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Dramatic Publishing

Don't Count Your Chickens Until They Cry Wolf

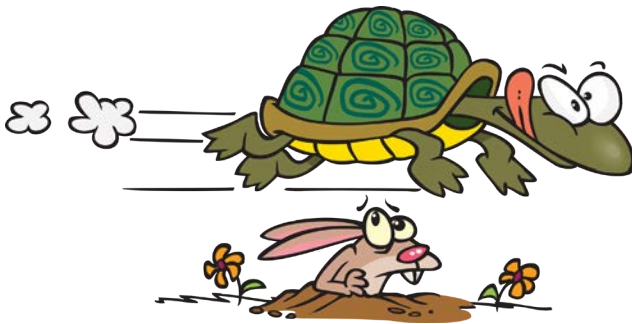
**Book by
Carol Lynn Pearson**

**Music by
J. A. C. Redford**



Don't Count Your Chickens Until They Cry Wolf

Musical. Book by Carol Lynn Pearson. Music by J.A.C. Redford. Cast: 10 or more actors, either gender. Aesop was never so charming as in Don't Count Your Chickens Until They Cry Wolf, a tour de force of Aesop's world. This musical, with optional participation elements, involves every age in tuneful pleasure, making audiences into actors. Filled with ancient wisdom and today's wit, clever lyrics and singable modern music, it is an irresistible attraction concocted by Carol Lynn Pearson and J.A.C. Redford. Highlights include: the famous race of tortoise and hare ("You got to keep on keeping on"); a soft-shoe number by the fox ("Flatter them, and you'll walk away with the cheese"); a rousing peasant dance in the bundle of sticks ("The trick is to stick together"); a chorus line of sheep ("If he's got fleece but the wrong kind of nose, maybe he's simply a wolf in sheep's clothes"). No set necessary. Animal costumes. Approximate running time: 45 minutes. Code: DB8.



ISBN-13 978-0-87602-122-4



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Don't Count Your Chickens
Until They Cry Wolf



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Don't Count Your Chickens Until They Cry Wolf

By

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Music By

J.A.C. REDFORD



Dramatic Publishing Company

Woodstock, Illinois • Australia • New Zealand • South Africa

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(DON'T COUNT YOUR CHICKENS UNTIL THEY CRY WOLF)

ISBN: 978-0-87602-122-4

IMPORTANT BILLING AND CREDIT REQUIREMENTS

All producers of the play *must* give credit to the author of the play in all programs distributed in connection with performances of the play and in all instances in which the title of the play appears for purposes of advertising, publicizing or otherwise exploiting the play and/or a production. The name of the author *must* also appear on a separate line, on which no other name appears, immediately following the title, and *must* appear in size of type not less than fifty percent (50%) the size of the title type. Biographical information on the author, if included in the playbook, may be used in all programs. *In all programs this notice must appear:*

“Produced by special arrangement with
THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC., of Woodstock, Illinois.”

**For Emily, Johnny,
Aaron and Katie—
“fables” in their
time.**

Music for this play is by J. A. C. Redford, a full-length score as cued throughout this text. Producers may order the score by writing Anchorage Press, Box 8067, New Orleans, Louisiana 70182.

CAST AND SETTING

This play is designed to be very flexible. It may be performed by a cast of as few as eight, or as many as twenty or more. The playing time is approximately one hour and fifteen minutes. However, it may be easily cut by eliminating one or more fables. The scenery should consist of nothing more than blocks. Costumes may be vests or jackets with tails and headpieces with ears.

The author, Carol Lynn Wright Pearson, has a number of widely-produced plays to her credit, notably PEGORA THE WITCH, a publication of the Anchorage Press. She is well known for several best-selling books of poetry, *Beginnings*, *The Search*, and *The Growing Season*.

DON'T COUNT YOUR CHICKENS UNTIL THEY CRY WOLF is a musical play for children of all ages and adults as young in heart as possible. It is based on the fables of Aesop. It was originally written by commission of Robert Redford's Sundance Theatre in Utah, where it has been performed every Monday evening through the summer until Labor Day.

The composer, J. A. C. Redford, has written and arranged a number of record albums and scores for motion pictures.

DON'T COUNT YOUR CHICKENS UNTIL THEY CRY WOLF

FIRST PERFORMER (*To audience.*): Welcome to the theatre! You are so lucky to be here, because this evening you are going to have a terrific time! Now, there might be some of you here, some of you younger ones, that have never before seen a *real live* play. Is this the first time for some of you? I thought so. Well. Let me give you an idea of just what a play is. A play is sort of like—well, it's—

(*Sings.*)

[“IT’S A PLAY!”]

(*SECOND PERFORMER enters.*)

It’s sort of like a circus.

(*THIRD PERFORMER enters.*)

Kind of like a zoo.

You watch the funny people as

They’re doing things.

SECOND AND THIRD: And the funny people watch you!

SECOND (*Speaks, points in audience.*): Hey, look at that funny little kid!

Have you ever seen anything so funny?

FIRST, SECOND, THIRD: It’s the theatre!

It’s drama!

It’s a play!

It’s the theatre!

It’s drama!

It’s a play!

(OTHERS enter in dance line.)

FIRST: It's sort of like a program.
Kind of like T.V.

FIFTH: But I'm not selling cereal
Or cars or soap or wax.
All that I am selling is me!

(Speaks.)

Now, the first thing you will notice is the marvelous packaging that I come in—the quality—the charm—the beauty—.

(OTHERS pull her back.)

ALL: It's the theatre!
It's drama!
It's a play!
It's the theatre!
It's drama!
It's a play!

(OTHERS enter in dramatic stances.)

FIRST: It's sort of like the movies.
Kind of like the screen.

SIXTH: Except the actors in a play
Can stop and talk to you
in the middle of a big scene.

(Speaks.)

Hello there. How are you?

FIRST: Now, that would never happen at the movies. Can you imagine Robert Redford stopping the movie to speak to the audience? But a play is alive—you can do anything!

ALL: It's the theatre!
It's drama!
It's a play!
It's the theatre!
It's drama!
It's a play!

FIRST: All right! So let's *play* it! Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls—.

SEVENTH *(Interrupting.):* Hey, wait. Not yet.

FIRST: Why not?

SEVENTH: They don't know who we are.

FIRST: Oh, yeah. Well. We're the actors. And it wasn't long ago that we were all little kids just like you. *(Indicates EIGHTH PERFORMER.)* Can you believe that he/she used to be a little kid?

EIGHTH *(Threateningly.):* Come on!

But it's true. I'm _____ from _____. And when I was a little kid I used to—.

(Here each of the PERFORMERS introduce themselves, saying their names, where they're from, and one true and funny thing that happened to them when they were little kids. About fifteen seconds each.)

FIRST: Okay! Now, let's get moving. Boys and girls—

SEVENTH: No!

FIRST: Now what?

SEVENTH: *We don't know who they are.*

(To audience.)

Okay. When I say "Who are you?" you shout out your name. All right?
Who are you?

(Repeats it until a fair response comes.)

And where are you from?

Hey, that little kid said he's from heaven. Do you believe it?

EIGHTH *(Looks in direction indicated, shakes head.)* Doesn't look like it to me!

Orem, maybe. *[Use name of nearby town.]*

FIRST *(Loud, frustrated yell.)* Enough of this nonsense! Clear the stage! Everybody off! Move!

(OTHERS quickly exit.)

Well. At last. The play tonight, as you may or may not know, comes from some of the most famous and favorite stories that have charmed the world for centuries—the fables of Aesop. Our title is—"Don't Count Your Chickens Until They Cry Wolf." *(Confused.)* Hey, that doesn't make sense.

(SECOND and THIRD enter, shrug shoulders, sing.)

SECOND AND THIRD: That's the theatre!

It's drama!

FIRST, SECOND, THIRD: It's a play!

(They exit. FIRST MOUSE enters.)

FIRST MOUSE *(To audience.):* Once upon a time the mice—

(Three other MICE enter, talking squeaky mice talk.)

—were very much bothered by—

(CAT enters from opposite side.)

—the cat!

(CAT meows fiercely at MICE. MICE shriek and huddle together. CAT settles down for a nap.)

And so the mice decided to call a council. And one of them said—

(Joins the other mice, continues speaking.)

Something has got to be done!

SECOND MOUSE: Quite right!

THIRD MOUSE: But what?

FOURTH MOUSE: We've got to come up with a plan. Think!

(They think.)

SECOND MOUSE: I've got it!

MICE: What?

SECOND MOUSE: That cat is so quiet that she sneaks up on us before we even know it, right?

MICE: Right.

SECOND MOUSE: But if we could hear that kitty coming—we'd have time to run away, right?

MICE: Right!

MOUSE: So what we need to do is to tie a bell around the cat's neck. Right?

MICE (*Delighted.*): Right! Wonderful idea! Brilliant plan! Terrific!

(*From offstage a bell is thrown on. SECOND MOUSE catches it and gives a little ring.*)

Yay!

SECOND MOUSE: Well. Who speaks to bell the cat?

(*They look at one another. Nobody steps forward. FIRST MOUSE holds the bell out to SECOND MOUSE. Sings.*)

[*"BELL THE CAT"*]

You are chosen.

See, she's dozin.

Quick, before she smells a rat!

(*SECOND MOUSE bravely takes the bell and tiptoes up to the CAT. Just as she is close enough to touch her, the CAT moves in her sleep and gives a cross between a meow and a snore. SECOND MOUSE darts back to the others.*)

SECOND MOUSE: I think that someone else will have to
Bell the cat!

(*To THIRD MOUSE.*)

You'd be fine—see,

I'm too tiny.

With one blow she'd mash me flat.

(*THIRD MOUSE reluctantly takes the bell and tiptoes up to the CAT. The same thing happens and THIRD MOUSE darts back to the others.*)

THIRD MOUSE: I think that someone else will have to
Bell the cat!

(*To FOURTH MOUSE.*)

I think you should.

I know you could.

I can't run quick—I'm too fat.

(*FOURTH MOUSE reluctantly takes the bell and tiptoes up to the CAT. The same thing happens and FOURTH MOUSE darts back to the others.*)

FOURTH MOUSE: I think that someone else will have to
Bell the cat!

(*Indicating FIRST MOUSE.*)

Don't forget—her

Eyes are better.

I can't tell quite where she's at.

(FIRST MOUSE reluctantly takes the bell and tiptoes up to the CAT. The same thing happens and FIRST MOUSE darts back to the others.)

FIRST MOUSE: I think that someone else will have to
Bell the cat!
Listen—I know!
We will all go.
We can give her tit for tat!

(Agreeing, they all approach the CAT. As CAT moves and snores, they all shriek and run offstage, stick heads back on.)

MICE: It looks like no one here is going to
Bell the cat!

(The CAT raises her head.)

CAT *(Wisely, to audience.):* It's *one* thing to think something up—and *another* thing to do it! Meow!

(CAT exits. HARE, TORTOISE enter.)

HARE: And who is the speediest animal, I ask you, of any animal in this entire world? Me! ME! Faster than a speeding bullet. Faster than the silent "E!"—comes that magnificent creature, the hare!

(Freezes.)

TORTOISE *(To audience.):* Day after day the animals had to listen to the bragging of the hare. And he especially sneered at the slower animals—animals like—

HARE *(To TORTOISE.):* You! You tortoise! How can you bear to be such a slow and useless animal? Are you not humiliated, mortified, and quite embarrassed to creep along at a snail's pace when other animals—animals such as I—speed like the wind?

TORTOISE: Listen here, Hare. Just don't push me. Or I might do something to make you very, very sorry, Hare.

HARE: Oh?

TORTOISE: I might—challenge you to a race!

HARE: A race!

(He goes into hysterical laughter.)

That's the funniest thing I've ever heard of. A race! The tortoise against the hare! A race!

(Abruptly stops laughing.)

I accept.

(OTHER PERFORMERS enter.)

FIRST PERFORMER *(To audience.):* So they set the course and established the finishing line. The hare and the tortoise got ready to go.

(To HARE and TORTOISE.)

On your mark—get set—go!

(With a jump and a yell the HARE darts off, while the TORTOISE doesn't even move. The OTHER PERFORMERS stare.)

OTHER PERFORMERS: Well?

TORTOISE (*Still not moving.*): Don't worry. I know how to win this race.

SECOND PERFORMER: How?

TORTOISE: Well, you start off by—

(Takes one slow step.)

—by just starting off. And then—

(Continues slow walk. Sings. OTHERS go into slow motion.)

[“KEEP ON KEEPING ON”]

You've got to keep on keeping on.

That's how it begins.

And then you keep on keeping on.

Slow and steady—wins!

Slow and steady—wins!

(OTHERS go out of slow motion.)

FIRST PERFORMER (*As cheerleader.*): Yay for the tortoise!

(To audience.)

Come on folks. Let's show a little support here.

(Leads them in singing.)

You got to keep on keeping on.

That's how it begins.

And then you keep on keeping on.

Slow and steady—wins!

Slow and steady—wins!

TORTOISE: See ya later.

(He exits. GRASSHOPPER and ANT enter.)

GRASSHOPPER: Once there was an ant who was very industrious indeed.

(ANT enters, very busy.)

All summer long she laid up a store of food for the winter.

ANT: And there was a grasshopper who was very, very lazy. He did no work at all. So all during the summer—

(ANT bustles about, dragging things, hurrying here and there. Sings.)

[“I'D RATHER SING”]

Busy—busy—I am busy.

Gather food all summer through.

Winter's coming—must get ready.

Lots and lots of work to do.

Busy—busy—I am busy.

(Stops and looks at GRASSHOPPER, who is reclining.)

Don't you gather anything?

GRASSHOPPER:

I'd rather sing!

(Breaks into aria, rubbing his wings together. “La-la-la's” in a soaring scale for about twenty seconds, while ANT watches in amazement.)

ANT (*Goes about her business.*):

Busy—busy—I am busy.
Working, working all the day.
Won't be hungry when the snow falls.
Lots of goodies put away.
Busy—busy—I am busy.

(*To GRASSHOPPER, impatiently.*)

Don't you have some food to bring?

GRASSHOPPER: I'd rather sing!

(*Breaks into another aria, soaring even higher than before. ANT watches.*)

ANT: All summer long the ant worked and the grasshopper sang. And when winter came, the ant had plenty of good food to eat. But the grasshopper—

GRASSHOPPER: —Was very hungry! And, of course, he remembered that the ant had a lot of food.

(*To ANT.*)

Ant—would you give me some food? I'm very hungry!

ANT: Give you some food?

(*To audience.*)

The ant, of course, was very indignant.

(*To GRASSHOPPER.*)

Food? Why, Grasshopper, what were you doing all summer long while I was working?

GRASSHOPPER: I was—

(*Without remorse.*)

—singing!

ANT: You sang all summer. Well, then—you can dance all winter!

(*GRASSHOPPER feebly does a few dance steps, gets weaker, clutches his stomach, falls over with his feet up, dead. ANT goes to him.*)

ANT AND GRASSHOPPER (*To audience.*): You can't play all the time!

(*They exit. SUN and WIND enter.*)

SUN: One day the sun—

WIND: And the wind—

SUN: Had a terrible argument. The wind said—

WIND: I am more powerful than you are! And the sun said—

SUN: No! I am more powerful than you are!

WIND: I'm the strongest!

SUN: I'm the strongest!

WIND (*To audience.*): Which one do you think is the strongest? How many think the wind is? Yay! Let's hear it for the wind!

SUN: Who thinks the sun is strongest? Come on! Yay for the sun!

WIND: I suggest we have a contest.

SUN: All right!

(*To audience.*)

So the sun and the wind decided on a plan.

(TRAVELER enters.)

WIND: Sec that man coming down the road? Whichever one of us can make him take off his cloak is the stronger of the two.

SUN: Agreed! You try first.

(The WIND gets into position.)

SUN: So the wind did his best.

(WIND blows.)

He roared and raged.

WIND: Roar! Rage!

SUN: And the man shivered.

TRAVELER: Sh-sh-shiver!

SUN: The more the wind blew, the tighter the man pulled his cloak about him.

WIND: I give up.

SUN: My turn!

(The SUN gets into position.)

WIND: At first the sun shone gently.

SUN *(Gently.):* Shine! Shine!

TRAVELER *(Loosens his cloak.):* My! It's getting rather warm.

WIND: Then the sun beat down as hard as could be.

SUN: Beat! Beat!

TRAVELER *(To audience, taking off his cloak.):* Within a few minutes the man was so hot that he took his cloak right off. And from then on it was definitely agreed that—kindness works better than force.

WIND: So don't forget—

SUN *(Sings.):*

["IF YOU SHINE"]

If you shine
The weather turns fine.
Everybody is glad.

WIND:

If you blow,
It's chilly, and so
Everybody is sad.

(CHORUS enters, joins them.)

So turn on the sunlight
And turn off the wind.
Kindness works better, of course.
A smile will do something
A frown never will.
Kindness works better than force.

(SUN, WIND, CHORUS and TRAVELER dance.)

If you shine
The weather turns fine.
Everybody is glad.

If you blow
It's chilly, and so
Everybody is sad.
And we'd rather be glad.
Shine!

SUN:

(They exit. MILKMAID enters, carrying on her head a pail of milk. CHORUS of three enter.)

MILKMAID *(Sings.):*

["DON'T COUNT YOUR CHICKENS"]

I will sell this milk for money—
It should bring me quite a bit.
Then I'll buy four dozen eggs on
which my hens will sit.

Soon there'll be four dozen chickens,
And they'll be my very own.
I will feed them 'til they're nice and
Fat and fully grown.

CHORUS:

Dreaming dreams is great, but just
In case there is a catch:
Don't count your chickens
until they hatch!

MILKMAID:

One, two, three, four—
And maybe there'll be even more.
Four dozen chickens!

I will sell them and I'll buy me
What I've always wanted—yes,
I will buy myself a brand new
Lovely dancing dress.

It has got puff sleeves and ribbons.
When I twirl the skirt just flies.
It's the very color of my beautiful blue eyes.

CHORUS:

Dreaming dreams is great, but just
In case there is a catch:
Don't count your chickens
Until they hatch!

MILKMAID:

One, two, three, four—
And maybe there'll be even more.
Four dozen chickens!

All the boys will want to dance with
Only me all evening, and
They will fight with one another
Just to hold my hand.

All the girls will be so jealous
That their faces will turn red.
I will simply smile at them, and
Then I'll toss my head.

(MILKMAID tosses her head. The pail of milk flies off, spilling.)

The milk! My chickens! The eggs! My beautiful new dress! The boys! The
jealous girls! Ohhhhhhhh!

CHORUS: Dreaming dreams is great, but just
In case there is a catch:
Don't count your chickens—

MILKMAID AND CHORUS: —Until they hatch!

*(Crying, she exits. CHORUS also exits. FIRST PERFORMER enters waving
flag with "T" on it.)*

FIRST PERFORMER: Well, here we are at the first crossing, folks. Who do you
think is ahead, the hare or the tortoise? What? Let's take a look and see.

*(HARE speeds through on a skateboard, exits quickly. TORTOISE slowly
follows, using one roller skate.)*

Come on, Tortoise! We're with you! Let's have a little support here for
the tortoise.

(He leads the audience in "Yay, Tortoise! Yay, Tortoise! Yay, Tortoise!")

There. That ought to do it.

(TORTOISE exits. FIRST PERFORMER exits opposite. BOY enters.)

BOY: There once was a boy who was sent out to tend the sheep. He had a fine,
big flock to take care of.

(Gestures to one side. One solitary sheep enters.)

SHEEP: Baaaa!

BOY *(Looks at SHEEP, puzzled.):* You're the fine, big flock of sheep?

SHEEP: Baaaaa!

BOY: Well. We'll have to do something about that.

(To audience.)

All the townspeople were counting on the boy to take good care of the
sheep.

(Gestures to the other side. One solitary TOWNSPERSON appears.)

You're all the townspeople?

(TOWNSPERSON shrugs shoulders.)

I can't believe it.

(To audience.)

And—there was a wolf.