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Cummins and Scoullar's

The Little Prince

the play

For One Live Actor and Life-size Puppets

By

RICK CUMMINS and JOHN SCOULLAR

Adapted from the book by

ANTOINE DE SAINT-EXUPÉRY

Incidental music by

RICK CUMMINS

Dramatic Publishing Company

Woodstock, Illinois • Australia • New Zealand • South Africa

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RICK CUMMINS and JOHN SCOLLAR

Adapted from the book by
ANTOINE DE SAINT-EXUPÉRY

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(THE LITTLE PRINCE [FOR ONE LIVE ACTOR AND LIFE-SIZE PUPPETS])

ISBN: 978-1-61959-290-2

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Presented off-Broadway at The New Victory Theater, October 2011. Developed with Susan Atkinson at Bristol Riverside Theatre. Earlier development by Scott Hitz and Monkey Boys Productions at Cape May Stage.

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The Little Prince (For One Live Actor and Life-size Puppets) was presented off-Broadway at The New Victory Theater by Bristol Riverside Theatre in October 2011.

CAST:

AVIATOR..... Leonard C. Haas
LITTLE PRINCEEileen Cella
FOXMichael Schupbach

PRODUCTION:

Director Susan Atkinson
Puppet DesignMichael Schupbach
Projection Design.....Daniel Brodie

The play was previously developed by Scott Hitz and Monkey Boys Productions at Cape May Stage in New Jersey.

AUTHORS' NOTES

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry wrote his classic tale in New York in the middle of World War II because he was forced into exile by the Nazi Vichy French government. His story was partly based on a true experience in which his plane crashed and he was stranded in North Africa. The story was told in the form of a children's fable. So from the day it was published in 1943, the market forces have been debating whether this was a piece for adults or children. Knowing it through and through as we do, our conclusion is that this is very much a story for adults and for families who can bring along their older children. The use of puppetry along with one live actor (Aviator) and the incidental music allows the audience to engage their imaginations in surprising and meaningful ways. The philosophical truths it captures were borne out of his own struggles for survival and his recognition of life's priorities.

At the invitation of the Monkey Boys, a puppetry group near Philadelphia, we developed our small-cast play into this puppetry version—one live actor and all other characters represented by large, costumed puppets handled by actors in black (AVENUE Q style). The project was developed with Cape May Playhouse in New Jersey. It opened in January 2011 at Bristol Riverside Theatre in Pennsylvania under the direction of Susan Atkinson. Positive reviews led to our being selected by the off-Broadway New Victory Theater in October 2011.

The Little Prince

(For One Live Actor and Life-size Puppets)

CHARACTERS

AVIATOR: A man in his early 40s.

THE LITTLE PRINCE: Voiced/operated by a short young woman.

ROSE/VARIOUS PUPPETS: Voiced/operated by an attractive, off-beat woman.

FOX: Voiced/operated by a short young man.

MEN ON PLANETS/VARIOUS PUPPETS: Voiced/operated by a man with character voices.

OFFSTAGE SKETCH ARTIST.

All characters, other than the AVIATOR, the MEN ON PLANETS and the OFFSTAGE SKETCH ARTIST, are played by onstage puppeteers dressed in all black.

PRODUCTION NOTES

Several notes regarding the set, puppets, music and sketches can be found at the end of the script.

The Little Prince

(For One Live Actor and Life-size Puppets)

SCENE 1

AT RISE: *A little boy is seen playing in a sandbox. The boy plays happily for a while, and he focuses most of his attention on a toy biplane. Eventually, he puts this aside and begins to draw in the sand with his finger. Slowly, the screen behind him comes up. We see what he's been drawing while he draws it. The AVIATOR is revealed in a spot DR, watching the child. He addresses the audience directly. [Music Cue #1] An ethereal solo voice sings as a hand is seen making a simple drawing. See Illustration B. The AVIATOR pulls a drawing from his pocket.*

AVIATOR. When I was six years old, once upon a very long time ago, I made this drawing. I showed my masterpiece to the grownups and asked, “Does it frighten you?” But they said, “Why should anyone be frightened by a hat?” It was not a hat. So I drew it for them more clearly. Grownups always need to have things explained to them.

([Music Cue #2] As he draws, the hand in the projection sketches again. See Illustration C.)

AVIATOR *(cont'd)*. It was a boa constrictor having swallowed an elephant. But this time they said, “Put those crayons away and study arithmetic or geography or something *important*.” So I did ... but I always kept my first drawing with me as a test of true understanding.

(He puts the folded paper back in his shirt pocket. [Music Cue #3] The first drawing re-appears. See Illustration B.)

AVIATOR *(cont'd)*. But no matter who I showed it to, they would always say, “That is a hat.” So I threw it away, and I never again spoke to them about boa constrictors, or primeval forests, or stars. And I never again made another drawing. I learned to pilot airplanes.

([Music Cue #4] Engine starts. Little boy picks up the toy plane, flies around with it, goes behind the screen and is seen in silhouette. He lets go, but the plane magically stays aloft and continues to fly for ten seconds. Sounds of a plane in the air. See Illustration D.)

AVIATOR *(cont'd)*. And I lived my life alone ... until six years ago, when I had an accident with my plane in the desert of Sahara.

(Sounds of a storm begin at 0:15. Lightning and wind begin to create trouble for the plane.)

AVIATOR *(cont'd)*. Come in, Tangiers. Tangiers, come in. This is Solitaire. Somebody! Helloooo!

(Storm escalates. Spotlight on AVIATOR has gone out. In darkness and shadow play, we hear the AVIATOR but can no longer see him. Engine begins to sputter at :30. Thunder and wind at :40 through 1:00.)

AVIATOR *(cont'd)*. Come in! Somebody! Anybody!! ... Do you read me? ... Is anybody there!? Solitaire going down for emergency landing. *(Sounds of the plane descending for ten seconds.)* Making emergency landing ... approximately ... *(Indiscernible sounds.)* ... OHHHH—

(Plane crashes at 1:11. Then four seconds of silence. The music continues with a whoosh sound then four ascending chords of scene transition in which the lights slowly come up again on the sandbox. The screen behind shows far-off sand dunes and the sun rising behind them. The AVIATOR is seen lying in the sand, passed out. Music ends at 1:35.)

SCENE 2

LITTLE PRINCE. Please, sir, draw me a sheep.

(The AVIATOR sits up suddenly as if from a nightmare. The shadows of dunes behind him shift and turn into the silhouette of the LITTLE PRINCE.)

AVIATOR *(turns, spots him, and heads toward him)*. Hello! Hello—who are you? Where—

(LITTLE PRINCE has vanished. AVIATOR is at a loss. He looks fearfully around him.)

AVIATOR *(cont'd)*. Where are we? *(Standing in place, he winces as he feels sand in his boot. Removing it, he pours sand out. He speaks with understanding and relieved resignation.)* Something tells me this isn't the Riviera. Ah yes, the storm ... the engine trouble ... the radio ... the radio!

(He digs in sand looking for the radio and finds the handset with cord stretching down into the sand.)

AVIATOR *(cont'd)*. Come in, Tangiers! Do you read me? Cairo, come in! Somebody!

(He discovers the radio cord is severed and slams down the headset.)

AVIATOR *(cont'd)*. Damn!

(LITTLE PRINCE has now entered, pad and pencil in hand, standing atop a dune.)

LITTLE PRINCE. If you please, draw me a sheep.

AVIATOR *(confused)*. You ... there ... here ... in the desert—but who—

(LITTLE PRINCE approaches. AVIATOR sits in weakness.)

LITTLE PRINCE. Draw me a sheep.

AVIATOR (*blankly*). I don't draw!

LITTLE PRINCE. You used to.

AVIATOR. How would you know—

LITTLE PRINCE (*firmly*). Draw me a sheep.

([Music Cue #5] Slowly, cautiously, the AVIATOR removes the picture from his shirt pocket and hands it to the LITTLE PRINCE. Illustration B. LITTLE PRINCE looks at it quizzically and hands it back.)

LITTLE PRINCE (*cont'd*). No no no! I don't want an elephant inside a boa constrictor. A boa constrictor is very dangerous and an elephant is very large. I need a sheep. Draw me a sheep.

(AVIATOR is shocked.)

AVIATOR (*to the audience*). When a mystery is too overpowering, one dares not disobey.

(Taking the pad and pencil, the AVIATOR complies reluctantly. [Music Cue #6] Artist removes Illustration B and begins to draw Illustration E. AVIATOR hands it back to LITTLE PRINCE.)

LITTLE PRINCE. You can see for yourself that's not a sheep. It's a ram, see? It has horns.

(AVIATOR, annoyed, flips page and tries again. Artist removes Illustration E. We watch him draw Illustration F. [Music Cue #7] AVIATOR hands him another.)

LITTLE PRINCE. This one is too old. I want a sheep that will live a long time.

(Frustrated, AVIATOR grabs pad out of LITTLE PRINCE's hand. He takes a deep breath, flips the page as before. Artist removes Illustration F. AVIATOR draws with finality. See Illustration G.)

AVIATOR. This is a box. (*Handing drawing to LITTLE PRINCE.*) The sheep that you want is inside.

LITTLE PRINCE. That is exactly the way I wanted it!

(LITTLE PRINCE exits. Illustration G fades out.)

AVIATOR (*to the audience*). And that was how I made the acquaintance of this strange little man.

([Music Cue #8] The AVIATOR has left the sandbox, looking off in the direction of the prince.)

AVIATOR *(cont'd)*. The next day, just before sunset, as I worked on my plane a thousand miles from any human habitation ... he appeared again.

(LITTLE PRINCE enters. He is heard throughout the theatre, always coming from different locations.)

AVIATOR *(cont'd)*. It took me a long time to learn where he came from. This little person, who asked so many questions, never seemed to hear the ones I asked.

LITTLE PRINCE. It is true, isn't it? Sheep eat little bushes?

AVIATOR *(turns, startled, to LITTLE PRINCE)*. Where did you go yesterday?

LITTLE PRINCE. It is true, isn't it?

AVIATOR *(exasperated)*. Yes.

LITTLE PRINCE. Then it follows that they also eat baobabs, correct?

(The AVIATOR, playfully confused, is enjoying this mystery and their vocal game of hide and seek.)

AVIATOR. Baobabs are not little bushes. They're trees as big as castles, and—

LITTLE PRINCE. But before they grow so big, the baobabs, they start out by being little?

AVIATOR. Strictly speaking, yes. Where is your family? Where do you come from? Why do you want the sheep, anyway? Don't you ever answer a question?

(LITTLE PRINCE appears holding the toy plane.)

LITTLE PRINCE. What is this object?

AVIATOR *(turns, startled)*. That is not an object. That is my airplane ... my—friend.

LITTLE PRINCE *(investigates the plane)*. Hello.

AVIATOR. It doesn't talk. It's true, I talk to it occasionally, but it doesn't answer back.

LITTLE PRINCE *(puzzled)*. That doesn't seem very satisfactory.

AVIATOR. It's an airplane! It flies!

LITTLE PRINCE. You dropped down from the sky?

AVIATOR. Yes.

(LITTLE PRINCE laughs. AVIATOR is fed up. LITTLE PRINCE tries to suppress his laughter.)

AVIATOR *(cont'd)*. What's so funny?!

(LITTLE PRINCE bursts into laughter again. AVIATOR speaks to the audience.)

AVIATOR *(cont'd, to the audience)*. His laughter irritated me. I liked my misfortunes taken seriously.

LITTLE PRINCE. You too come from the sky. Which is your planet?

AVIATOR. What?

LITTLE PRINCE. Though it is true that on that airplane you couldn't have come very far.

AVIATOR. You come from another planet?

LITTLE PRINCE *(distracted)*. Listen to that sunset. Do you hear the music?

AVIATOR. What music?

LITTLE PRINCE. It's wonderful that the sunset lasts such a long time here. Where I come from, the sunsets are much shorter, but there are so many more of them.

AVIATOR. It's clear I'm not going to get a straight answer out of you. I have to get back to my pla—

LITTLE PRINCE. One day I watched the sun set forty-four times.

AVIATOR. Forty-four times?

LITTLE PRINCE *(takes his hand)*. Come with me.

AVIATOR *(pulling his hand away)*. Enough of this. I have important things to ...

([Music Cue #9] The lights have dimmed, revealing a beautiful sunset projected onto the shadow screen. The LITTLE PRINCE and the AVIATOR are seen silhouetted against this. LITTLE PRINCE offers his hand to the stunned AVIATOR.)

LITTLE PRINCE. Come.

(AVIATOR takes his hand and follows in awe as they walk through the sunset.)

LITTLE PRINCE *(cont'd)*. You see, where I come from, it is so small that all you need to do is move your chair a few steps and you can see the day end and the twilight fall as many times as you like. But here, on your planet, you can walk and walk and still be in the same magnificent sunset. One loves the sunset when one is so sad.

AVIATOR. Were you so sad, then?

LITTLE PRINCE. I kept wondering what it was that I was missing and wishing I had. So far away from home, it's good to have someone to watch the sunset with.

(Music ends and lights return to normal.)

LITTLE PRINCE *(cont'd)*. The thing that is so good about the box you've given me is at night my sheep can use it as his house.

AVIATOR. And if you're good, I'll draw you a string and a post so you can tie him during the day.

LITTLE PRINCE. Tie him? What a strange idea!

AVIATOR. Well, he might run off.

LITTLE PRINCE. Run off? Where do you think he would go?

AVIATOR. Anywhere. Straight ahead.

LITTLE PRINCE (*laughs, pauses*). Straight ahead nobody can go very far.

(The AVIATOR is puzzled. LITTLE PRINCE is starting to leave.)

LITTLE PRINCE (*cont'd*). Look for me tomorrow—just at sunset.

AVIATOR. But—why do you come only at sunset?

(LITTLE PRINCE leaves.)

AVIATOR (*cont'd*). And where do you think you're going?

(LITTLE PRINCE is gone.)

AVIATOR (*cont'd*). Look, I really don't intend to be here all that long— (*Mumbling to himself.*) Straight ahead nobody can go very far ... what's that supposed to mean?

(Going to the plane, he checks it all over for damage.)

AVIATOR (*cont'd, talking to the plane*). Come on, we'll find out what the matter is right now and leave this bizarre little episode behind us. We can do it. You can do it. You've never let me down before.

(He picks up the toy trying to get it to magically fly as before, only to find that it still falls unceremoniously to the sand. [Music Cue #10] The high-pitched sound of the desert evening with sound of a snake rattle. Blackout. The sound trails off through the blackout. The lights come up on AVIATOR reviewing his supplies he's taking from his backpack.)

SCENE 3

AVIATOR. Let's see now—

(He takes out a pastry.)

AVIATOR (*cont'd*). One half-eaten croissant.

(He nibbles.)

AVIATOR (*cont'd*). Stale.

(He puts it down and takes out some cheese.)

AVIATOR *(cont'd)*. Some lovely cheese.

(He smells it—it is powerful.)

AVIATOR *(cont'd)*. Ripe.

(He retrieves an unidentifiable object and examines it from a number of angles.)

AVIATOR *(cont'd)*. Some other thing. I'm sure if I'm here long enough, I'll find it delectable. But I'm equally as sure that it's not going to come to that. *(To the plane.)* Today you are going to be more cooperative. Right, my friend?

([Music Cue #11] LITTLE PRINCE appears. The sun begins to set.)

LITTLE PRINCE. Talking again to your friend who doesn't answer back?

(AVIATOR turns to LITTLE PRINCE startled, then turns away and feigns disinterest.)

AVIATOR *(dryly)*. Sunset so soon?

LITTLE PRINCE *(picks up AVIATOR's canteen and examines it)*. What is this?

AVIATOR. It's water. It's my survival, thank you.

(AVIATOR snatches it back.)

LITTLE PRINCE. On my journey, I met a man who sold pills to quench thirst. If you took one a week, you'd never need water.

AVIATOR. They could come in handy—you don't happen to have any, do you?

LITTLE PRINCE. If I were thirsty, I think I'd rather take a stroll to a spring of fresh water.

AVIATOR. That would be nice.

(Drinking, he stops ... realizing he must ration.)

AVIATOR *(cont'd)*. But since there's no spring of fresh water here in the desert, and you don't have any of those pills with you, I'd—how long have you been on this journey?

LITTLE PRINCE *(turning to AVIATOR)*. Have you always been alone?

(AVIATOR reacts to the abrupt change of subject, then decides to answer.)

AVIATOR. No ... but I prefer it that way.

(AVIATOR goes to work on the plane.)

LITTLE PRINCE. Do you?

AVIATOR. What about you—you live alone on your—planet, and—

LITTLE PRINCE. Do you hear the music?

(AVIATOR notices LITTLE PRINCE watching the sunset.)

AVIATOR. Music? Oh ... *(Sarcastically.)* do you mean am I “listening to the sunset?” No. I don’t hear any music.

LITTLE PRINCE. I did.

AVIATOR. Yes, I know. You hear the music.

LITTLE PRINCE. No. I lived alone. Until the dawn—

(AVIATOR is puzzled.)

LITTLE PRINCE *(cont’d)*. After the night of forty-four sunsets—you remember. I realize now that was the day my journey really began.

AVIATOR. What is this journey you keep talking about?

LITTLE PRINCE. Until then, I had led a very well-ordered life ...

(From this point forward, the story is told as a more traditional “puppet show” behind the circular shadow screen, which has now doubled as a playboard. The LITTLE PRINCE is performed as a full-body rod puppet. As he moves around the planet, he actually walks in place as all elements move around him, giving the impression of movement around the small planet. Both LITTLE PRINCE and AVIATOR watch the show behind them.)

LITTLE PRINCE *(cont’d)*. I’d wake up every morning with such a lot to do. I’d clean out my two volcanoes—I have three actually, the third one is extinct, but I clean it anyway. One never knows. Then there are the baobabs.

AVIATOR. Ah yes, the baobabs.

LITTLE PRINCE. They burrow down so deeply and they spread their roots so wide that if I don’t dig them up as soon as they appear, they could break my planet into pieces. It’s very hard work. One day, however, when I’d finished, I felt—well, that was the day of the forty-four sunsets. Something was missing.

AVIATOR. Did you find the answer then? In the sunset?

LITTLE PRINCE. No. Not in the sunset, *([Music Cue #12])* but in the dawn the next day. That morning, from a seed blown from who knows where, a small sprout appeared—and it was not like any of the other small sprouts on my planet.

(The top of the ROSE appears.)

LITTLE PRINCE *(cont’d)*. So I watched it carefully. You see it could have been some new kind of baobab.

(The ROSE continues to grow and begins to produce a bud.)

LITTLE PRINCE *(cont'd)*. But soon it became clear—it was something entirely new—

(The bud begins to open.)

LITTLE PRINCE *(cont'd)*. It stopped growing and began to get ready to produce a flower
...

(The ROSE is gradually revealed.)

LITTLE PRINCE *(cont'd)*. A flower—like no flower I'd ever seen before. It chose its colors carefully and adjusted its petals one by one. A mysterious and glorious creature. Then finally—just as the dawn rose—

(Our focus shifts back to the AVIATOR and the LITTLE PRINCE downstage, but the puppets continue upstage.)

ROSE *(seeing her surroundings for the first time)*. Oh. *(Sees LITTLE PRINCE for the first time.)* Oh.

LITTLE PRINCE. You are so beautiful.

ROSE. I am?

LITTLE PRINCE. Yes.

ROSE. Oh. Hmm ... what is that?

LITTLE PRINCE. Beautiful? It's something pleasing to see.

ROSE. Oh. *(She sounds out the word.)* Beau-ti-ful. Huh. What's that?

LITTLE PRINCE. That's a volcano.

ROSE. Oh, it's beautiful!

LITTLE PRINCE. No, it's just a—

ROSE. And that? That's beautiful, too.

LITTLE PRINCE. No, that's a baobab.

ROSE *(pointing)*. And that? And that? And that?

(She notices the curl in his hair.)

ROSE *(cont'd)*. Oh. That's beautiful, too. There's so much to see here—

LITTLE PRINCE. You are the most beautiful flower.

ROSE. What's a flower?

LITTLE PRINCE. Why, you—you are a flower.

ROSE *(pleased)*. Oh.

LITTLE PRINCE. And you are the most beautiful one on my planet.

ROSE. There are other flowers here?

LITTLE PRINCE. Not unique like you. Unique—like nothing else in all the world!

ROSE. Is unique as good as beautiful?

LITTLE PRINCE. Oh, yes.

ROSE. Oh, good.

(She spreads her arms grandly, pricking him.)

LITTLE PRINCE. Ow!

ROSE. What's that?

LITTLE PRINCE. That's a thorn.

ROSE. Oh! I have quite a few. I will try to be more careful.

LITTLE PRINCE. That's all right. It didn't hurt, really. Not much anyway. I'm just so happy you are here with me.

(She points to herself.)

ROSE. You and—

(She points to LITTLE PRINCE.)

ROSE *(cont'd)*. Me.

LITTLE PRINCE. No, no. I'm you ... and you're me.

ROSE. This is very confusing.

LITTLE PRINCE *(laughs)*. It doesn't matter, really. As long as we are here together.

(She makes a troubled face.)

LITTLE PRINCE *(cont'd)*. What is it?

ROSE. What's we?

LITTLE PRINCE. Well, that's you and me together. We are WE.

(Their fingers touch. [Music Cue #13] They gaze lovingly at each other for a moment. Our focus shifts back to the AVIATOR and LITTLE PRINCE downstage, but the puppets continue upstage.)

AVIATOR. Sounds like a pretty jolly life you had there.

LITTLE PRINCE. It was.

(As LITTLE PRINCE talks to AVIATOR, we see ROSE fixing her petals.)

LITTLE PRINCE (*cont'd*). She was beautiful, she was exciting, and she was someone to talk to ... who answered back.

AVIATOR. Yes ... well.

LITTLE PRINCE. We spent so many lovely times together. But as time went by, things changed.

AVIATOR. Sounds familiar. My experience has been much the same with flowers I have known.

LITTLE PRINCE. She seemed to resent every moment I spent away from her tending to my chores.

(Attention again shifts to the puppet show. LITTLE PRINCE is cleaning, and ROSE is trying to get his attention.)

ROSE (*a cappella*). LA-LA-LALA—

(LITTLE PRINCE smiles but continues working. She looks around for distraction and suddenly spies a caterpillar on her leaf.)

ROSE (*cont'd*). EEK!

LITTLE PRINCE. What is it?

ROSE. It's a monster crawling on me.

(She holds out her leaf to show him.)

LITTLE PRINCE. Oh. It's just a caterpillar. They're really very marvelous creatures. One day it will turn into a beautiful butterfly. But if it upsets you, I'll take it away ... in just a moment.

(ROSE waits impatiently trying to think of another way to get his attention. She clears her throat. He looks up.)

ROSE. I seem to be very dry. Do you think I might have a drink?

LITTLE PRINCE. Certainly. As soon as I get this last little baobab.

(She is annoyed. She begins to cough lightly at first, then more vociferously. He rushes to her side.)

LITTLE PRINCE (*cont'd*). What is it?

ROSE (*coughing dramatically, hoarsely*). Water ...

LITTLE PRINCE (*rushes to water her*). Are you all right?

ROSE. Much better now. Thank you.