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Dramatic Publishing



A Tale of Time

Adapted by
SUZAN ZEDER

Ozma of Oz

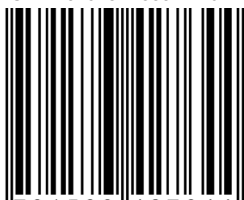
A Tale of Time

Premiered at the Poncho Theatre in Seattle. A contemporary original play, loosely based upon characters from L. Frank Baum's *Ozma of Oz*, woven into a timely new story. This modern fantasy explores the relationship between a now teen-aged Dorothy and her elderly Uncle Henry.

Fantasy. Adapted by Suzan Zeder. Based on the characters and events from Ozma of Oz by L. Frank Baum. Cast: 5m., 4w., 3 either gender with doubling, or 19 (7m., 6w., 6 either gender) with roles distributed. Dorothy reluctantly accompanies her eccentric uncle on his life-long dream voyage to Australia. They argue during a violent storm and are both blown off the boat to Oz, a land where there is no time. Unwittingly, they activate Tic Toc and time begins in Oz. Their adventures lead them to Bill, a giant wisecracking chicken, the wacky Wheelers, the vain and vicious Langwidere and, finally, to the superstrong, wonderfully wise Ozma. Ozma rescues Uncle Henry from the lapideous lair of the volcanic gnome king and teaches Dorothy to look beyond Uncle Henry's outward signs of aging to recognize his true competence, energy and worth. *Flexible casting; minimum twelve scenes; simple or elaborate set pieces. Modern and fantastic costumes. Music in book. Code: O85.*

(Cover artwork by Orlando Valdez for the Honolulu Theatre for Youth production of Ozma of Oz.)

ISBN-10 1-58342-764-3
ISBN-13 978-1-58342-764-4



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Ozma of Oz



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Ozma of Oz

A Tale of Time

Based on the characters and events
from **Ozma of Oz** by

L. FRANK BAUM

Adapted by

SUZAN ZEDER



Dramatic Publishing

Woodstock, Illinois • Australia • New Zealand • South Africa

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(OZMA OF OZ – A TALE OF TIME)

ISBN: 978-1-58342-764-4

*To Claire
Who has been the power to see behind the mind
And into the heart*

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Author's Notes

For those of you who have long cherished L. Frank Baum's Ozma of Oz, and who have been searching for an absolutely faithful stage adaptation of the book, this may not be the play for you. But for those who read, or were read the Oz books as a child, (as I was), who delight in their zany characters and improbable situations, and who admire and respect the spirit of Baum's work, this may be the play for you.

In the process of adapting this work to the stage, I found myself looking for something more: something beyond story, something deeper than crazy characters, a theme or central core I could care deeply about. I found this, not in the book, but in the potential of a relationship between a contemporary teen-aged Dorothy and her elderly, but magnificently spirited, Uncle Henry. So, I decided to depart from the book, to blow them both off the boat, and to whirl them away on an adventure of mutual discovery in the Land of Oz. Virtually all of the characters in this play appear in the book. Some of the events are the same but I have woven these glittering threads from Baum into a fabric of my own making. The theme of intergenerational caring and understanding has been my touchstone because, quite simply, that is what I care about.

I have seen four different productions of this script, and I have learned from all of them. I offer only one word of advice. This play tends to invite over-production. I urge you to resist the temptation to pull out all the stops. Be simple, suggest, and allow the imagination of the audience to work for you. The world of Oz should be a wild and dazzling place, but the accomplishment of this theatricality can obscure the focus on Dorothy and her personal voyage to discover her equally dazzling Uncle.

Suzan Zeder
Seattle
1981

The premiere production of *Ozma of Oz: A Tale of Time* was presented on October 5, 1979 at The Poncho Theatre, Seattle, with the following cast:

Sam	Randy Hoffmeyer
Steve	Ramone Marue
Dorothy	Pamela Bridgham
Uncle Henry	Edward Sampson
Bill	Linda Hartzell
Tic Toc	Paul Fleming
Wheeler I	Randy Hoffmeyer
Wheeler II	Pamela Pulver
Princess Langwidere	Linda Hartzell
Nanda	Diane Petrie
Guard	Pamela Pulver
Ozma of Oz	Gretchen Orsland
General	Ramone Marue
Army	Randy Hoffmeyer
Roquat of the Rock	Ramone Marue
Feldspar	Pamela Pulver
Rock People	Diane Petrie
	Randy Hoffmeyer

The production was directed by Jenifer McLaughlan

Set Design by	Mark Sullivan
Costume Design by	Susan Nininger
Music and Sound by	John Engerman

CHARACTERS

Sam	A sailor*
Steve	A sailor*
Dorothy	Thirteen years old.
Uncle Henry	Seventy-two years old.
Bill	A giant hen*
Tic Toc	The time machine.
Wheeler I	Spy of the Gnome King*
Wheeler II	Another spy*
Princess Langwidere	Woman with thirty heads*
Nanda	Servant to Langwidere*
Guard	Guard to Langwidere*
Ozma of Oz	The ruler of Oz.
General	Ozma's general*
Army	Ozma's army*
Roquat of the Rocks	The Gnome King.
Feldspar	The Gnome King's Servant*
Several Rock People	Gnomes*

* These roles may be double and triple cast to reduce the size of the company.
This show may be done with a minimum of twelve actors to a maximum of eighteen to twenty depending on the number of Gnomes.

SCENES

Shipboard
In the Cabin
On the Raft
On the Beach of Oz
The Desert of Shifting Sand
Langwidere's Palace
In the Guard House
Outside the Guard House
A Pass in the Road
In the Gnome King's Cavern
Outside the Gnome King's Cavern
Shipboard

Ozma of Oz

By Suzan Zeder
December 1980

Scene I: Shipboard

The play opens on board a cargo freighter bound for Australia. It is an open deck with several large crates marked 'Sydney'. The ship is old and somewhat rusty; there are a railing along one side of the deck, a couple of deck chairs, and a free-standing unit which indicates the entrance to the cabins. Sounds of gulls, water, and wind are heard. At opening the sky is light, but as the scene progresses the sky darkens and wind sounds build as a large storm approaches. The movement of the characters reflects the increasing roughness of the sea.

STEVE, a sailor, swabs the deck industriously; he whistles as he mops. In a moment SAM, another sailor, enters in a hurry.

SAM

Hey, Sailor, never mind about that deck! I got new orders for you!

STEVE

But Sir, I'm almost finished.

SAM

Radar's picked up a storm up ahead. We gotta get all this cargo stowed.

STEVE

All of it?

SAM

Lash down anything that can't be moved, and lash it good! Steel cables! Winds are up to seventy-five and we ain't got much time.

STEVE

(Apprehensively looking at the sky.)

Jeeze!

SAM

Jeeze is right, Sailor. Check those crates off the manifest and get that shipment of chickens below.

STEVE

Yes, Sir!

SAM

Get on it now!

STEVE

Yes, Sir! But Sir, what about the passengers?

SAM

Passengers?

STEVE

You know, the kid and . . .

SAM

Oh yeah, the old guy. I don't know why they let them on this boat in the first place. Cargo ship's no place for kids and old people.

STEVE

Yes, Sir! I mean, no, Sir.

SAM

Tell 'em to stay in their cabin. I don't want to see them on this deck until we dock in Sydney.

STEVE

Yes, sir!

(STEVE and SAM exit in opposite directions. DOROTHY and UNCLE HENRY enter from their cabin. UNCLE HENRY has had a stroke and is confined to a wheelchair throughout the play. DOROTHY pushes him as he reads along from 'AUSTRALIA ON \$15. a DAY.')

UNCLE HENRY

"The original Australians were too isolated from the rest of the world to conceive of any chronological history."

(DOROTHY pushes him to a spot on the deck, checks the sun and fixes the angle of the wheelchair. She places a blanket around his legs, and crosses to the deck chair. While he reads she makes an elaborate but silent production out of not listening to him.)

UNCLE HENRY

"But all the legends of these early Australians contain the image of endless space; a world where time and distance really didn't matter."

(DOROTHY turns on a small pocket radio some music, but mostly static.)

UNCLE HENRY

(Louder, over the sound of the radio.)

"In 1770 Captain James Cook sailed into Botany Bay and claimed the entire eastern seacoast of Australia for England."

(DOROTHY pulls out a movie magazine and buries herself in it.)

UNCLE HENRY

(Still trying to get her attention)

"The men with watches, measuring rods, and muskets had arrived. The great continent Terra Incognita Australis had been discovered."

DOROTHY

You can go on reading until you are blue in the face, but I'm not going to listen to you anymore.

(DOROTHY props her magazine on her knees and puts both hands over her ears. As he reads, UNCLE HENRY reaches out with one of his canes, hooks her arm, and pulls it from her ear.)

UNCLE HENRY

"The first settlers of Australia were convicts . . ."

DOROTHY

Uncle Henry, PLEASE! We have been on this boat for two and a half weeks and I have listened to you read about Australia. If I hear one more word about Koala Bears or Kangaroos I'm going to throw up.

UNCLE HENRY

But this is the good part, it's about convicts.

(DOROTHY turns up the radio.)

Dorothy, you can't get any music on that thing.

DOROTHY

There's nothing to do around here.

UNCLE HENRY

We are sailing to Australia, just like the explorers.

DOROTHY

On a cargo ship?

UNCLE HENRY

When Captain Cook was your age he was a cabin boy; sailed all over the North Sea.

DOROTHY

Good for Captain Cook.

UNCLE HENRY

Travel when you're young! If you wait till you're my age, you start falling apart and it's too late!

DOROTHY

When we land in Sydney . . .

UNCLE HENRY

Dock, we don't land, we dock.

DOROTHY

When we DOCK, we stay one week, then we catch the first plane right back to Kansas where we belong.

(UNCLE HENRY lines his chair next to a deck chair and struggles to lift himself onto his canes.)

UNCLE HENRY

I don't know why you came along in the first place.

DOROTHY

You know perfectly well, Aunt Em couldn't leave the farm, so somebody had to come along to take care of you, so I . . .

UNCLE HENRY

I can take care of myself!

(He can't quite manage getting into the chair.)

Uhhhhh. Could you help me into that deck chair?

DOROTHY

(Helping him)

Besides, I have to get back for school. We start in two weeks.

UNCLE HENRY

How can some piddly Junior High School compare to an adventure on the high seas?

DOROTHY

Tommy is going to be on the football team, and I promised I'd get back in time to sign up for cheerleaders.

UNCLE HENRY

Tommy who?

DOROTHY

Tommy Gleason.

UNCLE HENRY

Tommy Gleason's a nurd.

DOROTHY

Uncle Henry!

UNCLE HENRY

I knew his grandfather, he was a nurd too; so's his father! Whole family of nurds.

DOROTHY

You shouldn't talk like that.

UNCLE HENRY

When you get to be my age you can talk any fool way you like.

DOROTHY

I really don't think it's any of your business.

UNCLE HENRY

When you're as old as I am, you haven't got any business of your own, so you gotta mess around in everybody elses' Let's talk about something interesting. In Australia they had these outlaws, bushrangers they called 'em. They were sort of like Robin Hood, except they stole from the rich and kept it. . . . No nurds there.

(The ship lurches and STEVE enters.)

STEVE

Hey, kid, you and your grandfather better get to your cabin.

DOROTHY

I'm not a kid and he's not my grandfather.

STEVE

Sorry, kid, but there's a big storm up ahead and we don't want anyone getting hurt.

DOROTHY

Did you say storm?

STEVE

That's right and it's a beaut!

UNCLE HENRY

(Delighted)

Hot Damn!

(SAM enters and exits quickly.)

SAM

Get a move on Steve! Kid, Gramps, you gotta get to your cabin and stay there.

(The ship lurches, wind sounds increase. Unnoticed, UNCLE HENRY tries to hook his wheelchair with his canes.)

STEVE

Better do as he says.

DOROTHY

How big is this storm? Are we in danger, I mean could we turn over?

UNCLE HENRY

(Taking wide swipes with his cane at the chair.)

Capsize, they say capsize!

STEVE

You are perfectly safe as long as you stay in your cabin.

UNCLE HENRY

(Hooking the chair and pulling it towards him.)

I hope it's a regular typhoon!

STEVE

Just take him inside and take good care of him.

UNCLE HENRY

(Struggling to his feet.)

I can take care of myself.

(His legs buckle, but he catches himself.)

DOROTHY

Where are the life jackets? You do have life jackets?

STEVE

They're in the cabin, now go on!

(UNCLE HENRY works his way carefully toward the wheelchair.)

UNCLE HENRY

(Delighted)

Maybe a waterspout! That would be a sight!

(DOROTHY sees him. She and STEVE rush to help, upsetting his balance.)

DOROTHY

Uncle Henry!

UNCLE HENRY

Watch it. I can manage!

STEVE

Careful Gramps.

UNCLE HENRY

I SAID, I CAN MANAGE! There are still some things I can do for myself.

(With wounded dignity, he wheels off. Stage darkens and wind sounds build.)

DOROTHY

I was just trying to help!

SAM

(OFF)

Get a move on, Steve!

STEVE

Gotta go! Take care, kid.

(STEVE exits.)

DOROTHY

I was just trying to help!

(In frustration she kicks a crate; clucking sounds are heard.)

DOROTHY

What are we doing on this stupid boat? He's just a crazy old man, crazy as a coot. Whenever I try to help he turns into an old grouch, an old grump, an old . . . I must be going nuts; talking to a chicken!

(SAM enters, the ship lurches. Wind, lightning, thunder.)

SAM

I thought I told you to get in your cabin!

DOROTHY

Where's my Uncle? I should never have let him out of my sight . . .

SAM

He's in the cabin! Now, Move!

(DOROTHY exits to cabins. SAM exits shaking his head.)

Kids and old people. I don't know why they let them on this boat!

Scene II: In the Cabin

The storm is in full swing; wind sounds and thunder crash. UNCLE HENRY is in the tiny cramped cabin; his chair moves with the rocking of the boat. He is delighted with the storm, peers out a porthole, and sings a sea shanty at the top of his lungs.

UNCLE HENRY

"As we poor sailors go skipping through the tops,
While the land lubbers lie down below, below, below". . .

(The ship rocks and he slides.)

Whoooooeeeee! That last wave must have been ten feet high!

(DOROTHY enters very sea sick.)

DOROTHY

Aaaaaaaaauuuuuuuggggghhhhh!

UNCLE HENRY

If I could walk, I'd be out there with those sailors, winds lashing at my face, hauling in the top-sail.

DOROTHY

This is a cargo ship, there aren't any sails. Auuuuuggghhh.

UNCLE HENRY

Think of the explorers who have ridden these waves! They thought that storms were sea monsters, churning up the waters with their long scaley tails.

DOROTHY

I don't feel very well.

UNCLE HENRY

I never thought I'd live long enough to see something like this!

(The ship lurches.)

DOROTHY

Ohhhhh, this is terrible!

UNCLE HENRY

No, it's not; it's wonderful. It all depends on how you look at it. Let's pretend we're explorers heading into unknown territory.

(DOROTHY puts on a life jacket.)

DOROTHY

I don't feel much like pretending anything.

UNCLE HENRY

Well you used to. We used to pretend all sorts of things.

(DOROTHY holds out a life jacket for him.)

DOROTHY

You better put this on, just in case.

UNCLE HENRY

Remember the story you used to tell about going up in a tornado? Just imagine that you're up there now, going round and round and round

(He wheels his arms as DOROTHY is trying to put the jacket on him.)

DOROTHY

I was just a little kid. I made it up. Now let me put this on you.

UNCLE HENRY

Don't want it!

DOROTHY

Come on, Uncle Henry, if anything happened . . . with your legs . . . you couldn't swim or anything.

UNCLE HENRY

I bet Captain Cook never wore one of those contraptions.

DOROTHY

(Putting it on him.)

It's for your own good.

UNCLE HENRY

You always say that when you're making me do something I don't want to do.

(The ship lurches.)

DOROTHY

This ship's going under and we'll all be drowned.

UNCLE HENRY

Nonsense.

DOROTHY

Boats do sink you know!

UNCLE HENRY

At least this way's exciting. It beats popping off in your sleep or something.

DOROTHY

This cabin's so small. I can't breathe.

UNCLE HENRY

I'll open a porthole.

DOROTHY

Don't! We'll all be drowned for sure!

UNCLE HENRY

Dorothy, you are getting on my nerves.

(DOROTHY tries to put her radio on a shelf.)

DOROTHY

What are we doing on this stupid boat?

UNCLE HENRY

All my life I've wanted to see Australia, like the explorers.

(She loses her balance, the radio falls.)

DOROTHY

Everybody thinks you're cracked, going to Australia at your age.

(They both go for the radio.)

UNCLE HENRY

Before I die, I just want one adventure.

(His wheelchair runs over the radio and pinches her fingers under the wheel.)

DOROTHY

(Hurt and very upset.)

Why couldn't you just stay home to die?

(There is a frozen moment.)

UNCLE HENRY

I need some air!

(UNCLE HENRY, furious, wheels out the door.)

DOROTHY

No! Stop! I didn't mean . . .

(DOROTHY bolts out the door.)

UNCLE HENRYYYYYYYYY

(DOROTHY struggles against the wind; she grabs a large crate as a gust hits her. Sounds and light create the effect of a water spout. Scenery for the boat swirls away. BLACKOUT.)

Scene III: On the raft

It is morning. DOROTHY lies unconscious on a large raft-like structure which bears some resemblance to the chicken coop in the previous scene. Another figure is also on the raft covered with a tarpaulin. The raft is floating on a calm open sea; the sky is a strange non-sky color, and there is music.

DOROTHY

(Wakes slowly.)

Where am I? The boat? Where's the boat? Uncle Henry? **UNCLE HENRY?????**
... There's nothing out there ... Stay calm, Dorothy, just stay calm ... there's
bound to be a rescue ship. Just stay calm and wait ... **HELP! SOMEBODY
HELP ME PLEASE!**

(The figure under the tarpaulin moves.)

BILL

Kut-kut-kut- Ka Daw Kut!

(The tarp falls away revealing **BILL**, a person-sized chicken.)

BILL

What do you know, it's morning.

DOROTHY

(Astonished)

What in the world?

BILL

Bill's the name, chicken's the game. Pleased to meet you.

DOROTHY

You're ... You're ... a chicken?

BILL

You were expecting an armadillo?

DOROTHY

But you're so ... big.

BILL

Yeah, I noticed that.

DOROTHY

And you can talk ... You speak English.

BILL

How do you know you aren't speaking chicken?

DOROTHY

I must be dreaming; this is all a very strange dream.

BILL

Don't count on it, toots.

(**BILL** pecks her.)

DOROTHY

Ow! The name is Dorothy!

BILL

Did you wake up, Dorothy?

DOROTHY

No.

BILL

Then I guess we're here.

DOROTHY

Where are we?

BILL

How should I know, I just got here myself. One minute I was on the boat ...

DOROTHY

You were on the boat? What happened?

BILL

First the storm hit, and I was sliding all over the deck. Then you came along and grabbed my coop. Then there was this big waterspout that sucked up everything on the deck.

DOROTHY

UNCLE HENRY! Did you see what happened to my Uncle? He was on the deck too!

BILL

Take it easy.

DOROTHY

If anything happened to him . . .

BILL

The old coot bobbed by here

DOROTHY

What if he drowned? Oh, my Lord, it's all my fault. He never would have gone out in that storm if I hadn't . . .

BILL

I said, the old grouch floated by in that

DOROTHY

He can't be dead, he just can't be

BILL

HOLD IT! You don't listen too well, do you? I said, the old grump floated by in that wheelchair of his.

DOROTHY

Was he all right?

BILL

Sure.

DOROTHY

Thank God.

BILL

The old guy was just bobbing and smiling and singing, "Waltzing Matilda Waltzing Matilda" at the top of his lungs. Crazy old man.

DOROTHY

Don't call him those things!

BILL

Why not? You did. Uh Oh! Look out! Here it comes. Man your battle stations. 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 . . . Hit the deck! Uhhhhh.

(BILL lays an egg.)

DOROTHY

What are you doing?

BILL

Laying an egg.

DOROTHY

Do you have to make such a big deal out of it?

BILL

Have you ever laid an egg?

DOROTHY

No.

BILL

Then don't knock it.

DOROTHY

We have got to get out of here. We'll probably starve to death.

BILL

Here, you can have my egg.

DOROTHY

Don't you want it?

BILL

Oh, no! I just lay 'em and leave 'em.

DOROTHY

Thanks.

BILL

I sure wish you hadn't mentioned food. What I wouldn't give for a nice juicy order of grubs over easy with a side order of worms.

(There is a clunk and the raft lurches.)

BILL

What was that?

DOROTHY

Either we hit something or something hit us.

BILL

It's sharks!

(There is a clunk and the raft lurches.)

DOROTHY

There it is again.

BILL

It's a submarine.

(DOROTHY peers over the back of the raft.)

DOROTHY

It's a fish . . . a fish with sails or wings . . . and it's coming at us again.

(The raft lurches and the fish leaps into DOROTHY's hands. It is a strange looking fish with a large key in its mouth.)

I've got it! I've got it!

(BILL dives down head first. Suddenly the fish leaps out of her hands, disappears back into the water, leaving the key.)

I had it. It's gone But it left this

BILL

(Head up.)

Is it a worm?

DOROTHY

No. It looks like a key or something; and look here, under the barnacles, it has something written on it.

(DOROTHY scrapes away the barnacles and reads the inscription. As she does the lights change and magic music is heard.)

DOROTHY

(Reading)

"The power of this key is stronger than strength

Wider than width and longer than length.

The holder of this key has power unshaken

The key may be given but never taken.

S and T Incorporated."

What do you suppose it means?

BILL

Beats me, but then I'm just a chicken.

DOROTHY

This is weird.

BILL

I wish it was a worm.

DOROTHY

Really weird! I suppose we should keep it. Maybe it can help us get out of this mess.

BILL

(Suddenly excited.)

Uh Oh! Uh Oh! Look out! Here it comes!

DOROTHY

Don't tell me you are going to lay another egg?

BILL

Oh, no! Land Ho!

DOROTHY

Where?

BILL

There!

(DOROTHY and BILL are thrown forward as the raft lands upon the beach of OZ. Lights change and as they pull the raft off-stage, the scene shifts.)

Scene IV: The Beach of Oz

A large open space of rocks and bushes bearing wild and brightly colored flowers. It is like no place on this earth, the sky is a strange rainbow colored dawn, odd and wonderful music in the air. To one side of the stage is a large rock with vines and flowers growing on it. The rock bears a sign with the message "Beware of Wheelers." On the other side of the stage two ROCK PEOPLE sit in perfect stillness. They seem to be part of the scenery.

(DOROTHY and BILL enter, shaking the water off themselves and looking about in amazement. BILL begins to look intently at the ground.)

DOROTHY

This is weird, really weird. Out there on the water it was bright daylight, but here it looks like dawn.

BILL

(Not looking up.)

Yeah.

DOROTHY

(Checking her watch.)

My watch has stopped. I wonder where in the world we are?

BILL

You got me. Hey, look there on the ground!

DOROTHY

A tire track! A track from a wheel of some kind. Maybe a wheelchair!

BILL

Not that, A WORM! Hot diggety, a worm!

(BILL pecks at the ground in joy.)