—TRAPPED!
BEHIND A WALL.
AND I WILL NEVER DO ANYTHING
WORTHWHILE AT ALL
UNTIL I'M TALL!

TREE.

INSIDE THIS THREE-FOOT TRUNK
IS A TWELVE-FOOT GIANT
CRAMPED—IN A MEASLY SPRIG.
AND EVERY DAY I FIGHT

FOR ONE MORE INCH OF HEIGHT,
AH—AH
MAKE ME BIG!

THE OTHER EVERGREENS
WITH THEIR MIGHTY BRANCHES
LAUGH—AT MY LITTLE BOUGH.
I WONDER WHEN I'LL BE
A STRONG AND STATELY TREE,
OH—OH
MAKE IT NOW!

ABOVE ME IS THE GLORY OF THE
SUNLIGHT,
BLOCKED—'CAUSE I'M TOO SMALL.
AND I WILL NEVER DO ANYTHING
WORTHWHILE
AT ALL
UNTIL I'M TALL!

ERIC.

CUTE,
THEY CALL ME CUTE.
THEY PINCH MY CHEEK.

TREE.

THEY PAT MY TWIG.

ERIC.

THEY WOULDN'T DARE,

BOTH.

IF I WAS BIG!

TREE.

WAIT.

ERIC.

THEY TELL ME WAIT!

I CANNOT WAIT,
I WANT TO FLY.

TREE.

TO STRETCH MY BRANCHES
TO THE SKY!

ERIC.

OH, WHY MUST I
BE ONLY FOUR-FOOT-THREE?

TREE.

OH, WHEN WILL I
BE GROWN UP PROUD AND FREE?

ERIC.

THE ONLY THING
THAT'S LITT-LE-R THAN ME
IS THIS TREE! (*ERIC kicks TREE.*)

(*Speaking*). Ow!

TREE. Ow!

BOTH (*singing*).

OUTSIDE MY TINY WORLD
HOW THE FUTURE BECKONS
"COME," I CAN HEAR IT CALL.

TREE. BUT I WILL NEVER DO

ERIC. ANYTHING

TREE.

WORTHWHILE

ERIC.

AT ALL,

BOTH.

UNTIL I'M TALL!

(*OSCAR has become more and more entangled in the
berry bushes during the song, until he is hopelessly
caught by the time it concludes.*)
