

Excerpt terms and conditions

This excerpt is available to assist you in the play selection process.

Excerpts are not intended for performance, classroom or other academic use. In any of these cases you will need to purchase playbooks via our website or by phone, fax or mail.

A short excerpt is not always indicative of the entire work, and we strongly suggest you read the whole play before planning a production or ordering a cast quantity.

GREENSLEEVES' MAGIC

by

Marion Jonson



The Dramatic Publishing Company
Woodstock, Illinois • London, England • Melbourne, Australia

***** NOTICE *****

The amateur and stock acting rights to this work are controlled exclusively by THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY without whose permission in writing no performance of it may be given. Royalty fees are given in our current catalogue and are subject to change without notice. Royalty must be paid every time a play is performed whether or not it is presented for profit and whether or not admission is charged. A play is performed anytime it is acted before an audience. All inquiries concerning amateur and stock rights should be addressed to: THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY, 311 Washington St., Woodstock, Illinois 60098.

**COPYRIGHT LAW GIVES THE AUTHOR OR HIS AGENT
THE EXCLUSIVE RIGHT TO MAKE COPIES.**

This law provides authors with a fair return for their creative efforts. Authors earn their living from the royalties they receive from book sales and from the performance of their work. Conscientious observance of copyright law is not only ethical, it encourages authors to continue their creative work. This work is fully protected by copyright. No alterations, deletions or substitutions may be made in the work without the prior written consent of the publisher. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, videotape, film, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher. It may not be performed either by professionals or amateurs without payment of royalty. All rights, including but not limited to the professional, motion picture, radio, television, videotape, foreign language, tabloid, recitation, lecturing, publication, and reading are reserved. On all programs this notice should appear: "Produced by special arrangement with THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY of Woodstock, Illinois."

©MCMCLI by
MARION JONSON
Printed in the United States of America
All Rights Reserved
(GREENSLEEVES' MAGIC)

ISBN 0-87129-036-7
Cover design by Susan Carle

GREENSLEEVES' MAGIC

**A Folktale in Two Acts
For Six Men and Five Women, Extras**

CHARACTERS

**THE KING
THE QUEEN
MIRANDA
MATILDA
MARY
THE GRAND DUCHESS
FITZSNEEZE
THE FARMER
THE TAILOR
THE VERY BASHFUL SAILOR
GREENSLEEVES
A GROUP OF PEASANTS, Men and Women**

PLACE:

The garden of a castle that might be anywhere.

ACT ONE

Morning on a day that might be any day.

ACT TWO

Early the same evening.

ACT THREE

That night that dreams its way into the morning.

GREENSLEEVES' MAGIC
was first produced at the YM-YWHA,
New York, New York, in 1951.

ACT ONE

SCENE: *Morning on a day that might be any day. The garden of a castle in a land that might be anywhere. At one side the walls of the castle tower into the sky. Along the other side are shrubs, flowers and trees. At back is a hedge with a gate in the center and behind the hedge can be seen several roads leading off into the hills and the valley beyond.*

AT RISE: *KING and QUEEN are sitting at a table with a checkerboard between them. KING is a round little man whose face has the puckered melancholy of a sad spaniel puppy. QUEEN is dark and slender, beautifully dressed in a long velvet gown, but she, too, appears to be deeply melancholy.*

KING *(after a moment, sighs and moves one of the checkers).* Oh my! *(QUEEN makes a move which takes out one of KING's checkers.)*

QUEEN. Oh my! *(KING makes another move and sighs even more loudly and sadly.)*

KING. Oh dear—*(QUEEN makes a series of jumps which clears the board of his checkers. She sighs wearily).*

QUEEN. Oh dear! I've won the game again.

KING. So you have, my dear. Shall we play another game of checkers?

QUEEN *(rises, very much upset).* Oh no! Oh no!

KING. But why not, my dear?

QUEEN. We mustn't play checkers! It's—it's dangerous!

KING (*startled*). Oh my! You don't mean you—oh dear me!

QUEEN (*distraught*). Yes, I do. I must admit—I was beginning to—to enjoy it!

KING. Enjoy playing checkers!

QUEEN (*unhappily*). Yes. (*In great agitation KING puts away the checkers and the board, dropping them and frantically picking them up in his haste. He finally jams the last few into his pockets.*)

KING. This will never do! Oh dear me, it will never, never do! Oh dear me!

QUEEN (*sadly*). I know. It's dreadful. Just think of it—if we were to go on playing—

KING (*nodding distractedly*). Yes, if we were to go on—

QUEEN (*almost in tears*). I might—I might almost be happy about it!

KING. Oh my! Oh dear me!

QUEEN. And if I were happy enough, I might want to sing, or even to dance—

KING. Don't say that! For goodness' sake! Don't even think such a thing! What if someone heard you?

(The door of the castle swings open and the three princesses, MIRANDA, MATILDA and MARY enter. MIRANDA is the eldest. ALL move slowly and sadly.)

MIRANDA. Someone did hear you, Father. We did.

MATILDA. Yes, we did.

MARY. Through the windows. They were open.

KING (to QUEEN). You see! They heard! Now what are we going to do? Oh dear, I told you not to say those words!

QUEEN. It was all the fault of our playing checkers. If we hadn't played checkers then I would never have enjoyed myself and—

KING. Hush, my dear! Do be careful. (*He peers fearfully over his shoulder.*)

QUEEN. But it was your idea that we should play checkers.

KING. Well, how could I know anyone could possibly enjoy playing checkers? Besides me, I mean. Oh my, oh my, what have I said!

MIRANDA. Father—what does it mean—sing?

KING. Oh dear! They did hear you!

MATILDA. Is it something to eat?

KING. No, Matilda, it isn't.

MARY. Is it something to wear?

KING (*more upset by each question*). No! No, Mary, it is not something to wear and I wish you'd stop asking questions!

QUEEN. Yes, you really mustn't bother your poor father with any more questions.

KING. And particularly not that question!

MIRANDA. Why?

KING (*beginning to pace back and forth in agitation*).

There you go again! Oh dear, oh dear—

MARY (*after a moment*). What does it mean—to dance?

KING (to QUEEN). Now, see what you've done! They heard every word you said. Oh dear, and I thought I could trust you to be a good example to our daughters. I thought I could trust you never to be happy!

MIRANDA (*as QUEEN sighs unhappily*). Father, what does it mean—happy?

KING. Miranda! Don't mention that word! Besides, I never heard of it!

MARY. Yes, you have. You just said it.

MATILDA. Yes, Father, you did.

KING. Well, if I did, I didn't mean to. Oh dear. Oh dear, you've got me all upset. And I thought this was going to be a nice, peaceful morning—that everyone was going to be just as sad as usual and now you've upset me by asking questions.

(Back of the hedge a group of PEASANTS are seen slowly coming along the road. They move slowly, their heads bowed.)

KING. There! See—the peasants are on their way to the fields to work. They aren't asking a lot of questions.

FIRST PEASANT *(as they go past the hedge).* A sad morning to you, Your Majesties.

KING. Thank you. And a sad morning to you, too, my good people.

SECOND PEASANT. And a very sad morning indeed, to you, Princesses.

MIRANDA. Thank you. *(PEASANTS disappear into the distance.)*

QUEEN *(softly, as she watches them go).* Do you remember—when they and all our people everywhere in the land were happy? And sang as they walked the fields and worked?

KING. Stop reminding me of those things! Of course, they're unhappy. I'm unhappy. You're unhappy. *(Proudly.)* Why, this is the unhappiest kingdom in the world—except for the country the Grand Duchess rules, of course. *(He cocks his head to one side and purses*

his lips thoughtfully.) Dear me! Dear me, I don't suppose the Grand Duchess was *ever* happy.

MIRANDA. There! You did it again. You used the word happy. And mother said people sang.

KING. Oh stop saying that!

MIRANDA. But what does it mean?

KING. And do stop asking questions!

MIRANDA. But Father, we've asked questions before.

KING (*mopping his brow with a huge handkerchief*). Not those questions!

MIRANDA. But Father, I'll be eighteen tomorrow, and—

KING (*staring at her*). Eighteen! Is that all?

QUEEN. Yes. The years go by slowly when no one can laugh.

KING (*nearly jumping out of his boots*). Don't say it! Don't say that word!

MIRANDA. Another strange word—laugh.

KING (*to QUEEN*). Now see what you've done.

QUEEN. I didn't mean to. It slipped out. I'm sorry.

KING. Oh dear, what's wrong with everybody this morning?

QUEEN. Now, my dear, sit down quietly and be calm, please.

KING (*shouting*). Calm! Calm! I'm perfectly calm!

MIRANDA. But Father, why—

KING. *Don't ask me any more questions!*

MIRANDA. But why not, Father?

KING (*roaring*). Silence! Do you hear? Now, go over there and sit down on that bench. And don't let me hear you ask another question. (*Dejectedly, the THREE PRINCESSES cross and sit down on a garden bench, and huddle together crying softly.*)

MIRANDA. Very well, Father.

KING (*mopping his brow in great relief*). Well now, that's better. Much better.

QUEEN. Now, I suppose, you're satisfied?

KING. I should say so. It makes me very happ—(*Catches himself.*) that is to say, I'm very happ—oh, now you've got me doing it! (*He stomps to the door of the castle.*) I'm going to see the Prime Minister about this. Before it's too late and somebody laughs! I mean—oh, dear me, dear me—(*Very flustered, he exits into the castle.*)

QUEEN (*crossing to PRINCESSES to try to comfort them*). There, there—don't cry any more. Your father was upset. Please—don't think about it any more. Think about tomorrow. About Miranda's birthday.

MIRANDA (*wiping her eyes*). Mother, you promised me I should have whatever I wanted.

QUEEN. Did I, dear?

MATILDA. Yes, Mother, you did. I heard you.

MARY. You always do, Mother. You always say to us on our birthday—Unhappy Birthday Mary, or Matilda or Miranda. And then you give us whatever we want.

QUEEN (*kisses MIRANDA*). Very well. Miranda, what do you want?

MIRANDA. I want to know what it means—to sing and laugh and dance.

QUEEN (*alarmed, she crosses away from them*). Oh no! You mustn't ask me that!

MIRANDA. They have such a wonderful sound—listen—(*She tries the words slowly and with delight.*) sing—laugh—dance—They must mean something very strange and very wonderful. Surely, you know what they mean?

QUEEN (*softly*). Yes, I know what they mean.

MIRANDA. And the word happy. I never heard it used without the "un" before it. Did you? Then tell me what they mean, these words.

QUEEN (*trying to be severe, for she's frightened*). Miranda, your father told you not to ask any more questions.

MARY. He said not to let him hear us ask any more. He can't possibly hear us inside the castle.

MIRANDA. Now that I am eighteen I ought to be told. I have a right to know.

QUEEN. I dare not. I dare not tell you!

MIRANDA (*astonished, she goes to QUEEN*). Why, Mother—you're afraid. Afraid to tell us.

QUEEN. If the Grand Duchess were to find out—

MIRANDA. The Grand Duchess!

MATILDA. Does the Grand Duchess know about the words?

MARY. Then they must mean something awful! Don't tell us, Mother! Don't.

MATILDA. No, don't tell us, please don't. Not if the words have anything to do with the Grand Duchess.

MIRANDA. Yes, Mother! Do tell us—

MARY. No! If the words have something to do with the Grand Duchess, they must mean something very frightful and wicked!

MIRANDA. I don't believe it! They are such wonderful words—sing and laugh and dance. They can't mean anything frightful.

QUEEN. They are the most beautiful words in the world.

MIRANDA. Mother!

QUEEN. And it is right you should know what they mean. (*She draws herself up proudly.*) I shall not be afraid any longer. I will tell you.

MIRANDA (*hugging her excitedly*). Oh Mother, I knew you would.

QUEEN. If only I could show you what it is to sing and laugh and dance. (*Almost tempted to try.*) If only I dared—

MATILDA. Has the Grand Duchess forbidden it?

QUEEN. Yes, Matilda.

MATILDA (*panicky*). Then don't do it! Please don't.

MARY. Something awful will happen, I know it. Something very dreadful, Mother.

QUEEN. Something dreadful has happened, Mary. It is the most dreadful thing that could happen to you—to grow up not knowing what it is to sing and laugh and dance.

MIRANDA. The beautiful, strange words. Why did the Grand Duchess forbid you to speak them?

QUEEN. Because she is afraid, Miranda. Afraid of what they mean.

MIRANDA (*wonderingly*). The Grand Duchess afraid? Then the words must be a kind of magic. Oh how wonderful! Tell us, Mother, hurry.

MATILDA (*hesitantly*). Maybe you should, Mother, if Miranda says so.

MARY. All right, if Miranda says they're magic. But make it a story, Mother.

MIRANDA (*willing to compromise*). Very well, Mother, tell it like a story. (*QUEEN smiles, sits down on the bench and PRINCESSES gather around to listen.*)

QUEEN. Once, long ago, when you were a little girl, a very little girl, Miranda, the Grand Duchess came here to visit. She found her people singing and laughing and dancing. For your father was a good ruler and his people were happy.

MIRANDA (*puzzled*). Happy?

QUEEN. It is a feeling you have, Miranda. A feeling you have when you are free to sing and laugh and dance. Oh if only you had known what our country was like in those days!

MATILDA. But the Grand Duchess? What did she do?

QUEEN. She was furious!

MIRANDA. Why? Because she was afraid?

QUEEN. Yes, Miranda. She was afraid, and oh, so furious! She brought many soldiers with her and she called down upon our land a curse of darkness—there was the sound of great thunder and the flash of lightning. Then our people stopped singing and in the darkness there was only silence. The Grand Duchess became ruler of our country.

MIRANDA. But Father—he is the King!

QUEEN. No—only in name. It is the Grand Duchess who is the real ruler of our land. And it is her power over us that puts a curse upon our land so that our people live now in sadness. No one knows any more what it is to sing or laugh or dance. They have all forgotten.

MIRANDA. But you have not forgotten.

QUEEN. No, Miranda. Your father and I have not forgotten. But it is a secret we must never tell—

MIRANDA. But you will tell us. You said so.

MATILDA (*fearfully*). What will happen—if you tell us?

(During the last speeches, GRAND DUCHESS has entered the garden. She is a large, powerful woman with a tremendous deep voice. [NOTE: This part may be played by a man]. Her Prime Minister, FITZSNEEZE, is with her. He is a haughty, disdainful fellow with his nose always high in the air. He constantly peers down it as he speaks to lesser mortals.)

GRAND DUCHESS (*shouting with fury*). Miranda will die!
And you, Matilda, with her! And Mary! (*QUEEN and PRINCESSES whirl to face GRAND DUCHESS.*)

QUEEN (*gasps*). Your Imperial Highness!

MIRANDA. The Grand Duchess! (*ALL curtsy low before GRAND DUCHESS.*)

GRAND DUCHESS (*to QUEEN*). So! You cannot be trusted!

QUEEN. Please, Your Imperial Highness, I was only—

GRAND DUCHESS. Silence! I came here to honor Miranda's birthday and what do I find—

(*KING bursts into the garden without seeing GRAND DUCHESS. He is in quite a dither.*)

KING. Oh my dear, I forgot! Miranda's eighteenth birthday! That means the old—

QUEEN (*frantically, she tries to point out GRAND DUCHESS*). Hush—hush—

KING. I'm trying to tell you, the old—

GRAND DUCHESS (*bellowing*). The old what?

KING. Why the old—(*As he sees her.*) Oops! Oh dear—
(*He bows hastily.*) Your Imperial Highness—I was just about to tell my wife, the Queen, and my daughters, the Princesses—

GRAND DUCHESS. I know who they are!

KING (*terribly flustered*). Oh yes, so you do, to be sure, so you do—

GRAND DUCHESS. Now, my dear Queen, we will have an explanation of what I heard you saying as I came into the garden!

QUEEN. Your Imperial Highness—I was—I was—

MIRANDA. She was telling me what I have the right to know.

GRAND DUCHESS. And what, may I ask, is that?

KING (*hastily*). Oh dear me—don't you think we might all have a cup of tea? Aha, yes—

GRAND DUCHESS. Aha, no!

QUEEN (*trying very hard to be brave*). I only told them that in this land, too, there was once singing and—

GRAND DUCHESS. ENOUGH!

FITZSNEEZE (*bored*). Shall I throw them into the dungeons, Your Imperial Highness?

GRAND DUCHESS. Not just yet, my good Fitzsneeze. I shall spare them for the moment. Until I find out more.

MIRANDA. My mother wouldn't tell us what the strange words meant.

QUEEN (*her fear returning as she looks at the GRAND DUCHESS*). Oh no! I will never tell them that!

GRAND DUCHESS. Silence! I will do the talking. You, my dear Queen, will retire to your rooms and remain there, locked and barred in them, until I set you free. And that will be a long time, indeed.

MIRANDA. Oh no—please—

GRAND DUCHESS. Silence, I said! (*Back to QUEEN.*) You will not be allowed to see your daughters, or your husband, the King.

KING (*taking a step toward her*). Look here now, I protest! (*FITZSNEEZE claps his hand over KING's mouth.*)

GRAND DUCHESS (*sneering at KING's awkward helplessness*). I have other work for you. You will sit upon your throne and give orders. The orders I tell you to give.

QUEEN (*pleading*). You will not harm the Princesses?