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Dramatic Publishing

OZ

A Play in Two Acts

by

PATRICK SHANAHAN



Dramatic Publishing

Woodstock, Illinois • London, England • Melbourne, Australia

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PATRICK SHANAHAN

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(OZ)

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Author's Note

A great debt is owed by the playwright to the imagination of the original author of the book. This adaptation is based upon the book *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* by L. Frank Baum, published by George M. Hill Company, Chicago, Illinois in 1900. According to the Copyright Office in Washington, D.C., because the work was copyrighted in 1899 and Baum's death was in 1919, the work is now in the public domain. All of the original Oz material, with the exception of the color choice of Dorothy's slippers which were originally silver, are from the book. Colors cannot be copyrighted. The ruby slippers were a choice of the MGM movie version and Technicolor. The ruby slippers have become a cultural icon.

OZ was originally produced and commissioned by The Coterie Theatre, Kansas City, Missouri in June and July, 1994 with the following company. The playwright acknowledges their hard work in making this piece come alive.

THE COMPANY

L. Frank Baum William Harper
Dot Amani Starnes
Bridgety Sullivan Brenda Mason
Toto Lulu

ARTISTIC AND PRODUCTION COMPANY

Director Jeff Church
Set Designer/Technical Director Brad Shaw
Costume Designer Gayla Voss
Resident Lighting Designer Art Kent
Resident Composer/Sound Designer Greg Mackender
Properties Designer Ron Megee
Stage Manager Melanie Huntington
Intern Assistant Stage Manager Sarah Broude

COTERIE ADMINISTRATIVE AND SUPPORT STAFF

Executive Director Joette Pelster
Producing Artistic Director Jeff Church
Administrative Coordinator Jana Harper
Box Office and Business Manager Cheryl Bengé
Artist in Residence/Technical Director Brad Shaw

OZ

A Play in Two Acts
For One Man, One Woman and One Girl

CHARACTERS

L. FRANK BAUM an author of children's books, 44

DOT 10-year-old girl

BRIDGEY SULLIVAN . . . housekeeper for the Baum family

TIME: 1899

PLACE: Chicago, Illinois

Running time: Approximately 90 minutes in two acts with an intermission.

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE

The Cyclone

AT RISE: Depending upon your theater, you may choose to do a preshow, depicting BAUM and BRIDGEY enjoying the sedate life in the household as the audience enters the theater. After the houselights are dim we should become aware of DOT entering through the stage right suggestion of the garden, picking the lock on a pair of French doors, and cautiously entering Baum's study. She explores the study. She hears BAUM offstage left entering from the rest of the house and hurriedly hides in his roll-top desk. Or DOT can be "pre-set" within the roll-top desk when the lights go up, depending on whether you choose to let the audience in on the gag.

Enter BAUM binding the last few pages of a manuscript. He crosses to the roll-top desk distractedly rolls up the lid, revealing DOT as if a child laid out in a coffin. He screams, lets the lid close, manuscript pages fly into the air, and he neatly collapses dumbstruck into the desk chair. BRIDGEY enters with a feather duster, dressed in extremely tidy Victorian parlormaid uniform.

BRIDGEY (not having heard BAUM's piercing scream). Good morning, Mr. Baum. Saints preserve us, (Picking up pages of the manuscript.) what have you done with your book?

BAUM (*coming out of shock*). It's fine, Bridgey. Fine. Don't bother with that.

BRIDGEY. Well, sir, I best leave you to your wizards. I'll make sure you're not disturbed until tea.

BAUM (*distractedly glancing at closed roll-top desk as if it contained a body*). Thank you, Bridgey. (*She exits and BAUM nervously lifts the lid of the desk, screams again and recloses it.*)

DOT (*her hand reaching out and rolling up the lid*). You gonna let me suffocate in there, or what?

BAUM (*recovering, he stands, with a little bow*). How do you do? I am Mr. L. Frank Baum, and who exactly are you?

DOT. Dot, housebreaker. You'll want to fix the lock on that window there, Frank. Wanna help me out of this coffin here?

BAUM (*assisting DOT out of desk*). What exactly were you doing in my desk?

DOT. You didn't have any good loot. So, ah, I decided to play Mary Margaret Mulligan. She died. It was influenza, may she rest in peace. Then you show up—so I laid low. What're all these papers all over the floor? (*Kicking a few pages.*)

BAUM (*reverently picking up scattered pages*). My book. My work. My manuscript not quite ready for the publishers. It's a marvelous story for children. It is called (*As if on a billboard.*) THE EMERALD CITY (*No reaction so he tries again.*) FROM KANSAS TO FAIRYLAND (*Gives up on title. DOT gives him a vague hostile blank stare.*) It's an adventure about a little girl like you, well, not like you, really—well, she's about your height, and she's from the country, not Chicago. (*Lights change to grays.*) It's very gray and lonely there on the vast prairie...(*Silence.*) Well this cyclone comes...her name is Mary, (*Finds page in*

manuscript on the floor.) Practically every girl in fairy stories is Mary. Dot, no—Dorothy. (*Changes manuscript.*) She looks a little bit like you...and well, she goes to this strange and wonderful land. (*Lamely.*) She has some really wonderful, just wonderful adventures...

DOT. Yeah. Prove it.

BAUM. What do you mean, prove it? You burgle my home, sneak into my study, into my very desk. Coming into the private study of your betters and ordering me about...scaring me with my weak heart unto death...I mean, what outrageous behavior, from such a little girl. You don't...bite, do you?

DOT. I just thought you'd like to try your little story out on a kid. But, look if you're not interested...(*Starts to leave.*)

BAUM. No, wait. Let me tell you the story. I want to tell you the story.

DOT (*settling into an overstuffed chair*). Shoot.

BAUM (*excitedly grabbing Chapter 1 out of the manuscript mess, clearing his throat, reading*). "Chapter 1. The Cyclone. Dorothy..." that's the girl's name...(*Confirming changes to manuscript.*) "lived in the midst of the great prairie..."

DOT. Sounds like Kansas to me...

BAUM. "...with Uncle Henry, who was a farmer..."

DOT. Not a hog butcher in the stockyards like Pa. Make the aunt in Kansas Em for Emily. Like my aunt...the old battleax.

BAUM. "...and Aunt Em, who was the farmer's wife."
(*Looking expectantly at the girl who yawns.*)

DOT. Keep going.

BAUM (*tearing a footstool into the shape of Toto*). "The only thing in Kansas (*Adjusting manuscript.*) that made Dorothy

laugh was her dog, Toto.” *(He offers “Toto” and a basket to DOT.)*

DOT *(taking “Toto” and basket)*. Just read me the story and get on with. So far, if this an adventure story, I’m Little Egypt. *(Noticing BAUM’s activity, intrigued and a little nervous.)* What’re you up to now?

(BAUM is attaching long winter scarves to the ceiling fan, opening an umbrella, and turning down lights as stage lighting changes to almost silhouettes and a howling song is heard from the Victrola. BAUM throws sheets of his manuscript in the breeze caused by the fan. He uses the bellows of the fireplace, creating blowing prairie dust, with the help of offstage special effects.)

BAUM. The cyclone is coming!

DOT. Hey, once, when a cyclone came Auntie Em went into the root cellar...

BAUM. And so did Dorothy...

DOT. What about the dog...

BAUM. Toto was in her arms. Just as they were going down into the safety of the cellar, Toto jumped from Dorothy’s arms. *(He plucks the pillow from her arms and tosses it under the couch with DOT going to retrieve it.)* Auntie Em cried “Dorothy—Dorothy” nearly drowned out by the wind that sounded like a locomotive. *(BAUM picks up DOT from the floor now with the pillow clutched like a security blanket. Spins DOT around and plops her on the rolling overstuffed couch as the cyclone effect builds to a crescendo.)* The howling winds from the north and the south met at the exact corner of the gray little farmhouse. The house began to spin and lift from its foundation away from the safety of the root cellar.

DOT (*laughing and standing on the couch as BAUM lifts one end in a floating manner*). It lifted me high into Kansas' stormy skies. I feel like I'm riding in a balloon higher and higher into the sky. (*BAUM grabs Toto from DOT's arms and barks for Toto.*) Say, what's the big idea?

BAUM. Toto ran wildly about the room. Bark! here, Bark! there. Once he got too close to a trapdoor, being sucked outside. Dorothy saved him by grabbing his ear and pulling him back inside. (*DOT does this, giving BAUM a hard ear pull in the process, and takes back Toto as BAUM howls in pain and the wind sound quiets to a steady drum.*) Hour after hour passed away, and slowly Dorothy got over her fright; but she felt quite lonely, and the wind shrieked so loudly all about her that she nearly became deaf. (*BAUM spins the couch roughly.*)

DOT (*gasping*). What're you trying to do, dash me to pieces?

BAUM. After a while, she stopped worrying about what would happen when the house fell...

DOT (*screams*). She did, did she?

BAUM. ...and fell asleep with Toto wrapped in her arms. As the house flew on and on.

DOT. Yeah, right, sleep with all this racket. Flying around in the sky in a house. (*BAUM gives her a stern stare.*) OK, I'll bite. (*She closes her eyes as BAUM places a large pair of ruby shoes protruding from under the couch and dons a flower pot as a hat. Lights change to technicolor.*) Look at me, I'm sleeping like a baby as my life hangs in the balance. Snoozing like I haven't a care in the world and won't be meeting my maker any second, when I come face to face with some pig farm in northern Missouri. (*Making funny snoring noises.*) Sleeping like a baby with my little dog Toto. (*Sighs.*) Now I lay me down to sleep...

SCENE TWO

The Council with The Munchkins

(BAUM rips the curtains off the window forming a hood, and grabs cut flowers, attaching them to gloves, and jumps behind the couch. All is silence as he gives the couch a final good shove.)

BAUM. She was awakened by a shock so sudden and severe that if Dorothy had not been lying on the soft bed, well, she might have been hurt. As it was, the jar made her catch her breath...

DOT. I'll make you catch your breath. Say, why are you wearing those curtains on your head and why do you have those flowers?

BAUM *(on his knees behind the couch with only his head and hands visible, creating a puppet theater)*. We are Munchkins and welcome you, most noble Sorceress. *(Gesturing to the ruby shoes extending from beneath the couch.)* We are grateful to you for killing the Wicked Witch of the East and freeing us from bondage. *(BAUM makes a quick change from Munchkin to The Good Witch of the North.)*

DOT. It's a frame-up. I never killed anything in my life.

BAUM *(as Good Witch, with a little laugh, examining the red shoes under the couch)*. Well, your house did, anyway, and that is the same thing.

DOT. Jumping Jehoshaphat!

BAUM. See! There are her two sets of pointy toes, still sticking out from under the foundation of your little house.

DOT. What are we gonna do?

BAUM. There is nothing to be done. All the Munchkins are free from slaving for her night and day and are grateful to

Act I

you for the favor. (*As Mu
Witch.*) She was a very bad
of the North, who is good,

DOT. I thought all witches
witches were dead. Aunt I
were dead—years and years

BAUM. Well, that is a great
about Aunt Em?

DOT. She's my Pa's sister, m
send me there after that din

BAUM. Fire? (*He moves the
DOT and again assumes th*
do not know where Kansas
country mentioned before.
country?

DOT. Well, yeah...

BAUM. Then that accounts fo
believe there are no witches
esses, nor magicians. But yo
civilized, for we are cut off
Therefore, we still have wite

DOT. Who is the Wizard?

BAUM. He is more powerful
gether. He lives in the City
wizard named?...the land of
script and the set for inspira.
with a card marked "O to Z
phantly he pronounces the le
ily makes a notation to his
improvisational puppet theat
erpot Munchkins. Returning
it? (*Laughing.*) Oh look, the
so old she instantly dried up

her shoes. (*As Munchkin.*) She was proud of those ruby shoes, there's some charm attached to them; but we never knew what it was. (*As Good Witch.*) There now, I'll just get the dust out and you must have them.

DOT. Ick! I'm not putting on some dead witch's shoes.

BAUM (*as himself, taking shoes to her*). There now, they're Mrs. Baum's special occasion shoes and she won't mind if you use them.

DOT. How will I ever get home?

BAUM (*as Good Witch*). You must go to the City of Emeralds which is ruled by the wonderful Wizard, Oz. Yes, Oz! (*As himself.*) Eureka! THE WONDERFUL WIZARD OF OZ by L. Frank Baum! (*Changing the title page of the manuscript.*)

DOT. Are you quite finished? Is he a good man?

BAUM (*as Good Witch*). He is a good wizard. Whether he is man or not I cannot tell, for I have never seen him.

DOT. How can I get there?

BAUM. You must walk. It is a long journey, through a country that is sometimes pleasant and sometimes dark and terrible. However, I will use all the magic arts I know of to keep you from harm.

DOT. You gonna go with me?

BAUM. No, dear, I cannot. But I will give you my kiss, and no one will dare to injure a person who has been kissed by the Witch of the North. (*He does, and then assumes a Munchkin voice.*) The road to the City of Emeralds is paved with yellow bricks so you cannot miss it. When you get to Oz (*Aside.*) I love that word!...do not be afraid of him, but tell your story and ask him to help you. (*As Good Witch.*) Good-bye, my dear. (*In a cloud of sheer curtain fabric, BAUM disappears.*)

DOT. You being a witch and all, I expected a disappearing act. Adults are all alike—never there when you need them. Didn't surprise me in the least. Walk to the Emerald City—you bet. (*Trying on ruby shoes.*) At least, I got a new pair of shoes in the bargain. Ooh!