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Dramatic Publishing

THE HAPPY PRINCE

by
OSCAR WILDE

Adapted for the stage
by
ELIZABETH WONG



Dramatic Publishing

Woodstock, Illinois • England • Australia • New Zealand

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(THE HAPPY PRINCE)

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THE HAPPY PRINCE was commissioned by the
Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

THE HAPPY PRINCE

A One-act Play

For 3m., 5w., 2 either gender.

Or 4m., 4w. with doubling, plus extras.

Multicultural cast suggested.

CHARACTERS

THE HAPPY PRINCE

THE SWALLOW

TOWNSPEOPLE (2 men, 2 women and 2 children), who play the multiple roles of:

THE REED

THE SEAMSTRESS

THE LITTLE BOY

THE PALACE BEAUTY

THE PALACE LOVER

THE PLAYWRIGHT

THE LITTLE MATCHGIRL

THE BEAUTIFUL ANGEL

PLACE: A city.

TIME: Now.

Approximate running time: 45 minutes

THE HAPPY PRINCE

TOWNSPEOPLE climb a hill, high above the city.

TOWNSWOMAN #1.

High above our sick and squalid city.

TOWNSMAN #1.

High above our sad and shallow city.

TOWNSWOMAN #2.

Our stinking city below, and on this verdant hill.

LITTLE BOY.

I want to see the statue.

LITTLE GIRL.

Me too.

TOWNSMAN #2.

On this beautiful hill, so green and lush.

TOWNSWOMAN #1.

We put all our hopes up here.

LITTLE BOY.

I want to see the statue.

TOWNSMAN #1.

We invested all our hopes right here.

TOWNSPEOPLE.

High above our stinking, smoking, smug city, stands
a magnificent statue.

TOWNSMAN #2.

We paid for it.

TOWNSWOMAN #2.

I designed it.

*(TOWNSPEOPLE gather for the unveiling. A cloth cover
hides the statue.)*

TOWNSPEOPLE.

On a tall, tall, tall column...

TOWNSMAN #1.

...reaching...

TOWNSWOMAN #2.

...yearning...

TOWNSMAN #2.

...straining to touch the heavens.

TOWNSMAN #1.

Gilt with thin leaves of fine gold.

THE HAPPY PRINCE

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LITTLE BOY.

I want to see the statue.

LITTLE GIRL.

Me too.

TOWNSWOMAN #2.

Eyes made out of two bright, shining green sapphires.

LITTLE BOY.

I want to see it. I want to see it NOW!

TOWNSWOMAN #1.

A golden statue to uplift us...

TOWNSMAN #1.

...to inspire us.

TOWNSWOMAN #2 (*puts her hand on the BOY's head*).

...to bring us beauty.

(The cover is pulled to reveal—the HAPPY PRINCE, a golden statue encrusted with sparkling jewels.)

TOWNSPEOPLE.

THE HAPPY PRINCE! (*Beat.*) Aaaaaaahhhhhhhhhhh.

Oooooooooooooooooohhhhhhhh.

LITTLE GIRL.

The prince looks like an angel!

LITTLE BOY.

Teacher, are statues like angels on earth?

Teacher, he does look like an angel.

TOWNSMAN #2.

My dear boy, this *statue* is a beautiful representation of human endeavor, human ingenuity, a mixture of art and alloy. Metallurgical and mathematical. The x plus y of the arms and legs divided by the xx minus yy of the height and width and weight.

LITTLE GIRL.

I think he looks like an angel.

LITTLE BOY.

I saw an angel...in a dream. I was dreaming and I saw him. (*Points to the statue.*) It was for sure an angel.

TOWNSMAN #2 (*frowning, to TOWNSWOMAN #2*).

Madam, as a man of science, I disapprove of children ...dreaming.

TOWNSMAN #1.

Well, I'm just glad there's someone in the world who looks quite happy. I, for one, am really miserable.

TOWNSWOMAN #1.

A happy statue. Our money would have been better spent on something practical. A better landfill. We are drowning in our own garbage. Oh well, what's

the use of complaining. Here he is, the Happy Prince, beautiful as he is... useless.

LITTLE GIRL.

I bet the Happy Prince can talk to the moon.

TOWNSWOMAN #2.

Well, Timmy, time to go.

LITTLE BOY.

No, Mother! I don't want to go! I want to stay here and wait for the moon!

TOWNSWOMAN #2.

I said, let's go.

LITTLE BOY.

Nooooo. I want to wait for the moon. (*He drags his feet.*)

LITTLE GIRL.

Look, I think I see a star.

LITTLE BOY.

I see it, above the smokestacks.

TOWNSWOMAN #2.

Timmy, stop it. No stargazing. (*He cries.*) Stop it! Why can't you be more like the Happy Prince! You don't see him crying for anything. Look at him! (*He does.*) Do you see him crying for anything? Do you?

(The LITTLE BOY shakes his head.)

TOWNSMAN #1.

Young fellow, give your mom a big smile. A nice big smile, like this. *(Demonstrates, then sotto aside.)* I'm so miserable. *(To BOY.)* That's what I do when I don't get my way, and my wife hates me, and my boss keeps me from getting a promotion. When I feel like you do, I do this: *(Fake smile.)*

LITTLE GIRL.

I can smile too. *(Forces a smile.)*

TOWNSWOMAN #2.

Look, everyone is smiling except for you.

(Everyone plasters on a big wide fake smile. They exit.)

Day turns to night. The stars and the moon appear and twinkle. A SWALLOW enters, mimes flying motions, circles above the cityscape.)

THE SWALLOW.

Where to land? Where to land? Smokestacks. Church steeples. Chimneys. My wings are tired. *(Circling again.)* Where to land? Where to land? Over here, by this golden tree. I will have a golden bedroom.

(The SWALLOW lands at the feet of the HAPPY PRINCE, who is weeping quietly.)

THE SWALLOW (*cont'd*).

This is just fine. Just tuck my head under my wing, and I'll be dreaming about my destination.

(The following speech takes place with the SWALLOW talking to the AUDIENCE from under its wing.)

THE SWALLOW (*cont'd*).

That's where I'm going. A destination. A far-off destination! It's a long trip, my destination, I better get some sleep. (*Beat.*) What a curious thing? I feel a droplet. But not a single cloud in the sky. The stars are quite clear and bright. And yet... (*Another drop on the head.*) ...and yet it is raining. The climate here is truly dreadful. The Reed, my love, used to love the rain. But that was merely her selfishness! (*Another drop, in the eye this time!*) What is the use of a statue if it cannot keep the rain off? I'm going. (*Sees the statue lit by the moon.*) Wait. You are no ordinary statue. Your face...so beautiful in the moonlight. Who are you?

THE HAPPY PRINCE.

I am the Happy Prince.

THE SWALLOW.

Why are you weeping then? You have quite drenched me!