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Family Plays

Sprucey, the Blue Christmas Tree

Drama by
Donna J. Abear



Sprucey, the Blue Christmas Tree

Drama. By Donna J. Abear. Cast: 7m., 3w. First there was Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer and Frosty the Snowman. Now there is Sprucey, the Blue Christmas Tree. Sprucey is sad and homeless. He wants to be a Christmas tree, but no one wants him because he is a blue spruce—and who wants a blue Christmas tree! With the help of Santa Claus and a little homeless boy, Sprucey finds happiness and a home. The Davidson family—mother, dad and two children—live in a cardboard box near a Christmas tree lot. The homeless family is sadly looking forward to a bleak Christmas. But when the rest of the family is asleep on Christmas Eve, young Billy sets out to find a Christmas present for his little sister. He wanders into the Christmas tree lot, empty now except for a scraggly little blue spruce trees. But Santa does magical things for Sprucey, and when he and Billy get together ... well, you'll have to read the play to find out the exciting things that happen. Sprucey is a character you won't soon forget. The play premiered with 18 sold-out performances by the Bowen Park Theatre Co., a professional company at the Jack Benny Center in Waukegan, Illinois. The play appeals to children and family audiences. *One ext. set. Costumes: modern clothes. Approximate running time: 40 minutes. Demo CD available. Code: SZ4.*

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Sprucey, the Blue
Christmas Tree

Sprucey, the Blue Christmas Tree

A ONE-ACT PLAY
by ***DONNA J. ABEAR***

Family Plays

311 Washington St., Woodstock, IL 60098

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DONNA ABEAR

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(SPRUCEY, THE BLUE CHRISTMAS TREE)

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“Produced by special arrangement with
Family Plays of Woodstock, Illinois”

To my Grandfather

SPRUCEY, THE BLUE CHRISTMAS TREE

CAST

(In order of appearance)

***WOMAN**, buying a Christmas tree
****JOE**, owner of a Christmas tree lot
OFFICER MARTIN TINETTI, a policeman
SPRUCEY, a scraggly little blue spruce
BILLY DAVIDSON, a young boy
KATY DAVIDSON, a young girl
***MARY DAVIDSON** } Their parents
JOHN DAVIDSON }
*****KRIS KRINGLE**
****BUM**
*****SANTA CLAUS**

(* , ** , & *** indicates possible double-casting)

Time: About 9 p.m. on Christmas Eve

Place: A Christmas tree lot and a city street



The original cast of the Bowen Park Theatre Company,
directed by Mark Heller:

Woman Shopper	Barbara Elam
Joe	Tom McElroy
Officer Martin Tinetti	Leo Kalisz
Sprucey	Jason Clark
Billy Davidson	Joey Goodman
Katy Davidson	Ali Pesche
Mary Davidson	Margaret Schultz
John Davidson	Peter Nepstad
Kris Kringle	Bruce Heskett
Bum	Tom McElroy
Santa Claus	Bruce Heskett

Sprucey's song was composed by Mark Russell
and sung by Margaret Schulz

ABOUT THE SHOW

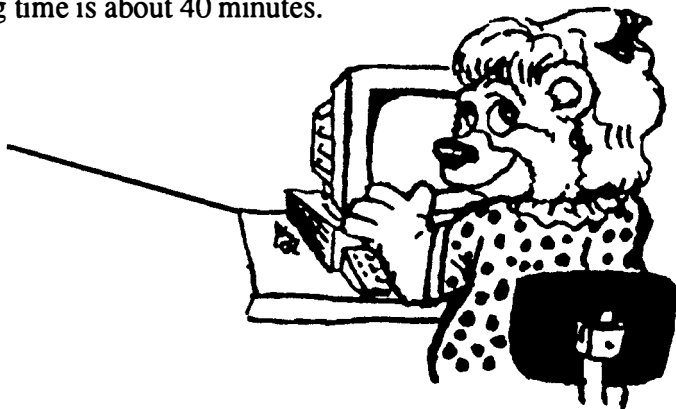
First there was Santa, followed by Rudolph the Red-Nose Reindeer and Frosty the Snowman. And then there was...no one. There hasn't been a truly memorable new Christmas character for children in many years. Until now. Here's Sprucey the Blue Christmas Tree.

The Davidson family—mother, dad, and two children—live in a cardboard box near a Christmas tree lot. The homeless family is sadly looking forward to a bleak Christmas. But when the rest of the family is asleep on Christmas Eve, young Billy sets out to find a Christmas present for his little sister. He wanders into the Christmas tree lot, empty now except for a scraggly little blue spruce. No one would buy the pitiful little tree and take it home to decorate as a Christmas tree. But Santa does magical things for Sprucey, and when he and Billy get together...well, you'll have to read the play to find out the exciting things that happen. Sprucey is a character you won't soon forget.

The play was premiered with 18 sold-out performances by the Bowen Park Theatre Co., a professional company at the Jack Benny Center in Waukegan, Ill. A video tape of that production is available from I. E. Clark Publications. The play appeals to children and family audiences.

Ms. Abear (she pronounces it like it looks: A [long "a"] BEAR) writes a weekly humor column called "Life's A Bear" circulated to 13 towns in Lake County, Ill.

Playing time is about 40 minutes.



Production Notes

Properties

A small Scotch pine tree—in Christmas tree lot
 Portable boom box (optional)—Joe
 \$10 bill—in woman's purse or pocket
 Ball—Billy and Katy
 Walking cain—Kris Kringle
 \$10 bill—Kris Kringle
 Old newspaper, tin foil—in garbage can or dumpster
 Flashlight—in shelter
 4 Christmas presents: basketball, radio, doll, and stuffed bear—Santa Claus

Costumes

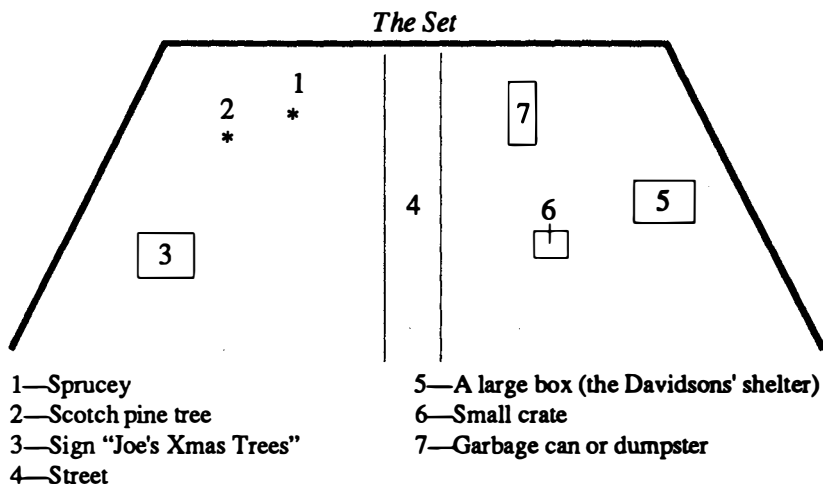
The Davidson family's clothes are well worn, perhaps a bit shabby. The other characters wear standard clothing, dressed for the cold weather. The Bum wears messy clothes. The key to Sprucey's costume is a two-piece cage. In the original production, the cage was constructed from chicken wire. The bottom cage is like a 3/4 cone which is worn using a harness over the shoulders (the harness should be well padded). The top cage is the "remainder" of the cone and rests on the actor's shoulders. Minimal cut-out areas are provided for the actor's shoulders/arms to protrude outside the cage. To achieve a "realistic" Christmas tree look, the cage is filled/intertwined with artificial Christmas tree boughs (the stiff type made with wire, so they can be bent and twisted as needed). Use less boughs in the face area, enough to hide the face, but still allow the actor enough vision to make his movements possible and safe. In the original productions, artificial "blue spruce" Christmas tree boughs could not be found, so spray paint highlighting was used to get the "blue spruce" effects. Use spray paint in shades of baby blue and teal (blue-green) to get the shaded effect of a real blue spruce. Heavy brown tights should be worn on the legs, with heavy brown socks, and a blue-green turtle neck on top, with blue-green gloves on the actor's hands. The arms/hands are also covered in boughs, which can be attached with safety pins or sewn to material.

Safety warning—No matter how carefully the chicken wire is cut and bent, there are always sharp nubs that have potential to scratch the actor. Take every precaution to cover the nubs with wax, tape, etc. to minimize scratches. Chicken wire need not be used if you can find a substitute material that achieves the same effect. Costume note from the author:

Although a costume could be created with the face uncovered, it is preferable to make Sprucey appear “real” and not just an actor in a costume. Just as children believe in the costumed characters at Disney’s theme parks, Sprucey should maintain the same type of mystique.

Music

Christmas music is called for—either the songs named in the stage directions or music of your choice. Use music in the public domain to avoid copyright infringement.



SPRUCEY, THE BLUE CHRISTMAS TREE

[It is Christmas Eve. A Christmas Song can be heard playing as the lights begin to come up. The stage is lit to represent evening, about 9:00 PM. Stage Right is a Christmas tree lot, empty except for two small trees, a Scotch Pine and a Blue Spruce. At Stage Left are city buildings in the backdrop, perhaps an alleyway or a vacant lot. On the lot is a large makeshift box/home, which houses a family of four who are down on their luck. A city street, runs through the center of the stage with perhaps a street lamp on each side. The street separates the tree lot from the makeshift box/home. Light the two sides of the stage separately to indicate distance between the two areas.]

At RISE, only the stage apron is lit, as a light snow falls. LIGHTS then come up on Stage Right: "Joe's Xmas Trees." A portable boom box may be playing Christmas songs. Joe can be seen tidying up, as he waits for the last shopper, a WOMAN, to pick out her tree before he closes the lot]

WOMAN. Are you sure you don't have any other trees?

JOE. No, ma'am. These are all I have left.

WOMAN. Just these two, hmmm? Well...that one over there is too little and crooked, not to mention it's blue. I don't like blue trees. I think I'll take this one here. *[She chooses the Scotch Pine]*

JOE. Good choice. That'll be \$10.

WOMAN. Right. \$10. Here you are, sir.

JOE. Thank you, ma'am. And a Merry Christmas to you. *[He watches as the woman leaves, then shakes his head as she carries the tree off fairly easily]*
Now there goes a strong woman!

[Joe gets back to tidying up and preparing to close up the tree lot. He sings as he works. OFFICER TINETTI appears, walking his beat, and hears JOE belting out a Christmas song. He walks over to Joe's lot]

OFFICER TINETTI. Hey—cut that racket or I'll have to run you in for disturbing the peace.

JOE. Well, Marty, I mean, "Officer Sir." It's Christmas, for pete's sake. Shouldn't you be home with the missus? Or did they punish you for not collecting enough donations for the Policeman's Charity Ball?

OFFICER TINETTI. Oh, nothing like that, Joe. Believe it or not, I volunteered to work tonight.

JOE. You volunteered? On Christmas?

OFFICER TINETTI. Yeah. You know it's just the wife and I, so I thought I'd give one of the guys with kids a break. I don't mind, really. Christmas Eve's a pretty quiet night.

JOE. You're a real peach, Marty. Makes me feel safe with a nice guy like you on the street watching out for me.

OFFICER TINETTI. Just doing my job. So, Joe, looks like business was good for you tonight. Sold 'em all but one, huh?

JOE. Not bad, not bad. Say, maybe you'd like to take this last one off my hands? Half price for you, Marty!

OFFICER TINETTI. Thanks, Joe, but I've already got one. My wife makes me drive out to a tree farm every year and cut our own. Sort of our tradition, I guess. Besides, you've gotta admit that's a pretty sad looking tree.

JOE. Hate to say it, but you're right. Oh, well, I had to give it a try. I suppose it'll make some nice firewood.

OFFICER TINETTI. Now you're using your head. Listen, you and your family have a Merry Christmas. And while you're home, all cozy in front of the fire, watching "It's a Wonderful Life" or something, I don't want you to feel bad about poor old Officer Tinetti, out in the cold walking his beat all alone on Christmas Eve.

JOE. Don't worry—I won't give you a second thought. Just kiddin', Marty. But give my best to your wife, will you? I think I'll call it a night. Take care.

OFFICER TINETTI. You, too, Joe. Goodnight.

[As both OFFICER TINETTI and JOE leave, the LIGHTS go down on Joe's Christmas tree lot. A VOICE can be heard as soon as the stage is dark]

SPRUCEY. Hey—who turned out the lights? Where did everyone go? *[A SPOTLIGHT centers on a lonely little tree, the only one left in the lot]* Hello...anybody? Mr. Joe? Mommy? Oh, no—I'm all alone. I can't believe no one wanted me. *[The TREE begins to move, the spotlight following him. He starts to the left, then starts to the right, then begins to walk straight downstage, right toward the audience. He speaks as he walks]* I've got to get out of here before Santa finds out that I blew it! Or worse yet—before I get used for firewood. Oh, oh...I just can't do anything right. This was my chance to go down in history, just like Rudolph. But no, I messed up. Ooh, it's dark—I felt safer out on the tree farm. What's out there in the dark? Lions, and tigers, and bears, OH, MY! Lions, and tigers, and bears, OH, MY! Lions and tigers...

[A loud VOICE that seems to come from the sky stops him]

THE VOICE. *Hold it right there, Sprucey.*

SPRUCEY. *[Freezes in place]* HUH? What? Who said that?

THE VOICE. You know who this is.

SPRUCEY. Uh...Santa?

THE VOICE. That's right, Sprucey. Now just where do you think you're going? You have a job to do.

SPRUCEY. I know, Santa. But now it's too late. Maybe you should have picked another tree for this job.

THE VOICE. You're not going to let me down, are you, Sprucey? I'm depending on you.

SPRUCEY. But it's too late... The Christmas tree lot is closed. No one's going to take me home now—except for firewood! Besides, I'm... I'm afraid of the dark!

THE VOICE. *[Chuckling]* Oh, Sprucey, you have nothing to be afraid of. I'll be watching over you. And it's not too late, I assure you. It's all part of the plan.

SPRUCEY. It is?

THE VOICE. It is. Now go back to the lot and wait. You'll know when the time is right, Sprucey. I've got to be off now—the children are waiting. Rudolph— *[he claps]* lights on. Away...

SPRUCEY. Boy, that Rudolph is something—he even has a song named after him. I'd sure like to have my own song... *[sings]* "Sprucey, the little blue spruce tree, had a very shiny..." oh, forget it, I don't have a nose anyway. I guess I better get back to the lot before Santa gets mad. *[He and the Follow Spot return to the back of the lot. As the SPOTLIGHT goes off, you can hear him mumble...]* I sure hope Santa knows what he's doing. *[Pause]* ...Anyway, I'm not afraid of the dark... I'm not afraid of the dark... *[whistle, whistle]* ...I'm not... Oh, darn, yes, I am! Oooh...

[A Christmas song begins to play. LIGHTS come up slowly on the Left half of the stage. A WOMAN sits on a crate, watching her TWO CHILDREN as they throw a ball to each other]

BILLY. Why isn't Dad back yet? I bet he didn't find any place for us to stay tonight.

KATY. Yes, he will, Billy. He *has* to. Santa won't be able to find us *here*.

BILLY. Katy, will you cut it out? I told you—Santa's not coming this year.

MRS. DAVIDSON. Billy! Don't talk like that to Katy.

BILLY. Like what, Mom? It's the truth. Why should she get her hopes up for nothing? *[These lines are said with sincerity, not disrespectfully]*

MRS. DAVIDSON. You shouldn't try to stop her from hoping, Billy. Besides, these days hope is about all we have—don't take that away from her, too. Let her dream.

KATY. You'll see I'm right, Billy. Dad will find us a place to stay. There'll be a Christmas tree there, and then Santa will come. I just know it.

BILLY. *[Sarcastically]* Sure, Katy, and tomorrow morning we'll wake up and there'll be lots of presents, too.

ATY. Well...maybe. At least one present. I think Santa only brings one present for poor people. I wonder why that is? *[Just then, she sees MR. DAVIDSON approaching]* Oh, look...Daddy's back!

[KATY runs to her father and hugs him, and MRS. DAVIDSON rises wearily from the crate and hugs him as well. He looks very, very tired]

KATY. Daddy! Did you find a place? Did you?

MRS. DAVIDSON. Katy, let your father sit down for a minute and catch his breath. He's been out walking in this cold for hours.

MR. DAVIDSON. *[Sits on the crate, running his hand wearily through his hair. He looks at his family, hesitating a moment before he speaks]* I hate to disappoint you kids, and you too, Mary, but I have bad news. *[He hesitates]* All of the shelters are full tonight. There's no room for us.

KATY. But they *can't* be, Daddy! You have to try harder. There must be one you didn't try!

BILLY. *[Resignedly]* I told you not to get your hopes up, Katy.

MRS. DAVIDSON. Billy, please.

MR. DAVIDSON. Katy, honest, honey, I did my best. I walked until I couldn't walk anymore. There was just no room anywhere. Guess there's an awful lot of people out there just like us.

ATY. But you promised, Daddy. This just can't happen. How will Santa ever find us here? We don't have a tree or a chimney, or even a real house. He'll never think to look *here*. Never! *[She is almost crying]*

MRS. DAVIDSON. Katy, your father tried so hard. Can't you try to understand?

KATY. No! He didn't try hard enough. And now Santa will pass us by. Why does everything bad happen to us!?! *[She runs inside the makeshift home, crying]*

BILLY. *[Yelling to Katy as she runs off]* Cut it out, Katy! You're making Dad feel worse.

MR. DAVIDSON. No, Billy, she's right. I let her down. This is my fault.

MRS. DAVIDSON. Stop it, John, it's not your fault.

MR. DAVIDSON. Yes it is, and I might as well start facing it. I made some bad choices and now we're here, without a home and wondering where our next meal is coming from.

MRS. DAVIDSON. It's just bad luck. You can't help that.

MR. DAVIDSON. No, Mary, it's me. I'm no good. I've let you all down, everyone of you. And I just don't know what to do anymore to make it better. *[He puts his head in his hands]*

MRS. DAVIDSON. John, you're tired. Let's just get some sleep, and tomorrow morning we'll go over to that church on 5th Street for a Christmas dinner. We'll get there first thing, so we'll be sure to get a place.

MR. DAVIDSON. And in the meantime Katy will cry herself to sleep and wake up to find that Santa has passed her by.

BILLY. Dad, Katy's just a baby. Please don't feel bad. I know you're trying.

MR. DAVIDSON. Thanks, son—that means a lot. I think I'd better turn in now. Maybe a good night's sleep will clear my head and help me find some answers. How about you, Mary? Are you ready to call it a night?

MRS. DAVIDSON. I thought you'd never ask. Billy? What about you? Ready to sleep?

BILLY. Not yet. Can I stay up just a little while longer, Mom? Please? I'm not really tired yet.

MRS. DAVIDSON. Well...all right. Just not too long, okay?

BILLY. OK, Mom, goodnight. Goodnight, Dad.

[Billy bounces the ball for a few moments and then stops. He gets down on his knees, putting his hands together, his eyes searching for something in the sky. He begins to pray]

BILLY. Please, God—if you're listening—you gotta help us. Maybe we've done something bad, I don't know—if we did, we're really sorry. But there's got to be a way you can help us...please...Oh, forget it! What am I doing? *[He suddenly gets up]* There probably is no God! And there sure isn't any stupid *Santa*, either! *[He hits the ball.*