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**"The best *Hansel and Gretel*  
adaptation I've ever seen."**

# **HANSEL AND GRETEL**

**Audience-Participation Play  
by  
MOSES GOLDBERG**

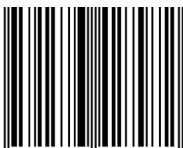


# HANSEL AND GRETEL

***Audience-participation play. By Moses Goldberg. Cast: 3m., 3w.*** This *Hansel and Gretel* is filled with imagination, psychological insights, and, above all, theatricality. Moses Goldberg has set the story in the round with an intimate audience who shares the action in a direct, physical way. From the Oriental theatre he borrowed the mute Propman, who changes the set and acts out minor characters and props in mime. The commedia inspired him to present the actors, through a prologue, as a band of strolling players which improvises on demand, mimes, dances and sings, accompanied by their own simple instruments. The result, as many have acclaimed: "The best *Hansel and Gretel* adaptation I've ever seen." *Simple set. Approximate running time: 1 hour. Code: HA3.*

**Originally published by New Plays, Inc.**

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Hansel and Gretel



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by  
MOSES GOLDBERG

Originally published in 1972 by New Plays, Inc.,  
under the management of Patricia Whitton Forrest.



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(HANSEL AND GRETEL)

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# **HANSEL AND GRETEL**

**An Arena Play for Children Five through Eight**

**Created by Moses Goldberg  
and**

**Staggio – Jim Wrynn**

**Sabrina – Angela Assalone**

**Bulbov – Doug Kaye**

**Trickle – Sharon Crowe**

**Bucol – Charles Bessant**

**Kiko – Rita Grossberg**

**Stage Manager – Joseph John D’Esposito**

**First Production: Florida State Univ., October, 1970**

## Hansel and Gretel

**Hansel and Gretel** was created during my experimentation, over the last five years, with a style of presentation for the youngest audiences that would capitalize on the child's natural instincts for creative play and, at the same time, subtly introduce him into the concept of live theatre, especially as being something different from television. For me, the proscenium spectacle — while a truly exciting aesthetic experience for the 9-year-old child — does not always sufficiently involve the younger child, nor does it teach him the conventions of the living theatre in a direct way.

My own experiments are an outgrowth of the method employed by Brian Way in England. Mr. Way does scripted plays which allow for audience participation. Moreover, he always performs in-the-round, and with a fairly intimate audience. A second influence on my own techniques has been the Oriental theatricality, especially the use of the “invisible” propman. Although stage magic excites children of all ages, being able to use their own imagination to supply the magic is also exciting, and far more conducive to developing creativity.

When we toured **Hansel** at Florida State University, we always performed in the round on any flat floor. The children came in and were seated by the cast. Aisles were located at the four corners of the square playing area and kept clear (usually) by crepe paper streamers taped to the floor (or to the grass when we performed outside.)

The cast was costumed as a group of strolling troubadours. The actors participated in designing their own costumes, and chose a name for themselves as individual performers. We wanted them to form the concept of a family as a Commedia del'Arte troupe, which earns its living as strolling players, and within which each plays a specialized part. We spent some of our rehearsal time improvising until the group became a cohesive band of actors.

In the Prologue, the characterizations of the family must be flamboyant and theatrical, yet real. The **Hansel and Gretel** characters must be played as realistically as the style permits, except for the witch, who is obviously a symbolic character and should be played as a stereotyped, although real menace. Kiko, the mute, is the propman, and changes the sets, acts out minor characters in mime, and herself portrays complex props — like trees or spinning wheels. She openly gives the actors hand props during the play, and removes them when they are no longer the object of our attention. She remains the same throughout both Prologue and Play.

As the children arrive, the company is warming up. When the time comes to start, the acting troupe begins the Prologue in which they decide what play to do, who will play what parts, and then prepare themselves, physically and emotionally, for their roles. *Through action*, they introduce such concepts to the audience as imagination, physical characterization, and audience participation.

By the end of the Prologue, the members of the troupe have each donned one or two significant pieces of costume to indicate the role they are taking. Doubling is possible by changing a hat or cape. All costume pieces and all props are taken from a huge trunk set in one aisle, presided over by Kiko.

The end of the Prologue is signified by an overture. All music is done by the cast; hopefully, at least a couple of them can play real instruments. The remainder fill in with tambourines, triangles, kazoos, etc. The story itself is then enacted. Kiko changes the sets when necessary. Long passages of time are shown through mime. The play ends with a dance as Hansel and

Gretel celebrate their triumph. Then there is a brief epilogue, during which the costume bits are removed and packed away, and the audience is asked to show their appreciation by clapping.

Observing audiences at these productions immediately makes one aware that this is not a traditional theatre experience. Neither is the process of preparing the show traditional. Our script was improvised by the cast, with my aid in preparing the scenario from the many versions of the tale and then refining and setting ideas, transitions, cues, etc. The play becomes fairly consistent by the end of the rehearsal period, but should change during performance. It is a rule of this method that any reaction made by a significant portion of the audience must be incorporated into the play.

There are specific moments which are planned for audience participation through creative dramatics. This is only worth doing, in my opinion, if the audience gets to respond creatively. The actors must never show the children how to be a beanshoot, or force a pattern on them. In fact, it is the original response which should be recognized and picked from. The actor playing Hansel should be particularly sensitive to the principles of creative dramatics as he will undoubtedly need to revise the disenchanting of Gretel at every performance, and will need to be both in control and yet accepting of new ideas and individual differences.

Other audience participation occurs that is unplanned. Usually the children know the story before they come. Often, during performances, they would rush on stage with a lollipop stick, pencil, or similar object in order that Hansel might fool the witch by pretending this was his skinny finger. The actors must accept this help even if it means revising the remainder of the play.

The cardinal rule of this kind of performance is that the audience is the seventh member of the cast. They should be played to as honestly as any two actors should play to each other. If they respond as a group to anything — ANYTHING — that response must be accepted and dealt with before the play can go on; even if that means improvising new scenes or cutting existing unnecessary ones. If individuals in the audience respond, however, it is wisest to ignore them. A small, part-group response is the most difficult to deal with, as the actor must decide whether a significant portion of the audience is involved, in which case he must accept the idea; or if it is only a fringe response, in which case he may ignore it. The more skillful the actors at improvisation, the more easily such decisions can be handled. For example, the audience may answer rhetorical questions, participate before they are asked to, come up with new solutions to problems. It has never happened (in over 80 performances to date) that the audience has refused to respond, but in the event it ever does, the actors may have to fall back on Kiko as the source of magic beans, etc., and then look to their own lack of sincerity as a possible source of the lack of response.

The advantages of this kind of theatre are easy to describe. The Prologue serves as a primer of theatrical conventions, which, subtly, teaches the child what theatre is. The troupe, by putting on and taking off their characters, convey the idea of acting as an art. (The fact that the young actors have themselves put on roles as members of a family ensemble is a subtlety intended for the unconscious awareness of the children, and it also preserves the excitement of a “theatrical event.”)

Another advantage is the audience involvement, which makes the play a creative experience as well as an aesthetic one. The audience also gets to use their imagination, and often come through in vivid color, as pictures done after they see the shows will testify. Their drawings invariably show detailed decor that was only indicated in mime.



A third real advantage is practical. Here is a children's fairy tale done with six actors on a budget of next to nothing. At Florida State University we drew the basic troubadour costumes from stock and built the entire production for \$50. With this technique, if you find it necessary to make a choice between paying for an elaborate production, or paying for top quality actors, the choice is obvious. Acting excellence more than compensates for the imaginary nature of the production. In fact, it might be said that this approach turns poverty into an advantage — provided one has a wealth of creative imagination to compensate for the scarcity of dollars.

Moses Goldberg

From "An Experiment in Theatre for 5- to 8-Year Olds,"  
*Children's Theatre Review*, II, 2 (May, 1970.)

# Hansel and Gretel

*The audience arrives to discover the Prologue characters in the final process of setting up the acting area, which consists of a 12 to 15 foot square with aisles at the four corners. The audience is separated from the stage by four bright ribbons which mark the boundary of the seating area, including the aisles. All the children are seated on the floor by the company. As they assemble, the actors pass among them, chatting, doing warm-ups, playing tricks on each other, cautioning the front row not to encroach on the ribboned area, etc. In one corner sits the large prop trunk, presided over by KIKO, who never speaks (“We don’t know whether she can or not, all we know is that she never does,” is the excuse offered by the other actors when the children inquire about it.) Next to the prop trunk is a largish cube (about 22’) which contains the smaller cubes nesting within it (20’ and 18’ are about right.) These cubes constitute the entire set.*

*STAGGIO, the leader of the company, is rather flamboyant and pig-headed. SABRINA, his daughter, is the calm one — very practical. BULBOV, her husband, is the temperamental Russian type. The Twins, TRICKLE and BUCOL, are both active and mischievous, with BUCOL perhaps a little more introspective. KIKO is irrepressible and probably the brightest member of the troupe — she is a foundling reared by Sabrina as her own. All of these relationships quickly become clear as the group interacts imaginatively with the gathering audience, so that by the time the play starts, every child in the audience (which should be limited to no more than 250 for best results) has had a chance to relate to at least one of the actors. The Prologue characters are frankly actors who are going to do a play, so it is perfectly appropriate for them to discuss theatre procedures, etc., with the children. As the time to start approaches, STAGGIO and BULBOV draw wooden foils from the prop chest and stand conferring in the center. The other characters subtly withdraw from the arena and stand watching in the aisles or sitting behind the children, where they remain throughout the play unless they are onstage.*

## PROLOGUE

**STAGGIO:** Aha!

**BULBOV:** (At the same time.) Aha!

**STAGGIO:** So, Count, you thought you had me trapped!

**BULBOV:** No, Baron, I know I have you defeated! On Guard!

*They fall to a very stacy swordfight, in the roles of the Count of Monte Cristo and his arch-enemy.*

**STAGGIO:** (As he takes the offensive) Ha! Ha! I’m toying with you!

**BULBOV:**

No, Baron, I'm toying with you!

*He carefully whips the Baron's sword from his grasp and stands with one foot upon it.*

Aha!

**STAGGIO:**

(Baring his chest.) Go ahead — I'll die like a man!

**BULBOV:**

*Throws sword back to Staggio.*

Bah! Defend yourself!

**STAGGIO:**

You'll regret that!

*They fight.*

**BULBOV:**

I doubt it!

*He "kills" STAGGIO who then goes into his famous elaborate death scene and finally expires at BULBOV's feet. BULBOV drops the character of the Count and helps him up.*

Hey, Staggio — that was pretty good! Let's do it again so I can watch you die once more?

**STAGGIO:**

(Accepting the compliment.) No — No — Our audience is ready and it's time to introduce the show.

**BULBOV:**

. . . introduce the show!

*He straightens his costume as STAGGIO gets a bugle from the prop chest.*

**STAGGIO:**

*Simultaneously with BULBOV, each unaware that the other is also starting.*

Ladies and Gentlemen, we beg your attention . . .

*They slowly turn and glare at each other, then they wave and turn back, each assuming that he will now be allowed to introduce the show without interference.*

Ladies and Gentlemen . . .

*Again they whirl on each other. BULBOV gives STAGGIO a withering look and turns his back to again "introduce the show." STAGGIO sneaks up behind him with the trumpet.*

**BULBOV:**

Ladies and gentlemen, we beg your attention . . .

*STAGGIO blasts the bugle in BULBOV's ear. BULBOV staggers around in agony, and ends up in the aisle receiving sympathy from SABRINA. STAGGIO is therefore able to continue with some peace.*

**STAGGIO:**

Ladies and Gentlemen, we beg your attention;  
The players in our troupe we would like to mention  
Six talented actors comprise our group.  
Il Staggioni is the name of our troupe.  
From the Russian steppes comes a swarthy lover.

**BULBOV:**

*He staggers back out to center and as STAGGIO introduces him with a*

*wave he gets hit in the midsection with STAGGIO's arm which forces him to a bow. The action is repeated to the other side of the audience.*

Staggio; I can't hear you — what are you saying?

**STAGGIO:**

*(Without stopping.)* When **Bulbov** gets mad, you'll run for cover  
He married my daughter and drew a tear,

*SABRINA comes out and guides BULBOV back to the aisle, then takes her own bow.*

But my heart grows big when **Sabrina** draws near  
A direct descendent with her mother's grace,

*SABRINA gives way to TRICKLE.*

**Trickle** has Grandpa's brains and Grandma's face.

**Bucol**, her twin, cuts a fine figure. *(His bow.)*

We use him for roles needing youthful vigor.

Her wit is great, her movements unique

**Kiko**, the Mime, does things "tongue in cheek." *(Her bow.)*

I have traveled the world and played for Kings,

Say the name, **Staggio**, and wild applause rings.

*The family wisely applauds.*

**BULBOV:**

*Who has finally cleared his ears.*

Hey, wait a minute, Staggio. You introduced yourself and you didn't introduce the rest of us . . .

**STAGGIO:**

I have already introduced the entire troupe!

**BULBOV:**

What do you mean? I didn't hear you!

**STAGGIO:**

Take the wax out of your ears! Shove off, Bulbov, you dumbkopf.

*Laughs at his poem.*

And now, Ladies and Gentlemen, my daughter Sabrina will tell you the title of today's show! Sabrina!

**SABRINA:**

*(A little embarrassed.)* But Papa . . . I don't know the title; you never told me . . .

**STAGGIO:**

*(Covering grandly.)* Ah . . . er . . . the title of today's play will be . . . uh, **Jack and the Beanstalk!**

**BULBOV:**

Oh, no — we're not doing **Jack and the Beanstalk!**

**SABRINA:**

Why not? What's the matter with **Jack and the Beanstalk?**

**BULBOV:**

Because your father always wants to play the giant, and his head is big enough already!

*STAGGIO goes for BULBOV, but SABRINA holds them apart.*

**STAGGIO:**

Bulbov, if you don't have a suggestion yourself, keep your big mouth shut!

**BULBOV:**

*(Withdrawing.)* Well, I do have a suggestion. I know a play we could do!

**SABRINA:**

Papa, Bulbov has an idea!

**STAGGIO:**

Well, what is it? What is it?

**BULBOV:**

*(Announcing)* Our play for today will be the **Three Little Pigs!**

**STAGGIO:**

Well, I know one pig we can cast — a Russian pig!

*They go at each other again and have to be separated by the whole troupe.***SABRINA:**I have an idea! Let's get together on **Hansel and Gretel**.*They all agree except for STAGGIO.***STAGGIO:**No! No! We can't do **Hansel and Gretel**. There isn't a role in **Hansel and Gretel** for an actor of my stature.**SABRINA:**

Papa, you could play the witch.

*The kids agree.***BULBOV:***Under his breath.*

Oh, he could play the witch — he scares everybody when he smiles.

**STAGGIO:**

Oh, no, I'm not! That's an old lady's part. I'm not going to play an old lady!

**SABRINA:**

Oh, Papa, Papa, the witch is a great villain — and you know how you love to play the villain.

**STAGGIO:**

Well . . .

**SABRINA:**

And, Papa, there's a death scene!

**STAGGIO:**

A death scene! I could do one of my twirling dying acts!

*He demonstrates.***SABRINA:**

Oh, Papa. Nobody can do it like you!

**STAGGIO:**

All right, I'll do it.

*He starts practicing witch positions.***SABRINA:**Good, then we'll do **Hansel and Gretel**. I'll be the Mother; Bulbov, my husband; Papa, the Witch, and **Hansel and Gretel** —**BULBOV:**

Bucol and Trickle.

*KIKO gives a loud whistle.***SABRINA:**

Oh, and Kiko — Kiko will take care of everything else we need!

**BULBOV:**

Well, let's get ready!

*They all go off in various directions except for KIKO, who is stopped by TRICKLE.***TRICKLE:**

Kiko, where are you going?

*KIKO indicates she is going off to rest.*

Have you done your warm-ups?

**KIKO:***Is embarrassed at having forgot. They get ready facing each other.***TRICKLE:**

Ready?

*Doing a very simple finger exercise.*

One, two, one, two, one, two, one, two, there! I'm ready now.

*She starts off.*

**KIKO:** *Whistles and stops her leaving. Scolds and indicates very vigorous exercise.*

**TRICKLE:** Kiko, I don't want to do that exercise — it's too hard. I'm ready right now.

**KIKO:** *Challenges TRICKLE to prove it by imitating KIKO's cartwheel.*

**TRICKLE:** I can do that.

*She tries a cartwheel, but falls on her rear.*

Ouch! Kiko do I have to do that in the show?

*KIKO indicates yes.*

Oh, I guess we better do some more warm-ups.

*They job off together and do a few vigorous exercises in the back area, then turn and watch the following.*

**BULBOV:** *Enters and goes directly to the trunk.*

Let's see, the Father in *Hansel and Gretel* is a woodcutter, so I need a woodcutter's costume. Ah! Here's a woodcutter's costume.

*He puts on a crown and starts off proudly. SABRINA enters and snatches off the crown.*

**BULBOV:** Hey, where are you going with my woodcutter's costume?

**SABRINA:** Bulbov, that's not a woodcutter's costume.

**BULBOV:** *Appeals to audience.*

Well, they think I look like a woodcutter. Don't you?

*Expect a response here from the audience. If you don't get one it is because BULBOV failed to ask directly enough. He should repeat the question until he gets a response, as this will set up later responses by the children.*

**SABRINA:** Bulbov, woodcutters don't wear crowns. Only Kings wear crowns!

**BULBOV:** Well . . . I'm King of the woodcutters?

**SABRINA:** Oh, Bulbov!

**BULBOV:** Well, what do I get to wear? Here's something I like. How's this?

*He grabs Gretel's apron out of the trunk, just as TRICKLE arrives in the back of the trunk. She pleads with SABRINA, who by now has put on her apron, etc.*

**SABRINA:** Bulbov! You can't chop wood in Gretel's apron.

*She retrieves it from the embarrassed BULBOV and TRICKLE puts it on offstage.*

**BULBOV:** I didn't know it was Gretel's. What do I get to wear then?

**SABRINA:** A woodcutter's jacket.

**BULBOV:** A woodcutter's jacket?

*Putting it on.*

It's such a plain color.

**SABRINA:** It fits right in with the trees.

**BULBOV:** (*Crestfallen.*) Well, do I get an ax?

**SABRINA:** Of course you get an ax. Who ever heard of a woodcutter without an ax?

*She finds him one in the chest.*

**BULBOV:** (*Modeling.*) How's that?

**SABRINA:** I think you look like a perfect woodcutter!

**BULBOV:** *Considerably relieved, as they start out arm in arm.*

I feel like a perfect woodcutter!

*Confides in audience as he exits.*

It's the ax!

**STAGGIO:** *Enters mumbling.*

Well, now I have to . . . what's this? Nobody's put out the scenery?

*He takes the top cube and places it center as a table. Next he takes the second cube and places it on an angle as a porch step leading to the house.*

I always end up doing the work of the stage crew. The oldest member of the troupe has to do the heavy work! Well, I suppose that's the meaning of responsibility.

*He surveys his work.*

Well, now I'll get my costume . . .

*He rummages around in the trunk for a cape and hat.*

**BUCOL:** *Enters and trips on a box. Muttering about the mess he picks up the two boxes and sets them in an aisle. Then, he goes to the trunk.*

Hi, Grandpa! "On guard!" Hahaha.

**STAGGIO:** Haha! That's my grandson. Better get on your costume, I'll —

*Turns to leave and sees the boxes are gone. He mutters and re-sets them as BUCOL, unaware, puts on Hansel's costume piece.*

What's going on here? I thought I moved . . . Must be getting old! Well.

*Returns to trunk.*

Oh, I guess I need my . . .

**BUCOL:** How do I look, Grandpa?

**STAGGIO:** Fine! Fine! Bucol.

**BUCOL:** *Turns to leave.*

I'll just . . .

*Sees boxes are back.*

Now I just moved these. Somebody is going to trip on them if I don't . . .

*He has picked them up and almost drops one as STAGGIO turns again and sees what is going on.*

**STAGGIO:** *Grabbing one of the boxes and resetting it.*

What are you doing with those?

**BUCOL:** I'm cleaning the stage. Somebody left these old boxes . . .

**STAGGIO:** Those are not boxes; that's our scenery! Put it back where you got it!

**BUCOL:** Oh, no, Grandpa. These are just boxes that we put stuff in.

**STAGGIO:** No, no! Grandson. That's what the theatre is all about. Imagination is what counts. Why, these boxes could be anything we want them to be — a giant mountain —

*BUCOL has reset the center box and is sitting on it.*

. . . an ocean liner . . . even a poison mushroom!

**BUCOL:** A poison mushroom!

*He leaps to his feet in fear.*

**STAGGIO:** *(Reassuring him.)* Well, in the first scene, it's only a table, in front of Hansel and Gretel's house.

*Indicating the porch step.*

**BUCOL:** *Sitting back down as STAGGIO starts off.*

Oh, a table.

**STAGGIO:** *(As he exits.)* Don't sit on the table!

**BUCOL:** *Jumps back to his feet and ponders.*

Well, we need something to sit on. I know — a tree stump to sit on.

*He places the third cube as a stump next to the table, and exits. KIKO enters playing with an imaginary toy, of the sort that can be molded into whatever shape is desired. First it is a hobby-horse and she rides it around. Then it becomes a yo-yo. SABRINA enters as KIKO is making it into a mirror.*

**SABRINA:** Hi, Kiko? Are you ready for the show?

*She goes to the trunk as KIKO nods.*

Kiko, where's the pitcher for the milk? Oh, never mind. I've found it.

*She starts to set it on the step then realizes it is empty. Turns it upside down to check it.*

Kiko, it's empty!

*KIKO comes to help her.*

We've got to have milk for the show!

**KIKO:** *Gives the pitcher back to Sabrina, and makes her toy into a cow. Then she takes the pitcher and milks the cow into it. SABRINA carefully lifts the pitcher and tastes the cream.*



**SABRINA:** Mmm, it's delicious.

*She carefully sets the pitcher on the step and exits. KIKO changes the cow into a skip-rope and skips off. TRICKLE enters and looks about her fearfully.*

**STAGGIO:** *Entering, putting on his cape.*

Now, I'll just . . .

**TRICKLE:** No! Oh, no!

*She screams and cries in apparent fear of STAGGIO.*

**STAGGIO:** Trickle, what's the matter?

**TRICKLE:** (*Crying.*) Don't come near me!

**STAGGIO:** Trickle. It's Grandpa Staggio. What's the matter?

**TRICKLE:** I was just practicing.

**STAGGIO:** Practicing?

**TRICKLE:** I was practicing being Gretel when she saw the witch come out of the house.

**STAGGIO:** I see. You were being Gretel — and when you saw the witch, you cried.

**TRICKLE:** Yes, Gretel cries in the story!

**STAGGIO:** Well, well, you are getting to be quite an actress. Pretty soon you'll be as good as your old Grandpa.

**TRICKLE:** Grandpa, that will never happen.

**STAGGIO:** You know, I used to be pretty well known for my crying. I remember there was my big cry

*He demonstrates*

and there was my little bitty cry — the audiences used to love that one.

*He continues his "little cry."*

**TRICKLE:** That's my favorite, too.

**STAGGIO:** But I just remembered one thing.

*Through his tears.*

Once I start crying I can't stop. Sometimes I cry for weeks and weeks.

**TRICKLE:** But, Grandpa, the witch doesn't cry in **Hansel and Gretel**.

**STAGGIO:** (*Still crying.*) I can't help it.

**BULBOV:** (*Entering briskly.*) Staggio, let's . . .

*STAGGIO cries loudly in BULBOV's face.*

What's the matter?

**STAGGIO:** I can't stop crying!

**BULBOV:** (*Confers with TRICKLE.*

Trickle, we have to stop him. (*She shrugs.*) Maybe they will help. You ask that half, I'll ask these.

- TRICKLE:** Okay.
- BULBOV:** (To half of audience.) Will you help us? He isn't going to listen to me; but if we all tell him to stop crying he might. So when I count to three, everybody yell, "Stop crying," okay?
- TRICKLE:** (*Simultaneously, to other half.*) Will you help us? My grandpa has started crying and we can't have a crying witch, so when Papa counts to three everyone tell Grandpa to "Stop crying" as loud as you can. Ready?
- BULBOV:** (*With TRICKLE.*) One, Two, Three. Stop Crying.
- STAGGIO sniffs a few times and stops. Then he points very happily at the audience.*
- BULBOV:** It worked! Very good. Say, if we need your help later on in the play, will you help us?
- Wait for a response.*
- Good.
- STAGGIO:** Hey, they're a good group.
- BULBOV:** Yes, and they're waiting for their play to start.
- STAGGIO:** Well then, ON WITH THE SHOW!

*The others are all onstage by now and get in position to play the overture. In the original production, the instruments were two recorders, a guitar, a kazoo, a triangle, and a tambourine, but any rudimentary orchestra will suffice, even all kazoos and percussion. The actors tune up and STAGGIO taps his kazoo on his ring to quiet them down. Announcing to the audience:*

The Overture!

*Then he conducts the overture, a short collage of the music in the play. As soon as the music ends the actors all run off, and HANSEL (Bucol) dashes to make his entrance, followed by GRETEL (Trickle.)*

## SCENE ONE

### The Yard in front of the Woodcutter's House

- HANSEL:** *Enters pursued by Gretel*
- You'll never catch me!
- GRETEL:** Oh, yes I will.
- HANSEL:** Never, never, never!
- GRETEL:** *Tagging him and knocking him down.*
- Got ya! Now you catch me!
- She runs.*

**HANSEL:** *Still on the ground.*

I don't want to play any more.

**GRETEL:** *(Returning.)* Why?

**HANSEL:** I'm too hungry.

*He rolls over and lies on the ground.*

**GRETEL:** You're always hungry.

**HANSEL:** I can't help it, my stomach is always empty. I wish I had something to eat.

*He starts to crawl around in search of food.*

I wish I had a mushroom. If I had one little mushroom, I'd —

*He crawls right up to his mother's foot, who has entered from the house.*

**MOTHER:** Hansel, what are you doing?

**HANSEL:** Looking for a mushroom.

**MOTHER:** Well, you should be working on those brooms!

*She points and simultaneously KIKO places a pile of straw and an unfinished broom in the spot pointed to. All of the props used are provided in this way by the MIME.*

You know your father has to sell them at the market. Do I have to keep after you every minute?

**HANSEL:** *(Grumbles a little.)* Mmmm. Yes, Ma'am.

**MOTHER:** Gretel, I have something for you to do, too. I'm going out in the woods to check the traps; while I'm gone I want you to set the table for your father. And I want both of you to listen very carefully. I don't want you to drink the milk that's in that pitcher. I don't want you to touch it; I don't want you to go near it. I don't even want you to think about it, is that clear. It's all we have left in the house to eat, and when that's gone, I don't know what we'll do.

**GRETEL:** But Mother, won't Father bring something from the market for dinner?

**MOTHER:** *(Angry.)* Gretel you ask me that every day, and every day I tell you . . .

**GRETEL:** But, Mother . . .

**MOTHER:** . . . every day I tell you the same thing: I don't know!

**GRETEL:** I'm sorry.

**MOTHER:** *(A pause.)* I'm sorry, too. I didn't mean to yell like that. I know you are hungry; I'm hungry, too. I'm sure your father will bring something home tonight — he has been gone an awfully long time, and that's usually a good sign. Now, you set the table like I told you.

**GRETEL:** Yes, Mother.

**MOTHER:** And Hansel, I want five brooms done by the time I get back!

**HANSEL:** FIVE brooms!

**MOTHER:** Five brooms! And Gretel, I'm depending on you!

*She exits.*