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Dramatic Publishing

A Full-Length Comedy

Bats in the Belfry

BY

ANGELA RANDAZZO



THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY

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(BATS IN THE BELFRY)

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to my
Mother and Father
with love

BATS IN THE BELFRY
A Full-Length Play
For Six Men, Eight Women, Extras

C H A R A C T E R S

MISS PENNYFEATHER	} <i>instructors at Ogilby Conservatory of Music</i>
MISS APPLEY		
MISS FITCHETT		
MISS MAFFIT		
OFFICER MacDOUGAL		<i>of the Brooklyn Police</i>
PAMELA		<i>the ladies' niece</i>
OLIVER WESTCOTT		<i>her fiancé</i>
MR. WESTCOTT	} <i>his parents</i>
MRS. WESTCOTT		
MISS FAIRFAX		<i>a former student</i>
REV. BARNABY		<i>a local minister</i>
BOY	} <i>the "Friends of Folk Music"</i>
GIRL		
MR. OGILBY		<i>himself</i>
CHILDREN		<i>trick-or-treaters</i>

PLACE: *The parlor and dining room of the Ogilby
 Conservatory of Music for Young Ladies.*

TIME: *Halloween.*

ACT ONE

Scene One

SCENE: An old Victorian house, occupied by the Ogilby Conservatory of Music. Two rooms are seen: the parlor and the dining room. The parlor, L, occupies roughly three-quarters of the stage, while the dining room, to R, is much smaller. There is an indication of a door and a wall separating the two rooms. In the parlor: There is a fireplace in the upstage wall. To the right of it is a stairway to the upstairs bedrooms. A grandfather clock stands to the right of the stairs. To the left of the fireplace is a small raised alcove, with a closet door in its right wall. The front door is UL. On the left wall of the alcove is a small table. On the stage L wall, below the alcove, is a sideboard, and below that, the door to another closet. At DL, against the wall, is a chair. At DC are two sofas, with a coffee table between them. In the dining room is a long dining table with five chairs, two on each side and one at the head. UR is a doorway leading to the kitchen and music rooms. In this doorway niche is a small chest with a telephone on it. There is a window in the wall R. The house is cluttered but clean. The furniture is old and in the Victorian style. There is a candelabra on the dining room table and candles around the house. There are jack-o-lanterns and an almanac on the fireplace mantel, and other Halloween decorations here and there. A

bowl of popcorn balls and candy is on the small table in the alcove. The lights are low and subdued. A "spooky" atmosphere prevails. It is early evening.)

AT RISE OF CURTAIN: The four ladies -- MISS PENNYFEATHER, MISS APPLEY, MISS FITCHETT, and MISS MAFFIT -- are seated around the dining table. They have just finished dinner. There is a cut-glass wine bottle and matching wine glasses on the table. The candles are lit and the lights are low. There are five place settings, with an empty chair at the head of the table. Also on the table is a pie plate, with pieces of pie remaining on it.)

PENNYFEATHER. It seems strange not having Mr. Ogilby with us this evening.

APPLEY. Yes, indeed, Miss Pennyfeather.

Mr. Ogilby has never missed dinner. (They all agree.)

FITCHETT. Oh, no, no, no, wait! Mr. Ogilby did miss one night. (She whispers to PENNYFEATHER, who whispers to APPLEY, who whispers to MAFFIT.)

MAFFIT. Yes, October thirty-first, nineteen-- (Fill in appropriate year.)

PENNYFEATHER: How foolish of me to forget.

APPLEY. It seems like yesterday.

MAFFIT. Twenty years ago, why, this very day.

FITCHETT: Mr. Ogilby was so upset about Pamela, he refused to come to dinner that evening.

MAFFIT. Shhhh----Miss Fitchett, Mr. Ogilby may hear you, and you know he doesn't like to be reminded of that -- er -- a -- mistake.

PENNYFEATHER. Of course, it does seem comforting to have his place set as usual.

APPLEY. I'm afraid most people wouldn't see the difference. (They all laugh.)

MAFFIT. I must admit, Mr. Ogilby has acted a bit peculiar today.

PENNYFEATHER. That's right, Miss Maffit, Mr. Ogilby has stayed in his room all day.

APPLEY. And he even missed our rehearsal this morning.

MAFFIT. Most peculiar.

FITCHETT. Ladies, we must expect a little change in our routine on this auspicious occasion.

PENNYFEATHER (proudly). The 100th Anniversary of the Ogilby Conservatory of Music for Young Ladies.

FITCHETT. You see, Mr. Ogilby is merely preparing himself for this evening's entertainment.

APPLEY. Still, I do feel uneasy tonight.

PENNYFEATHER. It's Halloween. It's a known fact that everyone feels strange on Halloween. Some people just can't get used to the idea of ghosts and goblins flying about.

MAFFIT. How unfortunate.

FITCHETT (to APPLEY). You, of all people, shouldn't feel uneasy about Halloween.

APPLEY. It's not about Halloween. Something I remember from when I was a little girl, but I can't put my finger on it.

MAFFIT. About us?

APPLEY. No, not us. But something to do with us. I believe I read it in one of my books.

PENNYFEATHER. About Mr. Ogilby perhaps?

APPLEY. Yes, Mr. Ogilby and his strange behavior today.

FITCHETT. Nonsense!

APPLEY. Still, I feel easier knowing that Pamela won't be with us tonight.

PENNYFEATHER. I don't, Miss Appley. I miss her.

APPLEY. Well, so do I, Miss Pennyfeather. It's just that . . .

FITCHETT. She's been gone such a long time.

MAFFIT. I hope they're kind to her at that boarding school.

APPLEY. I'm sure they are, Miss Maffit. Of course, it's not like home.

PENNYFEATHER. We just got that lovely letter from her all the way from er -- a -- where is she?

FITCHETT. Swisserland, like the cheese. Now don't fret so, ladies. She'll be home for Christmas.

PENNYFEATHER. Oh, yes, how wonderful. We must get a tree.

APPLEY. And bake cookies.

MAFFIT. Make eggnog.

FITCHETT. Ladies, we had better worry about this evening's festivities.

MAFFIT. Of course, Miss Fitchett, how silly of us.

PENNYFEATHER. Well, I've certainly done my best to ensure a smashing celebration this evening.

MAFFIT. All the invitations have been sent out. The "Friends of Folk Music" next door. You know, I even saved a stamp. I slipped it into their mailbox.

APPLEY. Very clever, Miss Maffit.

MAFFIT. And, of course, I sent an invitation to Reverend Barnaby.

PENNYFEATHER. A spiritual leader certainly fits in with our plans tonight.

MAFFIT. I had to invite Miss Fairfax.

APPLEY. I hope Mr. Ogilby doesn't see her. He never has liked her, even when she was a little girl.

FITCHETT. As the principal contributor to this institution, she can hardly be excluded. Anyway, Mr. Ogilby should be more involved with earthly matters.

APPLEY. Shhh----Miss Fitchett, he may hear you. I don't want to start anything, not tonight of all nights.

MAFFIT. That, ladies, is our guest list.

APPLEY. Here, Miss Pennyfeather, have another piece of hickleberry pie.

PENNYFEATHER. No, thank you. I'm watching my waist line. (She takes a piece anyway.)

MAFFIT. Everyone will be here, everyone except Pamela. (The doorbell rings.) Oh, it must be trick-or-treaters. The first ones tonight. I'll get it. (She goes into the parlor and answers the door.)

FITCHETT. Now to continue, ladies, for our musical program. Miss Appley on the flute, Miss Pennyfeather on the fiddle, Miss Maffit on the harp and I, of course, on drums. For our selections, this will be the order. First, Fugue in C minor . . .

MAFFIT (calling from parlor). Ladies, ladies, come quickly.

PENNYFEATHER. Our guests have arrived.

APPLEY. Dear me, we're not quite prepared. I'll clear off the table. (PENNYFEATHER and FITCHETT go into parlor.)

(Enter OFFICER MacDOUGAL UL.)

PENNYFEATHER. Why, Officer MacDougal, you're early.

MacDOUGAL. Er . . . good evening, ladies.

FITCHETT. Do sit down, Officer MacDougal.

MAFFIT. Please, have some hickleberry pie. I'll get you a piece.

MacDOUGAL. No, please, ladies, thank you.

MAFFIT. Or bimbleberry wine. You know some people say one shouldn't mix their berries, but

we always do -- strawberries with gooseberries,
crunchberries with raspberries . . .

MacDOUGAL. No, no, thank you, ladies, not on duty.

MAFFIT. Of course, how silly of me.

MacDOUGAL. That's right, ma'am.

FITCHETT. Well, what can we do for you, Officer
MacDougal?

MacDOUGAL. It's about this here invitation, ma'am.

PENNYFEATHER (innocently). Invitation?

MacDOUGAL (taking out invitation and reading from it).

To the "100th Anniversary of the Ogilby
Conservatory of Music for Young Ladies."

PENNYFEATHER. Yes, officer, it's tonight.

MacDOUGAL. Well . . . er . . . it's addressed to the
New York City Police Department . . . er . . .
a . . . Brooklyn Branch.

PENNYFEATHER. Yes, officer?

MacDOUGAL. Well . . . er . . . they can't come.

I mean, as a whole. You understand? You ladies
are on my beat; the captain asked me to drop in
tonight and tell you they . . . we . . . can't come.

PENNYFEATHER. Such a pity.

MacDOUGAL. Yeah. You ladies have been real sweet
to me and the missus all these years.

MAFFIT. Our pleasure, officer. Won't you take her
some bimbleberry wine?

MacDOUGAL. No, thanks, she's off the juice . . .
er . . . I mean, she don't drink no more. Well,
I'd better be going. Oh, and thanks again for the
mittens and earmuffs you're knitting me for my
birthday.

LADIES. Our pleasure. You're very welcome . . . etc.

MAFFIT. You let us know when your birthday is.

MacDOUGAL. Yeah, a . . . what color did you say
they was?

FITCHETT. Hot pink!

MacDOUGAL (meekly). Yeah, I'll let you know. Thanks

again, ladies. Good night. (Exit MacDOUGAL.)

LADIES (calling after him). Good night.

MAFFIT. Happy Halloween.

FITCHETT. Well, who invited the New York Police Department tonight? Miss Pennyfeather?

(PENNYFEATHER shakes her head "no.")

Miss Maffit, you were in charge of the invitations.

MAFFIT. It wasn't I.

FITCHETT. Well, it certainly wasn't me. I'll ask Miss Appley. (Calls toward dining room.) Miss Appley, come in here.

PENNYFEATHER. No, wait, Miss Fitchett. It was me. It just slipped out. Officer MacDougal is so thoughtful of us. I thought we should be considerate of the Police Department, too. (They walk back to dining room.)

FITCHETT. But, really, my dear, the whole Police Department.

PENNYFEATHER. I'm sorry.

FITCHETT. I don't think we have enough chairs.

APPLEY. I do wish Mr. Ogilby would come down and have his dinner. (The telephone rings.)

MAFFIT. There goes the doorbell again. It must be trick-or-treaters. (She runs to front door.)

FITCHETT. It's the telephone. Come back, Miss Maffit.

PENNYFEATHER (answering the telephone). Hello . . . hello . . . Miss Pennyfeather speaking.

APPLEY. It must be Pamela. She's the only one who ever calls on the telephone.

FITCHETT. I'll never get used to that thing.

APPLEY. She insisted we put it in so she could call us from . . . er . . . a . . .

FITCHETT. Switzerland, Switzerland, like the cheese. (Doorbell rings.) That is the doorbell.

Who is on the telephone, Miss Pennyfeather?

MAFFIT (calling from parlor). It's Pamela, ladies.

It's Pamela.

APPLEY. You see, I told you she would call.

MAFFIT (calling). Ladies, come here.

FITCHETT. Yes, Miss Maffit, we're coming. Now what do you want? (APPLEY and FITCHETT go into parlor. PENNYFEATHER is still on the telephone with her back to the front door.)

(Enter PAMELA and OLIVER WESTCOTT.)

PAMELA. Darlings, I'm home.

APPLEY. Where did you telephone from, dear?

PAMELA. No, dear, I didn't phone. I -- we -- wanted to surprise you.

APPLEY. But Miss Pennyfeather is on the telephone speaking to you.

PAMELA. No, dear, I'm not in Switzerland, I'm here.

APPLEY. Of course you are, dear.

PAMELA. I knew I should have written first. Aunties, dears, I want you to meet Oliver. (To OLIVER.) This is Auntie Appley, Auntie Maffit, Auntie Fitchett, oh, but . . .

OLIVER. How do you do? . . . etc.

PAMELA. Where is Auntie Pennyfeather?

(PENNYFEATHER enters parlor.)

PENNYFEATHER. Why, Pamela, what are you doing here? It isn't Christmas.

PAMELA (to OLIVER). And Auntie Pennyfeather.

PENNYFEATHER. Is this Joe?

PAMELA. Joe? No, dear, this is Oliver.

PENNYFEATHER. That's good. I didn't think we had a Joe here. I hung up.

OLIVER. How do you do, Auntie Pennyfeather?

PENNYFEATHER. I know why you're here. Pamela, you got the invitation.

PAMELA. No, Auntie, what invitation?

PENNYFEATHER. To our celebration tonight.

FITCHETT (angry). Miss Pennyfeather!

PENNYFEATHER. I'm sorry, Miss Fitchett, it just slipped out. How could we have a celebration without inviting Pamela?

FITCHETT (angry). Pamela is in school. She can't disrupt her studies to come home now. How many more invitations "just slipped out"?

PENNYFEATHER. None, honest. Just the New York Police Department and Pamela, that's all.

PAMELA. No, no, aunties, I'm not in school. That's what I want to talk to you about. Aunties, dears, I've left school. You see, Oliver and I are going to be married. We met each other during semester break. After we met, I just couldn't leave him to finish college. He's going to be a lawyer . . . and he's just wonderful. (OLIVER smiles.) Of course, I've told him you're not my real aunts, that I was orphaned by one of your pupils. But you are the only family I've ever known and you couldn't be more precious to me. So he had to meet you before we got married. I'm going to meet Oliver's family, too. . . . Oliver's from New England -- Cape Cod and all that. Well, his parents are in New York visiting friends and I've invited them over here to meet you and me, tonight. . . . I hope you don't mind. I know this is all so sudden.

MAFFIT. Why, no, my dear, they can join in on the festivities.

FITCHETT. I hope we have enough chairs.

PAMELA. Festivities? What do you mean?

PENNYFEATHER. The invitation.

PAMELA. What invitation, Auntie Pennyfeather?

PENNYFEATHER. The one I sent you. To the 100th Anniversary Celebration of the Ogilby School of Music.

PAMELA. Here? Tonight?

APPLEY. Yes, my dear.

PAMELA. Well, I suppose it will be all right. What do you think, Oliver?

OLIVER. I don't see how it could do any harm, such sweet charming ladies.

PAMELA. Who are the other guests?

MAFFIT. Reverend Barnaby, Miss Fairfax and the "Friends of Folk Music."

FITCHETT (looking at PENNYFEATHER). The Police Department couldn't make it.

PENNYFEATHER. Oh, I don't mind. Pamela made it.

APPLEY. And we're going to have a concert.

MAFFIT. Oh, yes, Pamela can join in with her tuba, just like it used to be before you went away to school.

PAMELA. No, auntie, no tuba.

APPLEY. Certainly we need a tuba.

PAMELA. Aunties, dears, no. . . .

FITCHETT. All those in favor of the tuba. (The ladies raise their hands.)

PENNYFEATHER. We left it in your bedroom, just where you left it.

APPLEY. I polish it every day.

MAFFIT. So do I.

PENNYFEATHER. So do I.

FITCHETT. Then it's settled. Pamela plays the tuba.

APPLEY. I imagine you haven't had a bite to eat, Pamela, dear.

PAMELA. That's right, aunties. You go into the dining room and fix us something to eat. There's something I want to talk to you about. (Exit the four ladies into the dining room.) Well, Oliver?

OLIVER. They're delightful old gals. Just as you described them. It must have been interesting growing up here.

PAMELA. Oh, it was. In more ways than one. But I didn't spend all my childhood here. I was sent

off to boarding school at a very young age. I came home on vacations, though.

OLIVER. It sure is a great set-up for spooks. Say, is it haunted?

PAMELA (uneasy). No, Oliver, don't be foolish.

OLIVER. Where are all the girls? I thought I was going to walk into a harem.

PAMELA. You were hoping, huh? Well, I'm sorry to disappoint you, but you'll have to wait until spring. The Institute is only open during the spring and summer and the young ladies who come here with their kazoos are hardly the harem type. So, Mr. Westcott, I guess you're stuck with me. (They kiss.) Well, what do you think, about your parents, I mean?

OLIVER. It sounds like a delightful program. I'm sure my parents might even enjoy it.

PAMELA. O. K., darling, hurry back.

OLIVER (kissing her again). Are you sure we have to wait until the honeymoon?

PAMELA. Yes.

OLIVER. Then I won't hurry back so fast. (They kiss.)
On second thought.

PAMELA. Good-bye, Oliver.

OLIVER. O. K., sweet, good-bye. (OLIVER starts to exit.)

PAMELA. Oh, and Oliver.

OLIVER. Yes?

PAMELA. I'll try to talk them out of the tuba. (Exit OLIVER UL. After hanging her coat in the upstage closet, PAMELA goes into the dining room.)

APPLEY. There you are, my dear.

FITCHETT. We've fixed you a nice hot sandwich.

PENNYFEATHER. And some huckleberry pie.

APPLEY. Where's Oliver? We have some for you both.

PAMELA. He's driving to New York to pick up his

parents and bring them back here. And it's just as well he's gone because I have something very important to talk to you about before the Westcotts arrive.

APPLEY. My, my, no one is eating tonight. First Mr. Ogilby, now Oliver.

MAFFIT. Mr. Ogilby has been acting strange all day.

APPLEY. I don't like it, not one bit.

PAMELA. Aunties, that's what I want to talk to you about.

PENNYFEATHER. Oliver not eating?

PAMELA. No, Mr. Ogilby.

MAFFIT. Oh, don't worry about him, dear. We'll bring him a sandwich later if he doesn't come down.

PAMELA. I'm not worried about what Mr. Ogilby eats. It's you I'm worried about.

APPLEY. We've already had our dinner, dear.

PAMELA. Not about your dinner. I'm worried about you and Mr. Ogilby. You see, Oliver and Mr. and Mrs. Westcott are . . . well . . . not used to . . . they might not understand four ladies in a house and . . . well . . . Mr. Ogilby.

APPLEY. You don't think there's anything improper?

PAMELA. Oh, no, darlings, of course not. How could there be? After all, he's . . . and you're . . . I'm not explaining myself very well. They won't understand your preoccupation with Mr. Ogilby. I know it's gotten worse since I've been away. There's been no one here to make you see things as they are. Oh, darlings, please, while Mr. and Mrs. Westcott are here, don't mention his name.

PENNYFEATHER (shocked). Not introduce him!

PAMELA. I know, darling, but please, just this once.

LADIES (worried, but giving in). All right, very well, dear, for you . . . etc. (Doorbell rings.)