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Family Plays

PENNY AND THE MAGIC MEDALLION

A One-act Musical for Children

Book and lyrics by

JOSEPH ROBINETTE

Music and lyrics by

JAMES R. SHAW



A "Stage Magic" Play

"An entertaining presentation of a valuable lesson: it's all right to admit you're wrong." (*Plays for Children and Young Adults*)

PENNY AND THE MAGIC MEDALLION

“It’s hard to imagine a more perfect example of children’s theatre ... *Penny* is pure theatre: a literate story, spectacular costumes, brilliant songs and a valuable message for the children in the audience: it doesn’t hurt to admit you’re wrong.”

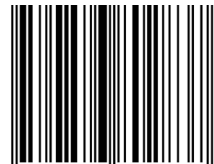
(Paul Merkoski, *Sunday Press*, Atlantic City, N.J.)

“*Penny and the Magic Medallion* tells the story of King Reginald the Righteous, a blustering tyrant who can never admit he’s wrong. He breeds slovenliness in his servants through his insensitivity to their needs ... There’s a message in all this that even a preschooler can grasp.”

(Roy Proctor, *News Leader*, Richmond, Va.)

Musical. Book and lyrics by Joseph Robinette. Music and lyrics by James R. Shaw. *Cast: 1 to 4m., 3 to 6w.* Fast action, a variety of characters, and tuneful music add up to the high quality children’s play we have come to expect from Joseph Robinette, author of *A*B*C**, *Beanstalk!* and other notable scripts. *Penny and the Magic Medallion* is set in the mythical kingdom of Reginald the Righteous, who can never admit he is wrong. “Forthright, upright and all right,” the King is plagued by inefficiency. His cook can’t cook, his sentinel can’t stay awake and his herald can’t herald. At least that’s the way the King sees things. Into the castle comes Bonibini, a whimsical failed magician who offers the King a solution to his problems. A mysterious medallion he gives to the King has the power to turn people into highly efficient robots. Mechanical and unemotional, the staff is soon bustling around the castle, following orders to the letter. The servants’ perfection soon begins to irritate the King, but before he realizes it, his wife and favorite page are also transformed into spiritless automatons. To stop the medallion, the King must unscramble a puzzle. With the help of the audience, he discovers the secret words that break the spell: “I am wrong.” Ordinarily, the King gets violently ill at the sound of the word “wrong,” but this time he learns it’s not so bad after all. The spell is broken, and, as they say in fairy tales, they all live happily ever after. With a flexible cast, *Penny and the Magic Medallion* is suitable for all types of theatre companies and performing spaces. The play has been thoroughly tested and polished before its publication. *Set: a throne room in a castle. Time: today or yesterday. Approximate running time: 60 minutes. Music score available. Demonstration CD available. Accompaniment/SFX CD available. Code: PH5.*

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Penny and the
Magic Medallion

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(PENNY AND THE MAGIC MEDALLION)

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IMPORTANT BILLING AND CREDIT REQUIREMENTS

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PENNY AND THE MAGIC MEDALLION

Cast

King Reginald, the Righteous

Cora, the cook

Hark, the herald

Simon, the sentinel

Queen Bea

Penny, the pageperson

Bonibini

Three of the four male roles—the sentinel, the herald, and Bonibini, may be played by females. In such cases, the names and dialogue should be altered to accommodate the changes.

Place: A Throne Room in a Castle

Time: Today—or Yesterday



Playing Time: 60 minutes



First produced by the Glassboro, New Jersey, Summer Theatre

ABOUT THE PLAY

Penny and the Magic Medallion is set in the mythical kingdom of Reginald the Righteous, who can never admit he is wrong. “Forthright, upright, and all right,” the King is plagued by inefficiency. His cook can’t cook, his sentinel can’t stay awake, and his herald can’t herald. At least that’s the way the King sees things.

Into the castle comes Bonibini, a whimsical failed magician who offers the King a solution to his problems. A mysterious medallion he gives to the King has the power to turn people into highly efficient robots. Mechanical and unemotional, the staff is soon bustling around the castle, following orders to the letter. The servants’ perfection soon begins to irritate the King, but before he realizes it, his wife and favorite page are also transformed into spiritless automatons.

To stop the medallion, the King must unscramble a puzzle. With the help of the audience, he discovers the secret words that break the spell: “I am wrong.” Ordinarily, the King gets violently ill at the sound of the word “wrong,” but this time he learns it’s not so bad after all. The spell is broken, and, as they say in fairy tales, they all live happily ever after.

With a flexible cast—4 men, 3 women or 1 man, 6 women or any combination in between—*Penny and the Magic Medallion* is suitable for all types of theatre companies and performing spaces. Thoroughly tested and polished before publication, the play was produced by the Flint, Mich., Youth Theatre; Richmond, Va., Children’s Theatre; Pleasantville, N. Y., Children’s Theatre; Lely Players of Naples, Fla.; Woodbury, N. J., Sketch Club; Haddonfield, N. J., Parks and Recreation Dept.; Glassboro, N. J., State College; high schools in Flushing, Mich.; Naples, Fla.; Gateway, N. J.; and several other groups.

The **sound effects** listed in the stage directions beginning on page 12 are available on two audio tapes: (1) A reel-to-reel tape (7½ ips) leadered for precise cueing, and (2) a cassette tape with voice cues. The sound effects are also described in the stage directions for those who prefer making their own.

Like all of Joseph Robinette's plays for children's theatre, *Penny* is universally lauded by the media, producers, and audiences:

"It's hard to imagine a more perfect example of children's theatre... 'Penny' is pure theatre: a literate story, spectacular costumes, brilliant songs and a valuable message for the children in the audience: it doesn't hurt to admit you're wrong."—Paul Merkoski, Atlantic City, N. J., *Sunday Press*

"The show is strongly recommended for all ages."—Mary O. Davis, Glassboro *Cam Glo*

"Old-fashioned fairy tale fantasy is combined with elements of pop culture in the musical play, 'Penny and the Magic Medallion,' that opened the Children's Theatre season here yesteryear. It was a mixture that worked well for the TV-conditioned youngsters."—Alison Griffin, Richmond, Va., *Times-Dispatch*

"'Penny and the Magic Medallion' tells the story of King Reginald the Righteous, a blustering tyrant who can never admit he's wrong. He breeds slovenliness in his servants through his insensitivity to their needs... There's a message in all this that even a pre-schooler can grasp."
—Roy Proctor, Richmond, Va., *News Leader*

"Penny was a smash. Another Robinette hit for Flint and seen by 5,000 children and adults."—Ann Elgood, Director, Youth Theatre, Flint, Mich.

PRODUCTION NOTES

Properties

Tray of food—Cora (brought in several times, supposedly with various foods)
 Worn trumpet—Hark
 Rusty rifle—Simon
 Sign: "THE KING IS IN"
 Stand with sign & hook: "TAKE A NUMBER"; numbered plaques—on rolling stand (see p. 3 for description)
 Scepter—King
 Book & quill—King
 Pitcher of water, glasses, pill bottle—on end-table
 Cloth sack containing wad of newspapers—Bonibini
 Water or confetti—in Bonibini's shoe
 Telephone—on table
 Bright medallion on gold chain—Bonibini
 Sparkling silver service—Cora
 Shiny new trumpet—Hark
 New rifle—Simon
 Motel-room-type key—King
 Basket of food—Cora
 New robe & shiny crown—Queen
 Small piece of paper—behind medallion
 Bag of mail—Hark
 Large Scrabble board with large moveable letters: "AIM" "GROWN"—Penny & Bonibini
 New jacket & hat—Penny
 Slice of pie—Cora
 Sword—Queen
 Long, elegant robe (if desired)—for Penny's "knighthood"

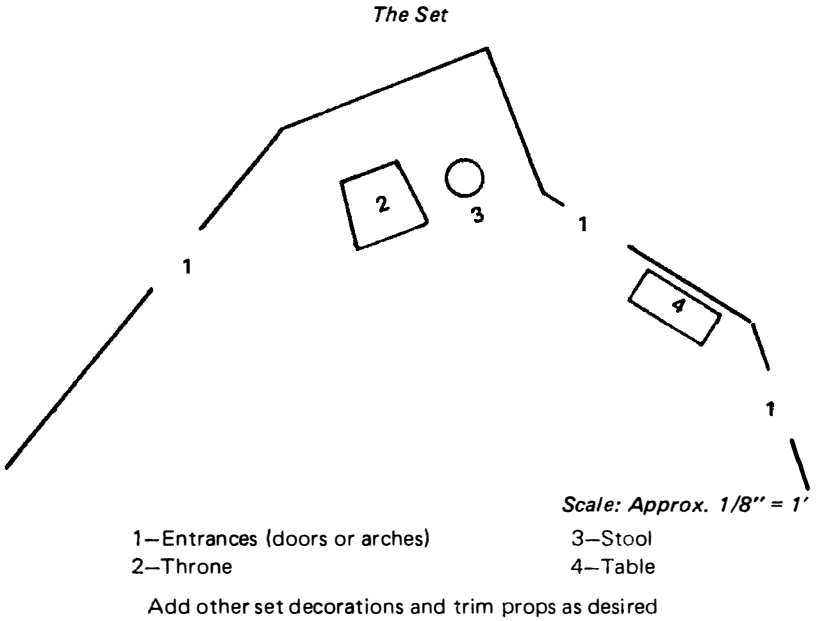
Costumes

Medieval or fairy tale costumes modified with contemporary touches are recommended. In the early scenes, everyone except the King is rather slovenly and unkempt. When the characters re-enter as "mechanical people," however, their costumes (or parts of costumes) are sparkling, shiny new, perhaps with a hint of robots and other futuristic features.

Lights, Sound, and Special Effects

Lighting is standard until the hanging of the Magic Medallion. Each time the Medallion casts its spell, the lighting should be coordinated with the sound effects to give the feeling of magic. A spotlight or strobe on the Medallion may be accompanied by flickering or "chase" stage lights, or alternating rays of colored light.

Sound effects described in the stage directions include a **horse's whinny**, a **thump** when the King falls off the horse, and the Herald's **trumpet notes**. The special sounds accompanying the **Medallion effects** are available on tape from the publisher. See page iv for details.



The play may be mounted on any performing space. The only essential feature is an exit over (or beside) which the Magic Medallion can be hung. For arena stages, the throne may be an ornately decorated swivel chair.

Trim props may be added to supplement the medieval/contemporary mode of the play.

PENNY AND THE MAGIC MEDALLION

Music No. 1: "OVERTURE"

[AT RISE: A throne room in a palace is revealed. Three doors lead off at Left, at Up Left Center, and at Right. The room may be furnished in a stereotype "Camelot" manner, or contemporary touches may be added to suggest "today." Various set pieces may be used as peripheral furnishings to the mandatory throne, which is located just off center to the right, and a footstool, which is to the immediate left of the throne. Perched on the throne in a pose suggesting "The Thinker" is KING REGINALD, a grumpy, yet not altogether unlikeable, ruler. After a moment, he straightens up]

Music No. 2: "IT'S GETTING TOUGHER TO RUN A KINGDOM EVERY DAY"

KING REGINALD. I have a royal feeling—this is going to be another rotten day. *[Singing]*

It's getting tougher to run a kingdom every day!
It's getting rougher to run a kingdom in every way!
The servants who serve me are often upsetting;
You wouldn't believe the bad service I'm getting;
Most of them seem to be always forgetting
Ev-er-y-thing that pleases the king!

[Speaking] Where is my royal breakfast? Cook! Cook! Stop dallying and start delivering. Bring me my breakfast. *[CORA, the cook, enters with a tray of food]*

CORA. Good morning, your excellency. Here's a good breakfast, your excellency—perfect for a good day like today, your excel—

KING. There's nothing good about this day, this morning, or this breakfast. *[He examines the food]* Eggs like rubber—sausage like sawdust—and biscuits like bricks. *[He drops a biscuit on his foot]* Owwww!

CORA. But your excellency, it's not my fault, really—you see, if only I—

KING. Excuses, excuses! *[Singing]*

It's getting tougher to run a kingdom more and more!
It's quite apparent I'll have to get gruffer—much more than before!
All that I ask is a little home cooking,
All that I get is a royal cook-rooking,

With two yellow yolks that never stop looking,

Staring at me—sickeningly! [*He shoves the tray at CORA, who takes it*]

CORA. But your excellency—

KING. And where is the royal herald? [*HARK, the herald, enters with a somewhat used trumpet*]

HARK. Coming, your majesty.

KING. Late, as usual.

HARK. But your majesty, if only you would—

KING. Spare me, please. Just blow the royal reveille and wake the kingdom. [*HARK blows a long, sour note. KING holds his ears*] That's not music—it's mush! [*He chases HARK around the throne*] I'm warning you, herald—if you don't— [*The KING is now behind the throne where he stumbles and falls over an unseen object*] What was that? [*Rising behind the throne and emerging is SIMON, the sentinel. He carries a rusty rifle*] My sentinel!

SIMON. [*Rubbing his eyes*] Yes, your highness?

KING. [*Sarcastically*] Keeper of the castle—guardian of the gate—watcher of the wall—asleep!

SIMON. But, your highness—

KING. But, but, but, but, but—my servants do more butting than the royal billy goat.

SERVANTS. But, King Reginald—

KING. [*Singing*] It's getting tougher to run this kingdom with reason or rhyme!

Why do they do what they do to make me suffer all of the time?

My cook moves as fast as a lady-in-waiting,

My sentinel sleeps like a bear hibernating,

My herald's horn sounds like some cats congregating!

It's tough as can be,

Easy to see,

Take it from me,

I'm sure you'll agree,

It's getting tougher to run a kingdom all of the time!

Tougher to run a kingdom all of the time!

Music No. 3: "TOUGHER . . .": PLAYOFF

SERVANTS. [*Speaking simultaneously*]

Your excellency, if you would—

Your majesty, what I really need is—

Your highness, if only I could—

KING. Quiet! Royal cook, repair to the range and resume your recipes.

CORA. What does that mean, your excellency?

KING. It means get back to the kitchen and start cooking, you klutz!

CORA. Yes, your excellency. *[She exits]*

KING. Royal herald—recoil to the conservatory until you can clarion the calls clearly.

HARK. What does that mean, your majesty?

KING. It means practice your trumpet, you toad!

HARK. Yes, your majesty. *[He exits]*

KING. Royal sentinel—advance thee against the avarice of apathy.

SIMON. What does that mean, your highness?

KING. It means start marching, you moose!

SIMON. Yes, your highness. *[He exits marching]*

KING. *[Mocking them]* Yes, your excellency—yes, your majesty—yes, your highness. My royal servants give me a royal pain! You'd think they would be happy to serve me—good King Reginald the Righteous: forthright, upright, and all right. Well, at least there are two people I can depend on—at least I think I can. *[Calling]* Beatrice—Queen Beatrice! Penelope—Penelope the pageperson.

QUEEN. *[From off Right]* Yes, dear!

PENNY. *[From off Up Center]* Coming, King Reginald!

[The KING hangs a sign near or over the throne which reads "THE KING IS IN." He then wheels from behind the throne a stand on which is printed "TAKE A NUMBER." A hook at the top of the stand holds several numbered plaques. A hook immediately below "receives" the numbers after they've been used]

KING. *[Announcing]* The throne room is now officially open. *[PENNY enters and takes a number. KING sits on the throne]* Number one. *[PENNY hands the plaque to him]* Good morning, Penelope.

PENNY. Good morning, King Reginald.

QUEEN. *[Entering]* Good morning, dear—how are you— *[The KING shushes her and indicates that she should take a number]* Oh, of course. I'm sorry. *[She takes a number]*

KING. Number two.

QUEEN. *[After a beat]* Oh, that's me. *[She hands the number to the KING, who hangs it up]*

KING. Good morning, Beatrice.

QUEEN. Good morning, dear. Did you sleep well, boobsie-woobsie?

KING. Beatrice, please—never call me “boobsie-woobsie” during office hours.

QUEEN. I’m sorry, sweetheart. [*In a deep, regal voice*] Reginald, my lord, how fares the king today? [*Normal voice again*] Was that better?

KING. I—I think so.

QUEEN. Good morning, Penny.

PENNY. Good morning, Queen Bea.

KING. [*Tapping the throne with his scepter*] Persons of the court: attention please, persons of the court!

QUEEN. Boobsie—I mean Reggie. Why don’t you call us “ladies of the court”?

KING. You are forgetting edict number 714-A. [*He motions for PENNY to read from a book which he hands to her*]

PENNY. [*Reading*] “Women will be equal to men in this kingdom and all will be referred to as persons.”

QUEEN. But, Reggie—if we’re equal, why do you get a throne—and I get a footstool?

KING. You are forgetting edict 714-B. [*Motioning to PENNY. She reads:*]

PENNY. “There will be certain exceptions to edict 714-A.”

QUEEN. Oh, Reggie, you’re right all the time.

KING. Of course I’m right. I could never be wro—. Oh, I almost said that horrible word. Anyway, as I was saying—persons of the court—I am at the end of my scepter with my servants. Unless they can give me complete satisfaction by noon today, I will rid this kingdom of the royal cook, the royal herald, and the royal sentinel.

Music No. 4: “TOUGHER BLUES”

QUEEN. Reggie!

PENNY. Oh, no—but King Reginald—

KING. I know they are your friends, Penelope, but I can tolerate their inefficiency no longer. By twelve o’clock noon, they must—shape up or—ship out. Say, that’s catchy. Jot it down, Penelope. [*She writes in the book*] Beatrice, let us retire to the royal garden. Perhaps a nice stroll will restore my sagging spirits.

QUEEN. Of course, boobsie-woob—

KING. Beatrice!

QUEEN. Oh, I'm sorry— [*Affected voice*] Of course, my lordship. Take my arm, you regal rogue. [*Normal voice again*] Is that better, dear?

KING. I—I think so. [*They exit*]

PENNY. This is horrible. I don't want to lose my friends. And King Reginald would be lonesome without them. I know he would. [*Calling*] Cora, Cora the cook!

CORA. [*Offstage*] Yes, Penny!

PENNY. Simon, Simon the sentinel!

SIMON. [*Offstage*] Here, Penny!

PENNY. Hark, Hark the herald!

HARK. [*Offstage*] Coming, Penny! [*ALL THREE enter*]

PENNY. Everybody, I have some bad news. King Reginald said that by noon today you've got to— [*She refers to the book*] —“shape up or ship out.”

SIMON. Is that bad?

PENNY. I don't think it's good.

CORA. Well, I might as well forget it. I can't shape up my cooking on that old wood stove in the kitchen. I need a new electric range, but his stubbornness won't buy me one.

HARK. And I can't play my trumpet any better until the king pays me more money. The reason I'm always late is because I have to play my trumpet all night in a cabaret to support my family.

PENNY. Where do you work, Hark?

HARK. At the Camelot Club. And every morning my lip is just too tired to play reveille.

PENNY. Simon, surely you can shape up by noon.

SIMON. No, Penny, I don't think so.

PENNY. Why not?

SIMON. I can't be a sentinel, Penny. I don't enjoy being a sentinel. I never wanted to be a sentinel.

PENNY. Simon!

SIMON. My late father arranged it with the king. I've tried—honest I have—but I'm just not the sentinel type.

CORA. Poor Simon.

SIMON. Actually, I'd rather be—

PENNY. Yes, Simon?

SIMON. [*In a whisper*] The royal interior decorator.

HARK. Penny, you've got to help us.

CORA. You're the only one who can.

SIMON. You have to tell the king what *he* has to do before we can shape up.

PENNY. Have you tried telling him yourself?

SIMON. We have.

CORA. But he won't listen.

HARK. And if *you* can't convince him, we'll have to ship out.

SIMON. And we don't even have a ship.

PENNY. Very well, I'll do what I can.

CORA. Thanks, Penny.

HARK. You're okay, Penny.

SIMON. You're super okay, Penny.

QUEEN. [*Offstage*] Aren't the peonies pretty today, dear?

KING. [*Offstage*] I didn't notice.

PENNY. Shhh! Now go back to what you were doing. [*The SERVANTS exit. The QUEEN enters and goes to an end-table where she finds a glass of water and a pill*]

QUEEN. Here, take your vitamins, dear. [*The KING enters*] You're just tired.

KING. [*Taking the medicine*] Yes, I'm tired—tired of all the incompetence around here. What happened to the good old days when this castle was fit—for a king. Oh, that's catchy. [*Calling to Penny*] Write that down, Penelope—"Fit for a King." [*She does, then crosses to him*]

PENNY. King Reginald.

KING. Yes?

PENNY. I've spoken with the servants.

KING. And?

PENNY. Well, it—it seems—

KING. Speak up, speak up!

PENNY. They need a little cooperation from you.

KING. Cooperation?

PENNY. Well, for instance, Cora needs a new stove.

KING. Nonsense.

PENNY. And Hark needs more money for his family.

KING. Ridiculous.

PENNY. And Simon doesn't really want to be a sentinel at all.

KING. Absurd.

PENNY. King Reginald, did it ever occur to you that you might be wrong? [*The KING gasps, chokes, and exits gagging. PENNY realizes her mistake. The QUEEN grabs the glass of water*]

QUEEN. Oh, Penny. You shouldn't have said that. It's the one word he can't abide.

PENNY. I'm sorry, Queen Bea—it just slipped out. *[Offstage, the KING emits a painful "yowl" as the QUEEN exits with the water and a pill. PENNY crosses to the SERVANTS, who have entered, attracted by the noise]* It didn't work. Gosh, I made a botch of things.

HARK. Oh, no. What are we going to do?

CORA. It's hopeless now. *[SIMON takes Penny's hand. The KING and QUEEN re-enter]*

Music No. 5: REPRISE: "IT'S GETTING TOUGHER. . ."

KING. I'm telling you, Beatrice—if I've said it once I've said it a thousand times— *[Singing:]*

It's getting tougher to run a kingdom every day!

It's getting rougher to run a kingdom in every way!

QUEEN. *[Singing]* The servants who serve you are often upsetting.

KING. You wouldn't believe the bad service I'm getting.

BOTH. Most of them seem to be always forgetting

KING. Ev-er-y-thing

BOTH. That pleases the king!

SERVANTS. *[Singing]* Gee, it's impossible pleasing that king!

CORA. He's so demanding.

HARK & SIMON. Always commanding.

SERVANTS. He is disgusted with everything!

CORA. He's so berating.

HARK & SIMON. It's irritating!

SERVANTS. We do the best that we can,

Which he says is less than we can,

But we're so distressed by a man

Who can prolong, for so long,

The fact that he's— *[whispers]*

Wrong!

PENNY. *[Singing]* Here I am in the middle, fiddle.

Here I am between this side and that!

Won't be easy to solve this riddle.

I feel like a mouse between a trap and a cat!

Why do they always come to me and say,

"Penny, wish my cares away!"

But wishes don't come true—do they?