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Family Plays

THE LALAPALOOZA BIRD

Comedy/Drama by
Tim Kelly

THE LALAPALOOZA BIRD

The Lalapalooza Bird was the winner of the Virginia Z. Weisbrod Playwriting Award and the Joseph C. Beatty Humanitarian Award in Playwriting.

“A mini-masterpiece.” (Dorian Robert Boyle, Do ubletree Productions, Cape Coral, Fla.)

“Charming and warm, a perfect gem of a short play with a wise message—we need each other, young and old.” (show bulletin.)

“A sensitive, insightful comment on the role of the elderly in today’s society.” (Virginia Port Packet.)

Comedy/Drama. By Tim Kelly. Cast: 2m., 4w. Grandpa Todd has taken up residence in a beach shanty, where he enjoys creating a new life—a life that includes helping unwanted kids find themselves, such as Ginny and Ralph. But his daughter comes to take him back to his lonely room in the family apartment. Her accomplice is his granddaughter, Sarah. When Ginny and Ralph discover that Grandpa Todd might be leaving, their world starts to crumble. Particularly interesting is the emphasis on the relationship between generations, the stupidity and waste of ageism, and the need for all of us to get to know and understand one another, young and not-so-young. *The Lalapalooza Bird* was first presented by the Little Theatre of Alexandria, Virginia. This show is highly recommended for all groups and all ages. *Bare stage with props: a table, two chairs and a bench. Costumes: modern clothes. Approximate running time: 25 to 30 minutes. Code: LH4.*

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The Lalapalooza Bird

THE LALAPALOOZA BIRD

A Play in One Act

by

TIM KELLY

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311 Washington St., Woodstock, IL 60098

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TIM KELLY

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(THE LALPALOOZA BIRD)

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THE LALAPALOOZA BIRD

Cast of Characters

(In Order of Appearance)

Grandpa Todd, *a likeable, friendly young-old man*

Ginny, *a neighbor, about 12*

Estelle, *Grandpa's daughter*

Sarah, *his granddaughter, about Ginny's age*

Ralph, *Ginny's "brother," about the same age*

Mrs. Baker, *an independent, lively woman who lives down the beach*

Time: Summer. The Present

Place: Porch of a beach shanty, somewhere along the California coast



Winner, Virginia Z. Weisbrod Playwriting Award

Winner, Joseph C. Beatty Humanitarian Award in Playwriting



First presented by the Little Theatre of Alexandria, Va., in the Virginia Z. Weisbrod One-Act Play Festival, October 23-25, 1980, directed by Margaret Folkins, with the following cast:

Grandpa Todd	Lionel C. "Pete" Holm
Ginny	Susanne Monahan
Estelle	Alice O'Connor
Sarah	Karen Bradford
Ralph	Stephen O'Connor
Mrs. Baker	Violet Clark

ABOUT THE PLAY

Grandpa Todd has taken up residence in a beach shanty, where he enjoys creating a new life—a life that includes helping unwanted kids find themselves. His ally in this project is Mrs. Baker, who has the only house on the shore that is “year-round.” Two youngsters who require immediate attention are Ginny, a girl who feels the whole world needs her; and Ralph, an angry boy who refuses to remove his leather jacket and is convinced no one can be trusted.

Grandpa Todd soon finds himself facing another problem: His daughter comes to the beach in an attempt to woo him back to his lonely room in the family apartment. Her accomplice is the granddaughter, Sarah. When Ginny and Ralph discover that Grandpa Todd might be leaving, their world starts to crumple.

Particularly interesting is the emphasis on the relationship between generations, the stupidity and waste of ageism, and the need for all of us to get to know and understand one another, young and not-so-young.

This sunny, humorous award-winning play is very easy to stage, and audiences love it. The set consists of two chairs, a table, and a bench. Playing time is about 30 minutes.

THE LALAPALOOZA BIRD is highly recommended for all groups and all ages.



“Charming and warm, a perfect gem of a short play with a wise message—we need each other, young and old.”—Show Bulletin

“A sensitive, insightful comment on the role of the elderly in today’s society.”—Virginia Port-Packet

PRODUCTION NOTES*Properties*

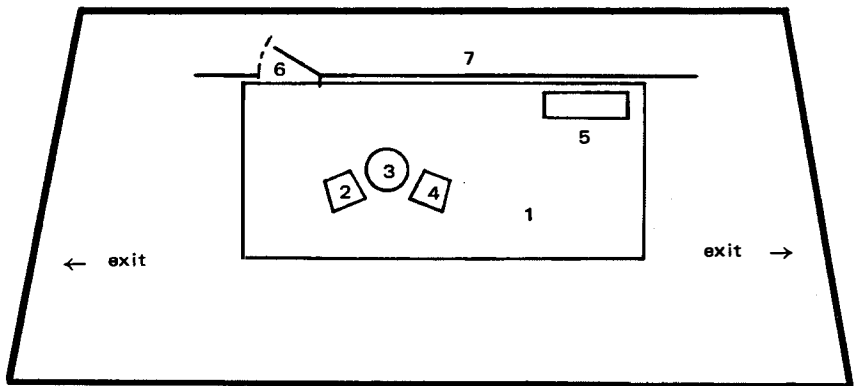
Pitcher of lemonade and glasses on a tray — Grandpa
 Pail — Ginny
 Slip of paper — Estelle
 "Blueprint" (crayon lines on a piece of wrapping paper) — Ralph
 Fishing pole — Ralph
 Eyeglasses — Mrs. Baker
 Box containing new surfer's jacket or windbreaker — Grandpa

Costumes

Costumes are contemporary, as described in the text. Ginny might wear overalls or shorts or a playsuit. Ralph's leather jacket is covered with medals, buttons, souvenir pins, any decoration he can find. Sarah and Estelle should be dressed fashionably to contrast with the "beach types." Mrs. Baker may wear a funny hat. Grandpa would undoubtedly wear old, tattered, comfortable clothes.

Special Effects

None required, although the director may add an occasional sound of gulls, breaking waves, and other beach sounds. The stage is fully lighted throughout.

The Set

Scale: 1/8" = 1'

- 1 — Platform(s) representing porch of Grandpa's shanty
- 2 — Chair (perhaps a rocking chair)
- 3 — Small table
- 4 — Chair
- 5 — Bench
- 6 — Entrance to cottage
- 7 — The background may be flats representing a beach shanty, or curtains

The furniture and general atmosphere should give the impression of a run-down, weatherbeaten beach shack. Other set and trim props—especially "beach decor" like fishnets, fishing poles, shells, etc.—may be added if desired.

THE LALAPALOOZA BIRD

By Tim Kelly

[SETTING: The porch of a beach shanty. Anything that adds to the "seaside effect" is helpful – fishnet, shells, fishing gear, etc. However, the essential properties are few. They are a weather-beaten rocking chair and a slightly battered chair, with a small table in between, at Right. A wooden bench is off to the side, Left. Entrance into the shanty is Up Right. Entrances to the porch from the beach are Down Right and Down Left.]

AT RISE: We hear the voice of GRANDPA TODD from inside the shanty, singing:]

GRANDPA. "Fifteen men on a dead man's chest,
Yo, ho, ho, and a bottle of rum!" *[In a moment he appears carrying a tray. On the tray is a pitcher of lemonade and two glasses. He sets the tray on the table, recites with gusto]*

 "Our captain stood upon the deck,
 A spy-glass in his hand,
 A-viewing of those gallant whales
 That blew at every strand."

[He stands straight, makes a fist with each hand, puts them together to suggest a "telescope" and puts them to his eye. He scans the horizon] Not a whale in sight. [Sighs] Pity. [GRANDPA TODD is a strong-looking man who obviously enjoys the outdoors. He is intelligent and friendly with a love and appreciation of life that's genuine. He wears a pair of faded dungarees, a work shirt, and a "skipper" or "sailor" hat]

GINNY. *[From offstage Left]* Mr. Todd! Mr. Todd!

GRANDPA. *[Puts down his "telescope," calls Down Left]* Over here, Ginny. On the porch. *[He works the "telescope" again. GINNY, an appealing girl, about 12, a shade on the tomboy side, enters Down Left. She carries a pail]*

GINNY. Mrs. Baker sent you some clams. Said you shouldn't be afraid of them. Said you'd enjoy them. Said to wash them good. Said –

GRANDPA. *[Cuts in]* Mrs. Baker does say a lot, doesn't she?

GINNY. She likes to talk, if that's what you mean.

GRANDPA. *[Laughs]* Tell her I'm much obliged for the clams. Just set them on the bench. *[GINNY puts the pail on the bench, observes GRANDPA with his "telescope"]*

GINNY. Looking for whales again?

GRANDPA. Yep. I'm searching the horizon.

GINNY. What's that?

GRANDPA. Horizon?

GINNY. Unh-hunh.

GRANDPA. It's where the sky and the earth appear to meet. See? Out across the water. It's almost a straight line.

GINNY. I've seen that before. Only I didn't know it was the, uh, uh –

GRANDPA. Horizon.

GINNY. Horizon.

GRANDPA. Right. Pour yourself some lemonade, Ginny. *[GINNY steps to the table, pours herself a glass, drinks as they converse]*

GINNY. *[As GRANDPA does "telescope" business again]* Wouldn't a real telescope work better?

GRANDPA. Anyone can use a real telescope, Ginny. I prefer this one. It helps the imagination.

GINNY. *[Sits on bench]* Doesn't cost as much as a real one either.

GRANDPA. You're much too young to be so practical, Ginny.

GINNY. *[Old beyond her years]* I suppose I am. No one ever sees a whale in these parts, Mr. Todd.

GRANDPA. That's why imagination is so important. *[Recites]* Maybe we didn't see a whale yesterday and maybe we won't see a whale today, but that doesn't mean we won't see one tomorrow. *[Scanning the horizon]* Just one span – one great span.

GINNY. Hunh?

GRANDPA. Span.

GINNY. Is that anything like a "horizon"?

GRANDPA. Not in the least. *[Lowers "telescope" again]* A span is the distance from one rise of the whale to the other.

GINNY. You sure know a bucketful about the ocean. You were a sailor, I bet.

GRANDPA. No, Ginny. I worked in an office. The only sailing I did was between filing cabinets. Always wanted to be a man of the sea, though.

GINNY. If you wanted to be a sailing man, why did you work in an office?

GRANDPA. We can't always do what we'd like.

GINNY. Why not?

GRANDPA. Life.

GINNY. *[Doesn't understand]* Hunh?

GRANDPA. Didn't you ever want something you couldn't have?

GINNY. You mean – like parents? *[GRANDPA looks at her; there is a moment of awkward silence. GINNY hops up]* I better see what Ralph's up to. He gets into trouble when I'm not around.

GRANDPA. I've got some chores inside. You take your time and finish your lemonade. Ralph can wait. Don't gulp.

[He goes into the shanty. GINNY puts down her glass, stands, and makes a "telescope" with her fists, scans. ESTELLE, Grandpa Todd's daughter, enters Down Right. She is looking at a slip of paper she holds in her hand. She's in her 30's or 40's, intelligent but rather prim]

ESTELLE. Excuse me, young lady.

GINNY. Hunh? *[Lowers "telescope"]*

ESTELLE. I'm looking for Windward Cottage.

GINNY. This is it.

ESTELLE. *[Appalled]* This?

GINNY. Unh-hunh.

ESTELLE. There must be some mistake. *[Checks paper]* Perhaps I have the wrong address.

GINNY. There's only one Windward Cottage on this beach.

ESTELLE. It's not a cottage at all. It's – *[searches for the right word]* – a shanty.

GINNY. Yup. Most of the cottages along the waterline are shanties. Folks only use them in the summertime. Except for Mrs. Baker. She's got a "year-round." Betcha don't know what I'm doing. *["Telescope" again]* I'm scanning the horizon for whales.

ESTELLE. I'm looking for Mister Todd.

GINNY. Hey, Mr. Todd! Company! *[To Estelle]* I better check out my brother. He needs me to look out for him. *[GINNY darts off, Down Left. ESTELLE steps onto the porch, apprehensive. She looks at the worn furniture as if she suspected it might change shape if she stared hard enough. GRANDPA enters from the shanty]*

GRANDPA. Who is it, Ginny?

ESTELLE. *[Forces a smile]* Hello, Dad.

GRANDPA. Estelle? Why didn't you tell me you were coming down?

ESTELLE. I wanted it to be a surprise.

GRANDPA. *[Grins wide]* Welcome. *[He embraces her. She kisses*

him dutifully on the cheek] Sit down, sit down. [*He gestures to chair Left. She sits*] You're in luck.

ESTELLE. Oh?

GRANDPA. The lemonade. I just made it. Fresh.

ESTELLE. No, thanks. I stopped and had lunch. Such a lovely day and the restaurant had a terrace overlooking the water.

GRANDPA. I'll pour myself a glass.

ESTELLE. Yes, do. [*Both are trying to be pleasant and noncommittal, but the attempt is one of evasion. They are trying to avoid a "certain" subject, but each knows this will not be possible*] Who was the girl here on the porch?

GRANDPA. Ginny. Lives with Mrs. Baker. She takes children in. [*He sits in the rocker with his lemonade*]

ESTELLE. What do you mean she takes them in?

GRANDPA. They have no place to go. Some are battered children, some are runaways that won't go home, some have no homes to go to, and some are simply unloved. Unwanted.

ESTELLE. She must have a big heart.

GRANDPA. And a big house. That helps. [*Indicates pail*] She sent Ginny with a pail of clams.

ESTELLE. [*Stands, nervous*] You can't be comfortable here.

GRANDPA. You haven't even seen the inside, Estelle.

ESTELLE. This place is nothing but a shack.

GRANDPA. It's only for the summer.

ESTELLE. Then what?

GRANDPA. [*Evasively*] We'll see.

ESTELLE. That's another way of saying you have no intention of returning. You have a perfectly good room of your own in our apartment.

GRANDPA. Estelle, I know this is difficult for you, but I'd rather live in this "shack," as you call it, than in that room you fixed up for me.

ESTELLE. That's cruel.

GRANDPA. Let me finish, darlin', and it's not cruel. You and Thomas have your own lives. It's not as if I was incapable of caring for myself. [*Wistful*] After your mother died I admit I was in something of a state, not myself at all. I'll always be grateful for the love and concern you and your husband showed me, but, now, I've got to get on with this business of living. Living *my* life.

ESTELLE. [*Beginning to break with frustration*] I can't let my own

father live in squalor like this – I won't accept it.

GRANDPA. You must.

ESTELLE. No!

GRANDPA. I am not coming back to the apartment.

ESTELLE. *[Tense]* If you don't I'll never forgive myself! I'll never forgive you. I mean that.

GRANDPA. Stop it.

ESTELLE. No – never!

[SARAH, Estelle's daughter, about 11 or 12, enters Down Right. ESTELLE sees her coming and turns away to hide her tears. GRANDPA is delighted to see Sarah]

SARAH. Hello, Grandpa.

GRANDPA. There she is! There's my Sarah! Best li'l granddaughter in the whole wide world! *[He hunkers, throws open his arms. SARAH rushes to him. They embrace. SARAH is a bright girl, a shade precocious]*

SARAH. I wanted to telephone. Mother said it would be more of a surprise this way.

GRANDPA. Sit down and have some lemonade. I better get some more ice. Melts in this weather. *[He picks up pitcher, gives a concerned glance to Estelle, exits]*

SARAH. *[She sits in the rocker]* I wish we lived on the beach.

ESTELLE. You wouldn't like it in the winter.

SARAH. Why not?

ESTELLE. It's bitterly cold and none of these shacks have decent heating.

SARAH. Where will Grandpa live in the winter?

ESTELLE. He'll be back with us in the apartment. Where he belongs. *[ESTELLE steps to the "door" of the shanty, checks to see that Grandpa can't hear, steps to Sarah and speaks with the tone of a conspirator]* Sarah, you're a bright girl, so I know I can count on you. We can't abandon him. I could ask him to come back again and again and he wouldn't. He's stubborn. Your father could plead and it wouldn't do much good, either. *[Pause]* So it's up to you, Sarah.

SARAH. What is?

ESTELLE. Tell him how much you miss him.

SARAH. He already knows that. He knows I miss him more than anything.

ESTELLE. Then persuading him to come home won't be too diffi-

cult. *[Hopeful]* Will it?

SARAH. I don't want him to do anything he doesn't want to do.

ESTELLE. *[Irritated]* You haven't been listening. Your grandfather doesn't know what he wants. You've got to make him see that he doesn't belong in this place. He —

GRANDPA. *[From inside]*

“Oh, Shenandoah, I long to hear you

Away you rolling river,

Oh, Shenandoah, I long to hear you

Way a-way, I'm bound a-way

'Cross the wide Missouri . . .”

[During song, ESTELLE crosses Down Right]

SARAH. Where are you going?

ESTELLE. *[Nervously]* I'll take a stroll along the beach. I'm counting on you, Sarah. *[ESTELLE hurriedly exits. SARAH stands. Still singing, GRANDPA enters from shanty. SARAH moves behind table]*

SARAH. You still like to sing, Grandpa.

GRANDPA. That's a fact. Can't deny it. I forgot to fill up the tray. No more ice for a while, I'm afraid.

SARAH. *[Pouring a glass of lemonade]* I'll use my imagination — like you taught me. *[Pointedly]* We have an ice-maker at home. All the ice anyone could want.

GRANDPA. *[Fixes her with a critical eye]* Hmmmm. If I didn't know better I'd swear that was Estelle talking. *[Looks about]* Where's your mother?

SARAH. She wanted to take a walk along the beach.

GRANDPA. *[Suspicious]* Oh?

SARAH. Maybe she wants to collect some shells.

GRANDPA. Your mother doesn't like shells in the house. You know that. They scratch the woodwork.

SARAH. Maybe she wants to take off her shoes and get her feet wet.

GRANDPA. Maybe she wanted you to persuade me to come back to the apartment. *[They look at each other for a moment and then break out into wide grins]*

SARAH. I knew I couldn't fool you.

GRANDPA. *[Sits Right]* I do miss you, Sarah.

SARAH. I miss you, too, Grandpa. I wanted to come see you sooner, but Mother was so upset about you leaving that she didn't want to hear about the beach.

GRANDPA. Estelle is a wonderful woman, but she does want to live

other people's lives. Living her own life ought to be a full-time job. *[SARAH steps behind the rocker and puts her arms around her GRANDFATHER, hugs]* Your mother and father should be able to do what they want without worrying about me.

SARAH. And you should be able to do what you want without worrying about them?

GRANDPA. Couldn't have said it better myself. Doesn't mean we've stopped loving each other, or needing each other, or helping each other.

SARAH. Then what does it mean?

GRANDPA. That every human being needs a little dignity. Some independence. That's very precious.

SARAH. Dad said you can't afford to be independent.

GRANDPA. You'd be surprised how easy it is to get by with a little independence and a few friends. Like Mrs. Baker.

SARAH. Who's Mrs. Baker?

GRANDPA. *[Points to pail]* Today, Mrs. Baker is the "clam lady."

SARAH. Clam lady? *[She crosses to pail, investigates]* Clams. Yeech.

RALPH. *[From offstage Down Left]* Hey, G. T.! G. T.!

SARAH. Who's that?

GRANDPA. That's Ralph.

SARAH. What's he shouting?

GRANDPA. G. T.

SARAH. What's that?

GRANDPA. Short for "Grandpa Todd." Ralph's inventive.

SARAH. He shouldn't call you G. T. It's not respectful.

GRANDPA. Don't be smug, Sarah.

[RALPH enters Down Left. He's about Ginny's age. Fast-talking, pretends to be streetwise. Insecure. Despite the warmness of the day he wears a leather jacket dripping with medals, buttons, pins. He wears surfing shorts, is barefooted. In one hand he carries a fishing pole. In the other a rolled up "blueprint"]

RALPH. Important business. Gotta talk with you, G. T. *[Notices Sarah]* Who's she?

GRANDPA. Ralph, I'd like you to meet my granddaughter. This is Sarah.

RALPH. *[The "Big Shot"]* Any granddaughter of G. T.'s is a granddaughter of mine.

SARAH. That's not an intelligent thing to say.