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Dramatic Publishing

The Wind in the Willows

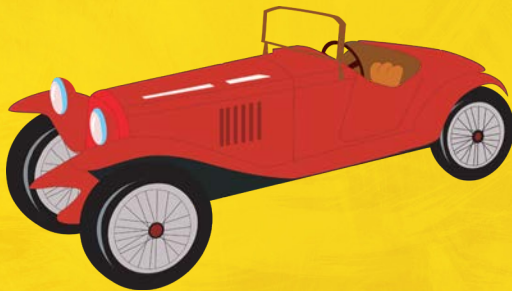
Adapted by
Moses Goldberg



The Wind in the Willows

First performed at the Showboat Theatre in Seattle,
followed by the Asolo Theatre of Sarasota, Fla.

Fantasy. Adapted by Moses Goldberg. Based on the book by Kenneth Grahame. Cast: 10+ either gender. In this animal fantasy, Toad is the rich playboy of the animal kingdom. His current enthusiasm is motor cars, which he embraces passionately without the formality of learning to drive. After several narrow shaves, his friends, Rat, Mole and Badger, ground him for his own safety at his home, Toad Hall. He manages to elude them and appropriates a police car, which lands him in jail. In his absence, the weasels take over Toad Hall, and Toad returns to find his elegant mansion in shambles. Toad's friends to drive the weasels out and restore Toad to his senses, but by that time he has acquired a new passion—airplanes! *Unit set. Animal and people costumes. Approximate running time: 45 minutes. Code: WD2.*



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The Wind in the Willows



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The Wind in the Willows

By

MOSES GOLDBERG



Dramatic Publishing Company

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

Mole
Rat
Otter
Toad
Badger
Weasels
Policeman
Alice

SCENES

- Scene 1. Rat's House.
Scene 2. The High Road.
Scene 3. The Wild Woods.
Scene 4. Badger's House.
Scene 5. Toad Hall.
Scene 6. A Street in the Village.
Scene 7. Rat's House.
Scene 8. Toad Hall.
Scene 9. A Jail Cell.
Scene 10. Badger's House.
Scene 11. Toad Hall.

An early version of this play was first performed at the Showboat Theatre in Seattle, Washington on April 15, 1965. The following is copied from the program for that performance:

THE WIND IN THE WILLOWS

Adapted from the book by Kenneth Graham

Adapted and Directed by Moses Goldberg

Sets by Gloria Fricke Matsumoto

Costumes by Jerry Williams

Music by Felix Powell

Technical Direction by Gloria Fricke Matsumoto
and Todd Mufafftti

CAST

Rat	Goeffrey Spurrll
Mole	Dick Sederholm
Otter	Kent Bishop
Toad	Bob Read
Badger	Kerry Magness
Alice	Ann Wynn
Bargewoman	Maureen Frawley
Sadie (driver)	Lynn Severance
Chief Weasel	Joy Burnley
Tall Weasel	Nancy Quense
Fat Weasel	Jean Bishop
Skinny Weasel	Betty Coleman
Short Weasel	Sue Picha

In revised form, this play was later produced at Tacoma, Washington, and at the Asolo Theatre in Sarasota, Florida.

Kenneth Graham described himself as a "mid-Victorian", expressing thereby that he was caught up emotionally in the events connected with mid-Victorianism — the industrial revolution, middle class mercantilism, the collapse of agricultural society, scientific evolution, and religious doubt.

He watched the decay of rural England with horror, and felt the emptiness of a society which was rapidly losing all spontaneity, combining the pursuit of money with a rigid and authoritarian moral code.

Thus, two powerful elements were at conflict in him. So he compromised. Outwardly, he conformed. But his inner self took revenge in satire and fantasy. Like Lear and Carroll, he found relief in the world of childhood, the animal fable, the potent symbols of fantasy, the depths of the heart.

In July, 1913, five years after he published *The Wind in the Willows*, and retired from the Bank of England, he sent a short essay to his old School magazine, called "The Fellow That Goes Alone". In it he said —

"... Nature's particular gift to the solitary walker . . . is to set the mind jogging, to make it garrulous, exalted, a little mad maybe, certainly creative and suprasensitive, until at last it really seems to be outside of you, and as it were talking to you, while you are talking back to it. Then everything seems gradually to join in, sun and wind, the white road and the dusty hedges, the spirit of the season . . . till you walk in the midst of a blessed company, immersed in a dream-talk far transcending any possible human conversation . . . Not a fiftieth part of all your happy imaginings will you ever later recapture, but meantime the mind has stretched itself and had its holiday."

This is what could be described as "listening to the wind in the willows".

From the Asolo State Theatre Company
News Release, July, 1970

THE WIND IN THE WILLOWS

By

MOSES GOLDBERG

(Freely adapted from the book by Kenneth Grahame)

A family fantasy in eleven scenes

SCENE ONE

The action of this play should be continuous, so that whatever changes are performed on the set, they should be nearly instantaneous; whether by means of wagons, revolves, flies, etc. Sets may be changed in view of the audience, but must be smoothly flowing, so that the action is not interrupted. Lighting effects carry a big burden for setting the mood and locale. Throughout it is important that the animal characters and settings be handled realistically, although greatly simplified. The actors playing animals are not to wear masks, but may use headpieces with ears attached, leaving a hole for the face. Makeup is simplified, but authentic. Human machines, by contrast, should be exaggerated and stylized; (the hobby horse, the cars, etc.); and the human characters may be masked. The general atmosphere is one of a blend, with Riverbank, Wild Wood, Toad Hall, and Wide World all contributing their special flavors. There is also a certain rural English elegance about the animals and their homes, especially Badger, Rat and Toad Hall, (although pre-Civil War Confederate elegance would probably work just as well). The overture starts and the house lights dim. It is night on the riverbank. We are at Rat's house, just where his front door issues-out onto the River itself, with his small front yard separating the porch and its thatched roof from high tide. It is nearly dawn, and as the overture dies the sun begins to rise. The music of the wind plays under the following scene. (Not a symphony, please. A solo flute or oboe is sufficient). Rat emerges slowly from sleep and from his hole. He yawns magnificently and inspects the beauty of the world he loves. Rat is the stable, understanding, gentlemanly poet of the play. He has a natural and uncultivated upper class manner; is extremely tolerant of the faults of others — and has depth of sensitivity which is all too rare. He makes his mistakes, like the rest of us, but he can always rise above them.

RAT: *(After a pause)* Listen! Listen to that wind! *(Nodding his head)* It's going to be a beautiful day. *(Pause)* Mole! Moley! Where are you? Come out. Smell this breeze!

MOLE: *(Sticks his nose timidly out, afraid to leave the security of the hole. Mole is sympathetic, warm, and sensitive. He is too naive, perhaps, and certainly unpolished, but his faith in*

others redeems both him and them. Black glasses protect his weak eyes) Oh! (he ducks back)

RAT: Come out, Mole. It's dawn! (pause, while Mole partly emerges, blinks at the sun, looks pleadingly at Rat, and hesitates.) Well? (Mole gathers his courage and his legs, and leaps out, losing his balance and almost falling down. Rat catches him, but lets him go as soon as he is sure Mole will not fall.) Easy. It's still here. (pause) Listen to that wind!

MOLE: (listens blankly, he cannot hear anything) What wind? What does it sound like?

RAT: (nods) Can't hear it? Well, you will. Too many years living underground—your eyes and ears are out of practice. Just keep trying.

MOLE: (pause) (shrugs, and shakes his head—he still can't hear it.) Maybe. But not today. (A long pause as they sample the dawn.) I'm glad I came to live with you Ratty.

RAT: So am I. (pause) Deep Breath! (Mole takes a deep breath, and starts to cough) (Rat chuckles) Easy! Easy!

MOLE: Just think—all this has been going on here all the time, every single day, and I was down underground—just like all the other moles in my family, and never knew about the wind, or the trees, or the fresh air. (he takes another deep breath, and holds on to it a little better. He takes a third and starts to relax with it.) Ah! (Suddenly he lifts his head and listens hard. Then sadly he shakes his head again; he almost thought he heard the wind.)

RAT: Go slow! You'll hear it! Takes time! (the music fades out)

MOLE: (pause) Rat?

RAT: What, Mole?

MOLE: Can I learn to swim today?

RAT: Go slow!

MOLE: I know. I'm sorry. Everything is so new and exciting though. I never dreamt that when I left my stuffy hole there would be so many new things to do—swimming, and boating, and sunshine, and wind, and . . . I can hardly wait.

RAT: I know. I know. Something new comes along and you want to explore it. Fine. But start out slowly. Animals who go rushing around too fast get into lots of trouble. You don't want to be the kind of an idiot who is always trying out new things and never having fun with the old ones!

MOLE: No. I guess not.

RAT: You don't want to be the kind who never tries anything new, either. If you did, you would never have left your hole.

MOLE: That's right. I guess I want to be someplace in the middle. *(pause) (Mole takes another deep breath.)* Well, you tell me then, what shall I learn today?

RAT: *(sniffing the air)* I'm not sure it's warm enough for the water. Spring hasn't really started yet. How about a picnic?

MOLE: A picnic? Oh. Rat. Can we go somewhere new? I mean . . . if you think I'm ready.

RAT: All right, all right. We'll head toward the High Road—that's someplace you've never been. And I'll try to invite some of the others to come along.

MOLE: Oh, good—thanks Ratty.

RAT: Wait here; I'll get a lunch packed. *(Exits into the house)*

MOLE: *(Yawns)* Oh, maybe I shouldn't have gotten up so early? But on a day like this, how can any animal stay in bed? *(Otter enters)* Oh, hi! It's Otter!

OTTER: *(Otter is largish and quick in his movements, but he is also on the fringe of the good life, as opposed to Rat, who is at the center. Otter is sensitive and presumptuous, in love with the status quo, and unashamedly hypocritical. He bullies anybody he can, and flatters the rest. Still he means well, is quite good natured, and can be forced to come through when the chips are down. His personal loyalty is to his comfort, but Rat is one of his favorites)* Howdy! How's little Mole?

MOLE: Oh, fine. er . . . how's big Otter?

OTTER: Not too bad. Not too bad. Well—how do you like the River?

MOLE: *(Somewhat taken aback)* Oh, I . . . well, I haven't really . . .

OTTER: Good. Good. Well, if mean old Rat gives you any trouble, you can always move in with me! Just you remember that.

MOLE: Thank you. But Rat isn't . . . I mean he doesn't . . . well . . . thank you.

OTTER: You're welcome. You are welcome. What's up?

MOLE: A picnic! Would you like to come?

OTTER: Sure! Why not! What about right here by the River? Perfect spot!

MOLE: I sort of wanted to go to the High Road. I've never been there and I . . .

OTTER: Yech! The High Road is a terrible place! Moley, you're new here, so I hope you'll take a little advice. Leave the High Road alone! Why that leads out to the Wide World, and there's nothing out there but people and trouble!

RAT: *(Returns with the loaded picnic basket)* Here it is! Hello, Otter! You coming along? We're going to the High Road!

OTTER: Oh? Yeah! Fine idea. I'd love to come. Haven't been to the High Road for months. Good spot.

RAT: Let's go. I brought extra food in case we run into Badger or Toad.

MOLE: But I thought you said the High Road . . .

OTTER: Oh! Toad! He'll probably be along! Yech! Moley, let me warn you about Toad!

MOLE: What's the matter? Is he bad?

OTTER: Bad? Worse! He's an idiot! Toad is an idiot!

TOAD: *(At this instant Toad is heard galloping along on the back of some noble horse. He rides into view on the back of a broom with a horse's head tied onto the handle. Toad is modern and progressive. He has a quick mind and an agile tongue, coupled with a love of life and a minimum of scruples. This makes him a delightful rogue—if a dangerous one. The problem with Toad is he wants to be a modern, and is completely unsuited for it, having been brought up in a respectable upper class tradition. He tries though—he tries very hard! Just now he is trying so hard to ride that he rides over the picnic-bound threesome, knocking them into a heap.)*

TOAD: Wahoo! Gidyap! Wahoo! Wahoo! Ride 'em Cowboy!
(Exits)

OTTER: *(As they untangle)* TOAD! TOAD! Come back here! Come back here this instant!

TOAD: *(Obliges by riding over them again)* Here comes Toad—the two-gun kid. Wahoo! *(Exits)*

MOLE: Is that Toad?

RAT: That's Toad!

OTTER: Look out! He's coming back! *(They duck this time, and as Toad returns they grab him and force him to the ground. Otter sits on his legs and Rat holds his shoulders down. Mole stands in wonder.)*

TOAD: Gidyap! Wahoo! Wahoo! Toad rides again!

MOLE: Rat. Ratty. What is it? Shall I get the doctor?

RAT: Hold on. He'll be all right.

TOAD: (*Subsides into a semi-trance*) Wahoo . . . c'mon horse!

OTTER: Useless Moron! He thinks he's riding a horse!

MOLE: A horse? Does he get like this often?

RAT: Every once in a while. He gets a new idea in his head, and everything else blanks out. We just watch him till he settles down. It shouldn't take long.

OTTER: Settle down? Yech! When does Toad ever settle down?

TOAD: MMMMMMMMMMMMM.

RAT: I think it's safe now. Let him up. (*They release him*)

TOAD: (*Sits up as if nothing had happened*) Hi! Beautiful day, huh? Oh, who's that?

RAT: This is Mole. I wish you had set him a better example, Toad; he's new to the Riverbank.

TOAD: New to the Riverbank, huh? How do you do? How do you like my horse?

MOLE: Oh, I . . . how do you do?

TOAD: Of course, this isn't a real horse.

OTTER: At least he knows it isn't real!

TOAD: (*Directs himself to Mole*) But I'm going to buy a real one. And Moley, I might even let you help pick it out.

MOLE: Really! Oh, Rat, he said I could help him. (*A look from Rat sobers him quickly.*) . . . Thank you, Toady.

OTTER: Yech!

TOAD: Don't pay any attention to them. You see, Mole, I'm having a whole set of stables built at Toad Hall. So I can have a whole fleet of horses. White ones and gray ones and red ones and black ones . . . I think I'll even let you ride sometimes!

MOLE: Really?

RAT: Mole! Go Slow!

TOAD: Can you see me riding about, or rather flying about, on the back of some great steed? Poetry in motion. I'll admit I've had some silly ideas before—but this is really it! Horses! Wahoo! Let's go buy a horse right now! (*Starts to drag Mole away*).

RAT: Moley! I thought you were coming on the picnic.

MOLE: Well, yes . . . but . . . Toad invited me to help him . . . that is, I . . .

OTTER: Little Mole, don't talk to the moron! Come with us!

TOAD: Come on, Moley, let's go. (*Climbs on horse and starts out, stepping on Rat's foot.*)

RAT: That's my foot, Toad!

MOLE: Oh, Rat! Are you all right? Please be careful, Toady.

TOAD: Wahoo! Gidyap! Neeeeigh!

RAT: Calm down, Toad, please! We were just starting a picnic. Interested?

MOLE: Yes. Come along on the picnic, Toady. We can go look at horses later.

TOAD: Picnic? What a splendid notion! Where are we going?

MOLE: To the High Road!

TOAD: To the High Road! Maybe I'll see a horse!

OTTER: That does it! I'm through. I take no picnics with morons! If he goes, I don't.

RAT: Otter, you lead the way. This is no time for YOU to get silly.

OTTER: I wasn't being silly! But that moron . . . oh, all right. I'll go ahead. But make HIM stop being silly. He's the one who's an idiot! (*Starts out*) Horses! Yech!

RAT: Coming, Toad?

TOAD: Sure!

MOLE: Good!

RAT: All right. But no mention of horses.

TOAD: I'll try. I will. But I can't promise; and if we should actually see a horse . . .

RAT: Toad!

TOAD: Oooops. I mean if we should actually see a whatcha-macallit. Well, I can't promise at all. After all, a whatcha-macallit is a whatcha-macallit.

RAT: Well, try! (*He catches up with Otter, and they go off.*)

MOLE: Come on, Toady, to the High Road! And on the way you can tell me what kind of horse you are going to buy.

TOAD: Mole, I like you. You are an animal with real understanding. I only want the kind of horse that suits my character—big, white, ferocious, and fast as the wind . . . (*They exit, following Rat and Otter and the scene changes to:*)

SCENE TWO

The High Road. A broad highway, with a low bank on the upstage side. The scenery is barer, the trees less green. Perhaps there is a milestone, brightly painted, showing "2 miles to the Red Lion Inn." The sounds of a real horse are heard in the distance. Instantly Toad is there, followed at a more leisurely pace by the others.)

TOAD: It was a horse. It was. A real horse. Aah! Ooh! EEEh!

OTTER: Yech!

TOAD: What beauty—what grace.

RAT: Toad—you promised!

TOAD: No I didn't—I said I'd try. And I have tried! But a real live horse; and we just missed him! (*He pretends to be riding a horse up and down all through the following.*)

OTTER: I can't stand it! Leave him alone! Let's get on with the picnic.

MOLE: But look at Toad!

OTTER: I'd rather not. Let's eat. I'm starved.

RAT: He'll come over in a minute. Mole. Don't worry. (*He starts to unpack the picnic basket, pulling out a fancy tablecloth and several wineglasses, followed by the wine, the cheese, the half turkey, the ham, the mustard pot, the cake, the jam, the buns, the cloth napkins—quite a spread.*)

MOLE: Oh! This is the High Road!

OTTER: This is it, little Mole. What do you think? Down that way is the village, where all the people live, and beyond there, the Wide World!

RAT: You could help me unpack! (*They do*)

TOAD: Gidyap! Neeeeeigh! (*The music of the wind is heard.*)

MOLE: Oh, Rat—it's different from the River. I can't explain it—it just seems, well, not as nice, somehow.

RAT: It's different . . . listen!

MOLE: (*Cocks his ears and tries to hear, without success. Otter and Toad are oblivious. The music stops and Rat signals Mole it is over. Mole sighs. Pause.*) Why is the Road—well—so dirty?

OTTER: That's because of the people, and their crazy inventions. People are never satisfied, always moving around, inventing new machines. I like it just like it is!

MOLE: Yes, but suppose I'd said that. I'd still be back in my hole.

TOAD: Neeeeeigh! (*He gallops around, stepping on some of the picnic.*)

OTTER: Moron! You stepped in the lunch! See what happens when you get crazy ideas all the time. You end up like Toad!

MOLE: I don't think Toad's that bad. I mean . . . well, who is right, Rat, me or Otter?

RAT: Both of you. Hand me the caviar dish, please. (*At this moment, Badger appears through the bushes*) Badger! Quick, Mole. Look!

MOLE: Oh!

RAT: Badger. It's only us. Come out.

OTTER: Quiet, Mole. He'll go away if he thinks it's too noisy.

TOAD: Go for your gun, bang, bang! Got ya! That'll teach you to mess with two-gun Toad! (*Badger disappears*)

OTTER: He's gone! Idiot. You scared him off!

MOLE: Oh, Toady! I wanted to meet him. Where does he live?

RAT: (*As they resume eating*) In the Wild Woods. He's the only friendly animal that dares to live there. He's so big, not even the weasels will bother him!

MOLE: Oh! Why is he so shy?

OTTER: Hates company! Tough as they come on the outside, but a heart of gold on the inside. Badger comes from a fine family. Anybody needs help—anybody—Badger's always ready to help them.

RAT: Never seems to be around when you need him though.

TOAD: Whoa, horse. I reckon I'll go over and get some grub. You set right here. (*Dismounts and joins the picnic*) What's for lunch?

OTTER: For you—fried horse!

RAT: Otter! (*Pause as Toad settles and they eat.*)

MOLE: Can I have an apple, Ratty, please?

(At this moment a shrill whine is heard—the approach of a motor-car. Brilliant red, stylized to represent the human world, and emitting an incessant “poop-poop”, the car streaks across and off, scattering the animals in its wake. Toad is drawn to center, where he sits dazed on the road. The others are flung to one side or another, but are instantly on their feet.)