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Dramatic Publishing

Puss In Boots



Fairy tale adapted by
Max Bush



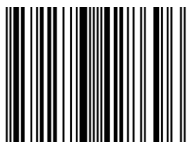
Puss In Boots

*Fairy tale. Adapted by Max Bush. Cast: 10m., 2w., gender flexibility permitted. With doubling, 6 actors. Can a poor miller's son with nothing on his mind except his next meal win a fortune, a title and the hand of a beautiful princess? With the help of a bold, enterprising cat, a pair of boots and a clever, imaginative playwright, the answer is yes! Funny and fast-paced, this *Puss In Boots* remains faithful to the qualities that have made the fable popular over many generations—an inventive wit and a sense of the magical possibilities of the relationships between men and beasts. Area staging. Approximate running time, 1 hour. Code, PD3.*

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Puss In Boots



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MAX BUSH

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(PUSS IN BOOTS)

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Puss In Boots

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PUSS IN BOOTS was commissioned by the Honolulu Theatre for Youth, and opened there in January, 1987, with the following cast and crew:

(in alphabetical order)

<i>Jean/Ogre/Harcourt</i>	David Furumoto
<i>Poppa/King</i>	Kyle Kakuno
<i>Curtis/Alphonse/Harvester</i>	James Pestana
<i>Claude</i>	Kevin Reese
<i>Puss</i>	Polly Kuulei Sommerfeld
<i>Danielle/Annette</i>	Alison Uyeda

Director	Anne-Denise Ford
Sets	Charles Walsh
Costumes	Ann Asakura Kimura
Sound	R. Suzanne Grant
Fight Choreography	Kevin Reese
Artistic Director	John Kauffman
Managing Director	Jane Campbell

PUSS IN BOOTS

CHARACTERS

Claude, *a miller's son*

Jean, *Claude's older brother, the oldest child*

Danielle, *Claude's older sister*

Father, *Claude's Father*

Puss, *a cat*

Princess Annette, *a princess*

King, *a king*

Harcourt, *the King's servant*

Curtis, *a Lieutenant in the King's Guard*

Ogre

Alphonse, *Ogre's servant*

A Harvester

All roles can be acted by a cast of 6 actors.

Time: Late 1600's

Place: France

Dedication:

To Jon Anderson, my teacher

Puss In Boots

Scene One

The Miller's house. Preshow music lowers in volume, playing ominously underneath the opening dialogue. PUSS sleeps on the floor, alone on stage. JEAN, the oldest child of the Miller, runs on, looks around, calls.

JEAN:

Claude?

Silence.

Claude! Father?

Silence.

Danielle?

DANIELLE:

Running on carrying clothes basket.

Here, Jean.

JEAN:

Danielle.

DANIELLE:

What is it?

JEAN:

I was called back from the mill.

DANIELLE:

And I was called from the riverside.

JEAN:

Is it Father?

DANIELLE:

It must be.

JEAN:

Father . . .

DANIELLE:

Where's Claude?

JEAN:

I sent him on ahead. He should have been here before us.

CLAUDE:

Running in, out of breath.

I'm here!

DANIELLE:

Why were we called back?

CLAUDE:

I don't know. I just got here.

JEAN:

I told you to run immediately home.

CLAUDE:

There was a carriage in the road, a royal carriage, with the Princess Annette. She waved at me!

JEAN:

A miller's son?

DANIELLE:

Father!

Music out. The FATHER enters, walking carefully with a cane. He sits.

JEAN:

What is it, Father?

DANIELLE:

How are you?

FATHER:

It's time.

CLAUDE:

Oh, Father, you're well enough.

FATHER:

The time has —

Puss In Boots

CLAUDE: I'll take you for a walk today, down near the river. The leaves are beginning to change and we —

JEAN: Let him speak.

FATHER: The time has come for me to give you all that I have in this world.

JEAN: Shall I call a lawyer?

FATHER: No. They would take too much for themselves and I have little enough to leave you. Jean . . .

JEAN: Yes, Sir.

He crosses to FATHER, kneels.

FATHER: To you, my oldest son, I leave the mill. Work hard, live wisely, and you will earn an honest living.

JEAN: Thank you, Father.

FATHER: Danielle . . .

DANIELLE: *Kneeling.*

Here, Father.

FATHER: To you, my second child, much less. For your dowry, I leave you my ox. Until you marry, work with your brother Jean and you will earn your bread. I had hoped for much more for you.

DANIELLE: *She kisses him.*

Thank you, Father.

She rises.

It's enough.

FATHER: Claude . . .

CLAUDE: Father, you have nothing left for —

FATHER: Kneel.

CLAUDE: *Kneeling.*

You have nothing else, Father, I know.

FATHER: To you, my youngest, who will need the most help but who may surpass the others in fortune, I leave my most important possession. Something better than a mill, richer than gold.

CLAUDE: What, Father? What secret have you kept from us?

FATHER: I leave you — for you alone will be able to profit by it — I leave you . . . my cat.

CLAUDE: Your cat?

PUSS stretches, yawns.

FATHER: My cat.

CLAUDE: That cat?

FATHER: That cat.

CLAUDE: Father . . . That cat?

Puss In Boots

FATHER: Our Puss.

CLAUDE: You . . .

He smiles.

are joking.

JEAN: Thank him.

CLAUDE: Father, what is it? What is your secret gift?

FATHER: Just as I've said.

CLAUDE: Your cat!

He laughs loudly.

JEAN: Thank him!

CLAUDE: *He stops laughing.*

Thank you, Father, for your cat.

FATHER: *Slowly rising, with DANIELLE's help.*

And now, help me to my bed, where I will pass from this world knowing all is well with all of you.

CLAUDE: All is well?

DANIELLE: *Helping FATHER out.*

Claude!

CLAUDE: Father, wait!

JEAN: He can't help you, anymore. And I can't either. There isn't enough work for you at the mill.

CLAUDE: What?

JEAN: There isn't enough business. You must go out on your own.

CLAUDE: Me?

JEAN: I'm sorry.

CLAUDE: But you and Danielle can make an honest living, by putting your property together. There is nothing left for me except to die of hunger.

JEAN: Father has faith in you. He gave you his cat.

PUSS meows. CLAUDE begins to protest but doesn't know what to say so he laughs.

Good luck, brother.

He exits.

CLAUDE: But . . . Jean! Father! I'll starve! Unless I skin the cat and eat it.

He dismisses the thought with a sound of disgust.

Father, you've condemned me to death!

Turning to PUSS.

But I won't starve today. I will eat, today. Casserole of Cat.

Puss In Boots

He draws his dagger.

Here, good Puss. Loyal Puss.

CLAUDE meows, slowly crosses to PUSS.

Yes, it's your new Master, good Master Claude, and since I am your Master it is your duty to keep me from starving. Therefore, generous servant — Voila!

He lunges at reclining PUSS. In a deft and not-too-concerned move, PUSS eludes the blow. Again CLAUDE lunges, again the same results. Again. Again. In frustration CLAUDE raises dagger to slice PUSS.

Stay still.

He swings, PUSS escapes.

I said stay!

He swings again, PUSS moves over to chair where FATHER left a cane. He picks it up, wields it like a sword with style and grace.

Put that cane down.

PUSS: If you would, Sir, sheathe your weapon and apologize for your attack, I would accept such an order.

CLAUDE: I am your new master, cat, and I command you to put that down.

PUSS: I won't.

CLAUDE: You will.

PUSS: Sir, I regret that what you say is impossible and I also regret that if you do not lower your weapon now, I must say to you — EN GARDE!

CLAUDE: En garde! To me? My own Puss?

PUSS: You leave me no choice, Sir. Casserole of Cat? So I say again, if you will not sheathe your weapon and apologize, en garde!

CLAUDE: Hah!

CLAUDE attacks, PUSS defends. They fight, PUSS with finesse, protecting himself, and CLAUDE on the attack, impetuous and outclassed. In a series of stunning moves, PUSS disarms CLAUDE, stands with his cane to CLAUDE's chest.

Touche.

PUSS: Reverse your position on eating your servant, Sir, or I shall, with clear conscience, run you through.

CLAUDE: With a cane? Ha!

CLAUDE grabs the end of the cane, PUSS pulls away, the cane comes apart revealing a sword. PUSS flashes more stunning moves with sword, then puts point to CLAUDE's chest.

Cat, I humbly apologize.

PUSS: The casserole, Sir.

CLAUDE: And will not attempt, in any way, to eat you again, in any dish.

Puss In Boots

PUSS: *Giving CLAUDE his weapon.*

You are made of kindness, Sir.

PUSS sheathes his weapon. Although their relationship begins with conflict, PUSS and CLAUDE must, almost from the start, demonstrate an underlying affection for one another. Their relationship is obviously contentious, with much joking at the other's expense — this is most true of PUSS — but a fast bonding and growing friendship between them is essential.

Master, I think you had better not kill me; I shall be much more useful to you, alive.

CLAUDE: How?

PUSS: I would teach you the art of swordplay, if nothing else. You are a boy, Sir; strong, with a good mind, but not well trained.

CLAUDE: Yes.

PUSS: And you **will** starve to death.

CLAUDE: Yes!

PUSS: Unless you give me a sack and a pair of fine new boots.

CLAUDE: My new boots?

PUSS: Then you will find your poor Father's gift to you richer than you imagine.

CLAUDE: How can that be? A bragging cat, with a trick cane.

PUSS: You doubt me, Sir?

CLAUDE: You do fight well. And I've seen you catch mice and rats. But I will not eat rats and mice.

PUSS: I will catch a rabbit.

CLAUDE: (*Helplessly*) I love rabbit.

PUSS: I will catch one.

CLAUDE: I love rabbit!

PUSS: What was that, sir?

CLAUDE: (*Completely innocently.*) I love rabbit!

PUSS: *Warmly, petting CLAUDE.*

Trust me and you will eat royally.

CLAUDE: What else can I do? I'll give you your sack and your boots. Here . . .

Gives him a sack.

And here . . . My new boots . . .

He takes off his boots or picks them up and hands them to PUSS.

These are all I have.

PUSS: You are made of generosity, Sir.

PUSS puts them on.

Puss In Boots

CLAUDE: How do they fit?
PUSS: Perfectly.
CLAUDE: Shall I follow you?
PUSS: Meet me on the roadside by the Fontaine bridge in one hour.
CLAUDE: I will.
PUSS: And I'll present you with your supper.

Bowing.

Sir.

CLAUDE: Puss . . .

PUSS runs off.

. . . in my boots . . . rabbit . . . rabbit . . .

He exits. Music covers scene change.

Scene Two

A field. PUSS enters, stalking carefully, quietly, a rabbit. He spies his quarry (we don't yet see it), moves closer, stops, then moves again. He sees a rabbit (hand puppet) moving innocently about. It disappears. PUSS continues stalking it. He reaches out, drops some lettuce in a small pile, backs off. He rolls on his back, pretends he is dead. The rabbit appears around a rock or hegerow, spies lettuce, starts for it, sees, cat, panics, runs away, hides.

Pause.

The rabbit peers out again, sees cat. Rabbit moves closer to lettuce, hides, peeks up, then moves wildly, taunting and enticing the cat. No response from PUSS. Rabbit moves toward lettuce, PUSS begins to move, stops as rabbit turns toward him, PUSS freezes and the rabbit resumes eating. PUSS pounces. He wrestles with rabbit (pulls puppet from unseen hand), rolls with it, throws it up, catches it, bats it about, catches it in his mouth, shakes it sharply, then drops it in the sack.

PUSS: Voila!

Music, as he exits with sack slung over his shoulder.

Puss In Boots

Scene Three

The roadside near the Fontaine Bridge. CLAUDE paces.

CLAUDE: Rabbit . . . rabbit . . . rabbit . . .

Spying PUSS off stage.

Cat!

PUSS: *Entering with bag.*

Your rabbit, Sir.

Throws it to CLAUDE.

CLAUDE: You caught one?

Opens bag, looks in.

A fat one! A fat rabbit! Well done, Puss! Good servant!

PUSS: *(Sincerely.)* Anything for you, sir.

CLAUDE: A fire. I'll build a fire. We'll cook it right here on the roadside. I brought some salt

—

Royal trumpets sound.

I know that sound.

PUSS: Royal trumpets. They announce the King and —

CLAUDE: Princess Annette!

PUSS: They're passing down this road.

CLAUDE: Stay a moment and will see a royal beauty.

Courtly music. The KING, PRINCESS ANNETTE, HARCOURT and CURTIS pass, ignore PUSS and CLAUDE, who bow deeply. CLAUDE waves: no response. He waves vigorously, walks with them, waves. No response. Finally CURTIS turns, they face each other for a moment. Then the entourage exits.

Did you see her?

He falls to his knees, weak with love.

She looked at me.

His head falls to his chest.

PUSS: If only she would turn and look at you now.

CLAUDE: I would give everything I own to kiss her just once.

PUSS: Easy to say. You own nothing.

CLAUDE: I own you.

Puss In Boots

Gets up, pets PUSS.

You're not worth a kiss from a princess. I couldn't get a slap from her maid for you. Puss, Puss, Puss, why was I born a miller's son and not a Baron or a Marquis? Why eat if I can't have what's most important to me?

PUSS: Exactly, Sir.

He snatches the bag from CLAUDE.

CLAUDE: But I will, all the same.

He snatches it back.

PUSS: No, Sir, you are right.

He snatches it back.

CLAUDE: I will eat this rabbit, anyway.

He snatches it back.

PUSS: Why? If you can't live your life as you want?

CLAUDE: Gives it to PUSS.

You're right.

Calling after retinue.

Princess! Annette! I starve to death for you!

PUSS: Are you young, Sir, and something close to a man?

CLAUDE: So?

PUSS: You should be brave and, since you are straight of limb and not too near ugly, pursue your fortune.

CLAUDE: Do you think so? Not too near ugly?

PUSS: You should go after —

CLAUDE: Am I nearer to handsome?

PUSS: go after her and —

CLAUDE: But am I nearer to handsome, Puss?

PUSS: You are as near to ugly as you are to handsome.

CLAUDE: You mean I am so-so?

PUSS: I mean you are ugly as a dog to me.

CLAUDE: Oh.

PUSS: And handsome enough for her.

CLAUDE: I am?

PUSS: Yes.

CLAUDE: Handsome!

CLAUDE is encouraged.

PUSS: Therefore, go after her!

Puss In Boots

CLAUDE: *Crestfallen again.*

She won't care for me. I'm too near poor.

PUSS: You can still pursue her . . .

CLAUDE: You're right. Princess Annette!

He dashes off stage after her.

PUSS: WITH A CLEVER PLAN!

After a moment CLAUDE slowly enters searching his thoughts without success.

CLAUDE: A clever plan.

PUSS: An ingenious plot to make you appear worthy of a Princess.

CLAUDE: An ingenious plot . . .

PUSS: Sir, with all respect, hunger has made you a crackbrain.

CLAUDE: Crackbrain?

PUSS: Can you think of no plots or schemes?

CLAUDE: None.

PUSS: If I could think of none I would go hang myself.

CLAUDE: You're right.

He starts off.

PUSS: You need me even more than your father believed. Stop.

CLAUDE stops.

Turn.

He turns to PUSS.

Listen.

He listens.

I'll present myself to the King — are you listening?

CLAUDE: My brain is cracked.

PUSS: I will present myself to the King and offer him this rabbit as a gift from your handsome self.

CLAUDE: He has a kitchen full of rabbits!

PUSS: I will say it's from you —

CLAUDE: A miller's son.

PUSS: The Marquis.

CLAUDE: Marquis?

PUSS: Of . . . Carabas.

CLAUDE: I see . . . the Marquis of Carabas . . . Who is he?

Puss In Boots

- PUSS:** You, Monsieur Crackbrain, are the Marquis of Carabas.
- CLAUDE:** *(What a joke.)* Ha!
- PUSS:** More planning later. I'll need, besides these boots, a gentleman's hat and cape to present myself to the King.
- CLAUDE:** I don't have a gentleman's hat and cape.
- PUSS:** Your ring, Sir.
- CLAUDE:** My mother gave me this ring! It was the only thing she left me.
- PUSS:** I'll sell it to buy my clothes.
- CLAUDE:** My mother's ring . . . What's it matter? If I can't live my life as I want . . . Take it. Do your best.
- Gives PUSS the ring.*
- PUSS:** *With a bow.*
- Sir.
- He exits.*
- CLAUDE:** I will be here, starving on this very roadside, if you need me.
- He exits. Music.*