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Little Red Riding Hood: Grandmother's Tale

By

MAX BUSH

Based on the oral tale *The Grandmother's Tale* (pre 1690);
Little Red Riding Hood, by Charles Perrault (1697);
and *Little Red Cap*, by the Brothers Grimm (1812)

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MAX BUSH

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Little Red Riding Hood: Grandmother's Tale was co-commissioned by the Savannah Children's Theatre (Savannah, Ga.) and the University of Northwestern - St. Paul (St. Paul, Minn.). It opened in Savannah on March 20, 2015.

CAST:

Red Morgan Jane Anderson
Percy Kealan Neal-Farr
Lacy Emma Hohnerlein
Giles Raymond Ocasio
Dillen Thurston Rex Withington
Kari Chloe Lynch
Leon Andre Stafford
Elisha Katie James
Owl Skyler Lanier
Wolf Noah Edwards
Zurie Lexy Bonsignori
Roland Izzy Phillips
Fox Jonas Broom
Rabbit Taylor Rigsbee
Playmates Molly Bass, Emma Gross, Braidyn Rigsbee

CREW:

Director Kelie Miley
Stage Manager Cynthia Holmen
Prop Mistress Gloria Rigsbee
Set Design and Construction Mike Prow, Eric Mitchell
Lighting and Sound Design On Site Services
Office Manager Georgette Ford
Housekeeping Josh Riggs
Program Renee McMahon
Concessions Jason and Gloria Rigsbee, Nancy Phillips
Tech Crew Chris Bass, Jacob Bass,
Maddie Grove, Len James, Madison Major,
Catie Morris, Finn Repella, Anna Schneider

Little Red Riding Hood: Grandmother's Tale opened in St. Paul on Sept. 24, 2015, in Northwestern's Maranatha Hall.

CAST:

Red	Marissa Jacobus
Percy	Alec Leonard
Lacy.....	Chumani Wayd
Giles	Jonathan Horn
Dillen.....	Stalyon Blackmon
Kari	Emma Janssen
Leon	Jeffrey Lloyd
Elisha.....	Lydia Wildes
Owl.....	Gabriella Abbott
Wolf.....	Dawson Ehlke
Zurie.....	Abigail Day
Roland.....	Samuel Mayhew

CREW:

Director	Jennifer Hunter
Assistant Director.....	Abigail Thompson
Scenic Designer	Don Wilson
Costume Design.....	Diane Beal
Light Design.....	Granville Ashling
Master Electrician	Sarah Pierucki
Stage Manager	Meghan Sly
Assistant Stage Manager.....	Jeremiah Thiessen
Production Manager.....	Daniel McLaughlin
Sound Design	Elaina Holmes
Music Composer	Todd Lewis
Audio Engineer	Matt Beckstrom
Head Carpenter	Jay Schueller
Choreographer.....	Jolene Konkel
Fight Choreographer	Corey Mills

INTRODUCTION

Through the centuries, the tale of *Little Red Riding Hood* has captivated the imaginations of storytellers and illustrators, playwrights and audiences. But the story itself suffered remarkable and aesthetically violent changes. For instance, just to note one of those changes, in the oral story—*The Grandmother's Tale*—which predates both the Perrault and Grimm versions—the girl journeys through the forest without a red riding hood or a red cap. Perrault and the Brothers Grimm dressed the girl in red to suit their purposes.

Jack Zipes, in *The Trials and Tribulations of Little Red Riding Hood*, presents numerous versions of the story told through the ages, as well as a progression of illustrations by visual artists. Even a quick glance at his book will give the reader a sense of the tribulations this girl has gone through, from her age, her relationship to the wolf, her eventual fate, etc.

What has compelled so many writers and illustrators to express their vision of the story? The simplicity and sparse nature of the tale seems to invite widely divergent takes on it. Certainly this play represents one of those takes.

One of the most difficult challenges of putting this tale on the stage requires the adaptor to tell a tale of adolescence to a targeted audience, who, in all probability, is much younger than the heroine and who are not yet engaged in her adolescent passage. Illustrators and retellers of the tale attempt to solve this problem by making Little Red pre-adolescent—7 years old or younger. Even the tellers of *The Grandmother's Tale* leave the age of the girl to the audience's imagination. Perhaps this is the wisest choice. As an adaptor, however, it became necessary to choose an age based on an understanding of what the story was

actually about. The original storytellers were probably aware their story was a tale of adolescence but wanted to entertain and communicate something to younger children. They chose to couch their tale's overall meanings in metaphor.

I based the play mostly on versions of *The Grandmother's Tale*, while retaining some of the elements of both the Perrault and Grimm versions. Most familiar elements of the story exist in *The Grandmother's Tale*: Mother giving a girl (of unstated age) a basket to take to Grandmother; the girl encountering a wolf (werewolf) in the forest and, when asked, telling the wolf where she is going and how to find Grandmother's house; the wolf arriving there first, donning the nightgown and cap and getting in bed; the wolf pretending to be Grandmother. But there are also major thematic, tonal, circumstance and character elements not found in most future versions. While always a cautionary tale, the oral versions speak much less moralistically and, to me, much more satisfyingly. And, I hope, much more appropriately to today's audiences. A good oral tale, such as *Little Red Riding Hood*, speaks across time and place, directly to the human experience, unencumbered by the literary and dogmatic ambitions of a single person.

This last point represents a danger to any of us who attempt to transpose the tale to the stage. To build a play that runs 55 minutes out of such a short story requires expansion at the expense of the simplicity and sparseness of the original tale. Yet, here it is. However, in returning mostly to the oral story, I hope the girl experiences a little less trial and tribulation.

—Max Bush
Aug. 30, 2016

Little Red Riding Hood: Grandmother's Tale

CHARACTERS

RED: 12-13, Little Red Riding Hood

PERCY: 17-18, Red's older brother, the woodsman, the hunter

LACY: 11, Red's younger sister

GILES: Red's young dog, either gender

DILLEN: 12, Red's friend

KARI: 12, Red's friend

LEON: 14, Red's friend

ELISHA: Red's mother

OWL: The owl

WOLF: The wolf

ZURIE: Red's grandmother

ROLAND: Grandmother Zurie's old hound dog

SETTING: Outside Little Red's house, the deep woods,
inside and outside Grandmother Zurie's house.

TIME: Springtime

SCENES

Scene 1: Outside Little Red's house

Scene 2: The deep forest

Scene 3: Grandmother's house

Scene 4: Outside Little Red's house

Scene 5: The deep forest

Scene 6: Grandmother's house

Little Red Riding Hood: Grandmother's Tale

SCENE 1

SETTING: *A clearing on the edge of the great forest. The front of RED's house in the background.*

AT RISE: *GILES, the young dog, lies near the edge of the playing space, watching the game. ELISHA, RED's mother, sits plucking and bundling herbs and packing a basket. A group of young people play their version of the medieval game "Jingling." Everyone blinds themselves except the "it-person." The it-person wears a large bell around her neck. The object of the game is for one of the blinded players to grab and hold the person who is it. That then concludes the round, and the player who successfully grabbed the it-person becomes the new it-person. All players and the it-person must stay within the game's boundaries in the form of a large playing space. To begin a new round of the game, the blinded players all gather in the middle of the playing space around the it-person—here it is KARI—circle around her and recite a rhyme. RED is among the players. She does not wear a red cap or riding hood.*

KARI. Ready.

(She rings the bell, the others skip in a circle around her.)

PLAYERS.

RING AROUND THE ROSIE
A POCKET FULL OF POSIES
ASHES! ASHES! WE ALL FALL DOWN.

(All the blinded players fall down. KARI then moves quickly away from the group, staying within the playing space.)

LACY. She went this way! She moved right past me!

DILLEN. Quiet, so we can hear her!

(The players rise, begin searching, hands extended. KARI moves, avoiding them, careful not to ring the bell.)

LACY. Here, Kari, Kari, I can hear you breathing.

(Lunging, grabbing. KARI keeps moving away.)

LACY *(cont'd)*. Hah! *(Again.)* Hah! *(Again lunges.)* Hah!
(Lunges, grabs DILLEN.) Caught!

DILLEN. It's Dillen! Get away from me! *(LACY trips DILLEN, who falls.)* Ah!

LACY. Sorry. Where are you, Kari?! Here? Here? But you were just here! *(She grabs nothing but air.)*

DILLEN. Lacy, quiet! Why do girls always have to talk!

(KARI suddenly runs close and past DILLEN, the bell sounds loudly. They all hear it and move quickly toward her.)

DILLEN. Kari! I heard you! You're right over here, I know you are.

LACY. Who is talking now?

(RED sniffs the air. Suddenly, RED runs right to KARI and grabs her.)

RED. Got her! I got her!

KARI. Caught. Red caught me.

PLAYERS (*a disappointed groan, as they take off their blindfolds. Variously*). Aaahhh. Already? I almost caught you, etc.

KARI. Red, how did you do that? I didn't make a noise!

RED. You did your chores with your sheep today, and you smelled like a sheep. I could smell you.

KARI. That is cheating.

ELISHA. That is smart.

DILLEN. I was doing the same thing. She just caught you before I did.

RED. Blindfolds! My turn! Jingling!

ALL. Jingling! Red's it! Red's it!

(RED gives KARI her blindfold, KARI gives RED the bell, which she puts over her neck. The players gather around RED and put their blindfolds on.)

RED. Ready.

(She rings the bell, the others skip in a circle around her.)

PLAYERS.

TOM-A-LIN AND HIS WIFE AND MOTHER,
WENT OVER A BRIDGE ALL THREE TOGETHER;
THE BRIDGE WAS BROKEN AND THEY FELL IN,

(The players all slowly fall from the bridge.)

PLAYERS (*cont'd*).

“WHAT THE DEVIL,” SAID TOM-A-LIN.

(RED moves deliberately aggressively, causing the bell to ring loudly. The players all quickly jump up and go for her. She quietly moves away, then aggressively moves again,

causing bell to ring. The players turn to her. She moves quietly away, escaping their notice.

She smiles at them as they move in the wrong direction. After a short time, DILLEN is frustrated.)

DILLEN. Are you inside the yard? You can't move outside the yard.

ELISHA. She is inside the yard.

(GILES, the dog, runs up to RED, wagging and panting, happy to play, too. He jumps up on RED. She grabs dog by the head, looks in its eyes.)

RED (*soto voce*). What do you want? You cannot play this game. Go away!

(She turns dog and slaps its bottom. GILES runs right to DILLEN, who grabs him.)

DILLEN. Caught!

(GILES barks.)

DILLEN (*cont'd*). It's Giles, isn't it.

(GILES barks, wags his tail and licks DILLEN's hand.)

DILLEN (*cont'd*). Ugh, Giles.

ELISHA. Come here, Giles, lie down.

(RED moves quietly away, as GILES lies down next to ELISHA. The searchers continue. RED deliberately makes a noise, next to KARI, the players converge on the noise as she moves quietly away. DILLEN and LACY both grab KARI at the same moment. The following three speeches are spoken together.)

DILLEN. I got her! I caught her first! No, I did! I said it first!

LACY. Caught! I got you! I caught her first! No, I caught her!

KARI. It's Kari! I'm not Red, it's Kari! I'm Kari!

LACY. Sorry.

(They separate.)

RED *(sings)*.

DEAR SISTER WHEN WILL WE GO HOME?

(They move toward the voice, as RED moves away.)

RED *(cont'd)*.

NOT TILL THE MORNING HAS COME.

(They all turn to her, she moves away. A distant, forlorn howl of a lone WOLF freezes everybody. RED steps toward the sound. The WOLF howls again, this time it sounds closer. The others back away from howl in fear. RED, however, is enchanted by the sound, moves toward it. ELISHA sees this. GILES rises, alerted.)

ELISHA. Red?

(A third howl, from a different direction, all quickly turn to the sound. As RED turns, the bell rings, DILLEN grabs her.)

DILLEN. Got you! I caught you! Red?

RED. Caught. Dillen caught me.

DILLEN. I got you! I caught her!

PLAYERS *(groan. They remove their blindfolds. RED takes off the bell and sets it down)*. Aahhh! Dillen! Not again.

You always win.

LACY. Did I almost catch you?

RED. You were right next to me.

LACY. I should have grabbed you!

ELISHA. The wolf distracted you, Red, and you got caught.

(RED stares in the direction of the howl.)

KARI. I never heard it so close.

LACY. I never heard it so clearly.

DILLEN. He sounded big.

LACY. He sounded hungry.

KARI. He sounded close.

RED. He sounded lonely.

DILLEN. Lonely?

(Offstage, someone is heard trying his best to howl like a wolf. Everyone freezes again. Again he howls, the players all back away, except for RED, who moves toward the sound. Another howl.)

DILLEN *(cont'd)*. That's just Leon! It's Leon.

PLAYERS *(variously, laughing)*. Leon. That's Leon.

(LEON runs on, looking dressed up and carrying a flower.)

LEON *(gruffly)*. I have come to gobble you up, you raggedy, smelly children!

DILLEN. It's the wolf!

(All scream and run away from LEON, as he chases them around as the wolf. After a few moments of chase, DILLEN points at LEON.)

DILLEN *(cont'd)*. It's the wolf! Werewolf!

(Now they all run at LEON—including GILES—and jump on him, knocking him down. They fall on him, hitting him.)

PLAYERS *(variously)*. Werewolf! Wolf! It's the wolf!
Werewolf! Werewolf!

LEON. Ow! Don't—get off—that tickles! Ha ha—help, Red help me! Red, please! Somebody help me!

ELISHA. Everybody up. It's just Leon.

(They all get off him. He quickly jumps up, straightens himself.)

KARI. Why you got a flower, Leon?

LEON. Red ... ah ... *(He holds out the now bent flower to RED.)*

OTHERS *(recognizing the situation)*. Ooooo...

RED *(laughs)*. What do you want me to do with that, Leon?

LEON. You are supposed to take it.

RED. Why? I have lots of flowers—and that one is broken.

LEON. It's a rose.

RED. Why, so it is.

LEON. You're supposed to take it and thank me.

ELISHA. Red, he's giving you a gift.

RED. Thank you, Leon. *(She takes the flower.)*

LEON. Red, will you go with me to the fair?

(The others try unsuccessfully to squelch their laughing. LEON then regains a little formality, bows.)

LEON *(cont'd)*. I would be honored.

RED *(laughing)*. What are you doing, Leon?

LEON. I think I'm asking you to the fair.

RED. Why?

LEON. This is the way my father told me to ask you.

RED. We're all going to the fair. I'm going with my family. I will see you there. You know that.

LEON. Yes, but I thought, well, I thought if we went together, we might ...

LACY. You might what, Leon?

KARI. I know.

(The others react.)

LEON. We could see jousting.

(DILLEN loves jousting; RED is unenthused.)

LEON *(cont'd)*. And sword fights.

(DILLEN loves sword fights; RED dismisses the idea.)

LEON *(cont'd)*. And fire eaters.

DILLEN. Give me that flower, Leon, I'll go to the fair with you!

(LACY and KARI pull DILLEN back. LEON continues.)

LEON. Or ... *(Reluctantly.)* puppet shows ... and gypsy dancing ...

(RED is more interested. He senses her interest.)

LEON *(cont'd)*. I'll buy you a cake.

RED *(likes cake)*. Cake?

LEON. Apple, it is your favorite, isn't it?

RED. Yes, yes it is.

LEON. I'll buy you an apple cake.

(After a moment.)

RED. Leon, we're playing jingling. Do you want to play?—
With us?

KARI. Yes!

DILLEN. Jingling!

KARI. Let's play again.

DILLEN. Yes, play with us. (*Bowing like LEON.*) I would be honored.

LACY. Dillen's it.

DILLEN. Where is the bell?

(As they prepare to play again, ELISHA calls to an offstage PERCY.)

ELISHA. Percy, come here. Red, carry this basket of cake and milk to Grandmother Zurie. There are also herbs your grandmother needs for her soup.

RED. But mother, we are playing jingling, now. Leon hasn't played with us yet.

(PERCY enters, carrying an axe.)

ELISHA. Now you are going to Grandmother's house. You may play when you get back home.

LACY. We heard a wolf and he sounded close.

ELISHA. Brother will go with you through the forest.

PERCY. But I have to stack the wood I just split.

ELISHA. You can stack the wood when you return home.

PERCY. And I need to check my traps in the forest.

ELISHA (*throwing him a bag*). Check your traps on the way to Grandmother's house. (*To RED, as PERCY retrieves his sword.*) And Granny needs an owl feather. See if you can find one on the way.

RED. May I play one more game? Then I will—

ELISHA. I baked this for Granny and I want her to eat it while it is still fresh.

RED. But our game—we just started.

ELISHA. And she needs to speak with you.

RED. What about?

ELISHA. Wolves. And the world around us. And you.

PERCY (*recognizing what this is about*). I see. (*Strapping on sword.*) Come on, Grandmother needs to talk to you. And she'll probably give you something.

RED. What?

PERCY. Something ... different for you.

LEON. That looks like a sturdy sword, Percy.

(PERCY takes it out of sheathe, hands it to LEON.)

PERCY. It was my grandfather's.

LEON. My father is fashioning me a sword. With iron from the dwarves.

PERCY. When he is finished, show it to me, and I'll teach you how to face an opponent.

(LEON hands the sword back to PERCY.)

RED (*to others*). I'll be back soon, and we can play then. And ... thank you for the broken flower, Leon. I'll see you at the fair.

GROUP. Goodbye, Red. Come play when you get back. We'll be in the field. (*Etc.*)

ELISHA. Don't forget, if you see an owl feather, Granny needs one.