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Dramatic Publishing

The Troll and the Elephant Prince



by Max Bush

The Troll and the Elephant Prince

Successful production at the Goodman Theatre.

Fantasy. By Max Bush. Cast: 3m., 2w., with doubling, or up to 7 (4m., 3w.) Here is an imaginative, original tale that shows how using “your good eye, not your no-eye” can help reveal the path to courage and change. Wonderful physical action builds the plot, as well as the courage of Jack and his playmate, Dana, as they ultimately conquer their fears and save the village. The citizens of Trolltown obediently pay gold to the intimidating Troll to protect them from the awful, one-eyed, slithering Zanies. One morning Jack arrives, a peasant boy with a toy elephant. He meets Dana, a village girl, who joins him in fantastical, pretend play until the Troll sees something powerful in Jack and demands that he be handed over. A mysterious traveler, Boulton, steps in to defend Jack, who is confused as to why the Troll would want him. Dana and Jack steal away and discover the truth about the Zanies—they are gentle, music-playing, mountain creatures who wouldn’t hurt anyone. The Troll manages to capture Jack. With the help of Dana and Boulton, Jack confronts the Troll and convinces the citizens to see with their “good eyes” the truth of the Troll’s trickery. *Unit set. Approximate running time: 55 minutes. Code: TN4.*

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MAX BUSH



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(THE TROLL AND THE ELEPHANT PRINCE)

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The premiere production of *The Troll and the Elephant Prince* was presented on November 27, 1982, at the Country Playhouse in Houston, Texas, with the following cast:

Jack..... Matt Rippy
Dana..... Susan Abshire
Mr. Trapp..... R. Clint Arlington
Mrs. Mint..... Pam Feicht
Boult..... Deborah Downs Broadhead
Troll..... Adam Parker

The production was directed by Pamela Gruber Edelen.

Technical Director, Adam Parker
Technical Crew, James Webb
Stage Manager, Jack M. Cramer
Assistant Director, Danielle Stewart

The Troll and the Elephant Prince was subsequently produced by the Goodman/DePaul School of Drama of Chicago, Illinois, January 8-March 13, 1983.

CAST:

Mr. Trapp..... Matthew J. O'Donnell
Mrs. Mint..... Katherine Lynch
Boult..... Randy Steinmeyer
Jack..... Lawrence Smith
Dana..... Leslie Eiring
Troll..... Steve Sherwin

Directed by Carol Delk.

Scenic Design, Nan Zabriskie
Costume Design, Hedvig Andér
Lighting Design, Tom Celner
Sound, J. Michael Griggs
Stage Manager, Michelle C. Armamentos
Assistant Stage Manager, Amanda White

To DONNA VICTOR

CHARACTERS

JACK..... a peasant boy
DANA..... a girl, daughter of the Applegrower
MR. TRAPP..... a banker
MRS. MINT..... a candy maker
BOULT..... a traveler and storyteller
TROLL..... a troll

TIME

Some time ago.

PLACE

Trolltown. The square. Up left is the bank and the candy factory. Center left is the monument of Trolltown—a statue of the Troll or a decorative sign that says “Trolltown” or just a planter with plants in it. At any rate its base must be round and made of stones. A line of brightly colored bricks (or perhaps a very short fence or a row of stones or just a painted line) runs from up center right, in an arching curve, all the way down right. The line denotes the Troll’s arena. A small platform stands on the line center right with a sign on it that says “Pay Here” and a bell hanging from it. A tree stump with two shackles stands center right and a large rock sits down right. It is also possible to attach the shackles to the Troll’s cave which is up right. Trolltown lies on the seaside and the background of the arena appears to be a cliff near the sea.

A note on the Troll: I believe he must be played very straight—without the typical evil laughing and wringing of hands. He is a serious and intent creature with little empathy who believes in himself. It is safe to say that not once during the play does the Troll laugh.

A note on Boulton: it is possible for a female to play Boulton.

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At rise it is early morning in Trolltown. MRS. MINT comes out the door to the candy factory as MR. TRAPP enters from the bank.

TRAPP. Good morning, Mrs. Mint.

MINT. *(Turning around "closed" sign to read "open.")* Good morning, Mr. Trapp. It looks like a fine day to do business.

TRAPP. *(Turning around sign as well, on the bank.)* What is the Royal Candy Factory making this morning?

MINT. *(Proudly.)* Apple-mint Trollbabies.

TRAPP. Delicious. I'm very fond of your Trollbabies, Mrs. Mint.

(DANA runs on to arena, looks in. DANA is a bold and courageous, curious and imaginative girl, but still a product of the culture of Trolltown.)

DANA. Hi!

MINT. Good morning, Dana.

DANA. Has the Troll collected the gold, yet?

TRAPP. Not yet.

DANA. Oh, then I'm not late. *(Moving quickly to TRAPP.)* I'm paying the Troll for my father this morning. *(Moving quickly to MINT.)* He's out planting apple trees. *(Giving MINT an apple from her basket, she moves quickly to the payboard, deposits gold on it.)* There. And one extra for last night.

TRAPP. Last night?

DANA. Didn't you hear about last night?

MINT. What happened?

DANA. *(Moving TRAPP and MINT down center.)* We heard that four One-Eyed Slithering Zanies came down from Zanie Mountain last night, grunting and growling. *(She illustrates this.)* and they looked over the city walls

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with their long eyes. . . (*She illustrates this with her arm and hand being the long eye of the Zanie.*)

TRAPP. Did you see them?

DANA. No, but the Troll saw them, and when they started climbing over the city walls, he fought them. (*She illustrates this.*) Three of the Awful Zanies ran away, but one of them slithered right past your bank, Mr. Trapp, right into the Troll's arena and the Troll gobbled him up. (*She shows us how it happened.*)

TRAPP. Thank goodness we have the Troll to protect us. Otherwise the Awful Zanies would have eaten us by now. There. . . (*He pays TROLL, putting gold on payboard.*) Today's gold, for a job well done.

MINT. Let's hope the Zanies don't come back today.

DANA. (*Enthusiastically.*) What are you making this morning, Mrs. Mint?

MINT. Apple-mint Trollbabies.

DANA. Oh. . . (*An aside. TRAPP pulls his own face.*) ughk. . . Well, I have to bring my father biscuits from the Royal Baker. Bye! (*She runs off.*)

MINT. Good-bye, Dana.

TRAPP. Must that girl run everywhere?

MINT. I know what you mean, Mr. Trapp. (*She is counting out her gold pieces.*) If we were meant to run everywhere, we would have legs to run with. (*TRAPP hears this, tries to make sense out of it. MINT places gold on payboard.*) Today's gold for the Troll. And one extra for stopping those Zanies last night.

VOICE. (*A voice suddenly begins singing, loudly and heartily, off stage. It startles MINT and TRAPP.*)
Lo-de-do!

MINT. What is that?

TRAPP. (*Going to look.*) It came from over there.

MINT. (*Only slightly fearful.*) Is it a One-Eyed Zanie?

TRAPP. No; a stranger.

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MINT. Here in Trolltown?

BOULT. (*BOULT is a hearty, strong man, curious, adventuresome, and seemingly unafraid of the unknown—indeed he seeks it out. He immediately takes over the entire atmosphere of the stage, charging it with energy and frightening MINT and TRAPP who hide their fear as much as possible. BOULT acts strongly on impulse and seems to create—and involve others around him in—a rhythm of language, action and emotion. Vocally he is strong, animated, clear and pleasing. He enters singing, carrying a staff.*)

“I sailed all the way
On a four-winged beast,
Who flew me away
To the Sky-Palace feast. (*A big finish to TRAPP and MINT.*)

Where I sang for the Queen
And her people of green
Who had two heads, six eyes
And no nose in-between.” (*He boldly approaches MR. TRAPP and MRS. MINT.*) Good morning, Royal Citizens. Is this Trolltown, where lives the Troll? I have travelled far to see him.

TRAPP. The Troll lives there, stranger.

BOULT. When will he appear?

TRAPP. He'll appear soon, to collect the gold we have given him.

(*BOULT jumps into TROLL's arena.*)

BOULT. Troll! Show yourself!

TRAPP. (*More out of fear than anger.*) Come out of the arena!

BOULT. (*Yelling into mouth of cave.*) There's gold for you!

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MINT. Come back here!

BOULT. Appear! Troll!

TRAPP. The Troll will eat you if you're in the arena, stranger. *(A growl is heard coming from cave.)* Get behind here. He won't pass beyond this line.

BOULT. *(Jumping out, responding more to the social convention than fear.)* Then I'll wait out here.

TRAPP. *(With an effort toward being polite.)* Who are you?

MINT. What is your business here?

BOULT. I am Boulton, Traveler of Earth and Stars, and a Holder of Knowledge. I have traveled to many stars and places distant and strange. I am a Storyteller looking for curious people such as you to tell my stories to. Would you generous citizens of Troll town pay a piece of gold to hear a story?

MINT. About what?

BOULT. A story of trees that walk and dance when they find water; whose fruit, when ripe, flies off its branches like blackbirds and drops its seeds from the air onto riverbanks half a world away? Of monsters made of mud bigger than a house with little birds on their backs? Or a star where animals walk but have no brains but rocks that rattle in their three heads?

MINT. There aren't such things.

BOULT. Many people believe there are no Trolls, Madam, and would pay five gold pieces to hear of one. For one gold piece I'll tell you of towns with giants whose hair burns like torches because there is no sun, towns as small as a seed, towns with no people but with fish that walk. Gigantic towns with flying beasts whose necks are as long as tree trunks! Towns built of nothing but *fire*, whose citizens float on the flames. And towns with no Trolls.

MINT. *(Mouth agape.)* Really?

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TRAPP. Mint! (*Her mouth snaps shut. With complete, calm belief.*) Of course not. There can't possibly be such places.

BOULT. I'll tell you of such impossible places for just one gold coin. (*Grabbing gold off station.*) Surely he could spare one of these. You've given him so many.

MINT. Stop!

TRAPP. That is stealing!

MINT. Put them back!

BOULT. Gold! I'll tell you of towns where it rains gold! Where gold falls from the sky! (*He throws two pieces in the air. One is caught by TRAPP, the other by MINT.*) Like this!

MINT & TRAPP. Stop! Stop!

(*He throws more into air. MR. TRAPP and MRS. MINT try desperately to catch them all.*)

BOULT. And this! And this! And this! (*Turning to them.*) Why do you pay the Troll?

MINT. He protects us.

BOULT. From whom?

TRAPP. The Awful One-Eyed Slithering Zanies.

BOULT. By the stars! What marvelous sounding creatures. Awful One-Eyed Slithering Zanies. Tell me more about them.

TRAPP. They are not marvelous. They are dangerous. They live on the mountain. (*He points off left.*)

MINT. They have one eye that sticks out of their heads three feet long.

TRAPP. They shoot lightning bolts out of them that burn houses and stores.

MINT. Just last night the Troll stopped four of them at the city walls; he even gobbled one up.

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BOULT. Wonderful. Here . . . for telling me a story of the Zanies. One gold coin each.

MINT. (*Pleasantly surprised.*) Thank-you.

BOULT. Tell me more of these Zanies.

MINT. (*Who is more enthusiastic as she appears to be making more gold.*) What else. . . ? Oh, yes. They can't talk.

TRAPP. They can only grunt.

MINT. And growl.

BOULT. Like what?

(*Beat. MINT and TRAPP are shy.*)

For a gold piece?

(*MINT growls. Pause. Growls again; again. BOULT is finally satisfied.*)

Marvelous.

(*He tosses her a coin. She counts hers, places them on the payboard.*)

And they grunt, you say?

(*TRAPP grunts quietly. Silence. Again, louder. Silence. Again. BOULT laughs.*)

Wonderful!

(*TRAPP is alternately proud and embarrassed.*)

Have you ever seen an Awful One-Eyed Slithering Zanie?

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(TRAPP counts his gold. He is one short.)

MINT. Of course not. The Troll chases them away before they get inside the city.

TRAPP. So put the gold back or we won't be safe.

BOULT. Gold! Is that all we can talk about? Let it fly away!

(He throws his last gold piece well into the air. It falls in the arena. TRAPP and MINT freeze in a moment of panic.)

TRAPP. *(Nervous.)* Go get it, please. The Troll won't accept it if it's not on the payboard.

BOULT. No.

MINT. Yes.

BOULT. No.

MINT. *(To TRAPP.)* You go, Mr. Trapp.

TRAPP. I'm not going into the arena. It's against the law. And the Troll—

BOULT. Surely he wouldn't eat you.

TRAPP. Ha.

MINT. If he catches a citizen in the arena he chains them up—

TRAPP. And if the Goldmakers won't pay what he asks within one day—

MINT. The Troll may eat whoever he's caught.

BOULT. What are you going to do?

TRAPP. Mint—

MINT. No.

TRAPP. Yes.

MINT. It's your gold piece.

TRAPP. Mine?

MINT. My gold is on the payboard.

TRAPP. Then you have one of mine.

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MINT. How can you be sure? They all look alike.
TRAPP. I am sure that one is yours, Mint. You go.
MINT. YOU.
TRAPP. NO.
MINT. Yes.
TRAPP. NO.
MINT. Yes!
TRAPP. NO!
BOULT. I'll go.
MINT & TRAPP. You will?
BOULT. If I can keep it.
MINT & TRAPP. No!
BOULT. Then you go. (*Jumping away from TRAPP.*)
MINT. Yes.
TRAPP. Both of us will go, Mrs. Mint.

(They carefully, quietly move toward the gold piece. They hold hands. A sudden growl is heard in cave; rocks and dirt appear to be thrown at cave's entrance. We see a TROLL claw for a moment.

That startles TRAPP and MINT and they try to run in opposite directions. BOULT laughs. MR. TRAPP pulls MRS. MINT over to gold piece, he picks it up and they run out of arena.)

MINT. What do you want? Troublemaker!
TRAPP. Who are you?! How did you get inside the city walls?!
BOULT. I told you. I am Boulton and I floated down from the sky. I am a traveler of earth and stars and I have come to explore the fascinations of this countryside.

(A faint haunting music drifts in. Whenever the Zanite music is heard, it is as if the wind has changed direction and we now hear the music drifting in on the wind. After a

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time, the wind again will shift, and the music will drift off. For just a moment TRAPP and MINT look up, then turn away from Zanie Mountain.)

What is that?

MINT. (*Uncomfortably.*) What?

BOULT. That music you're pretending not to hear.

MINT. I don't hear that music. Do you, Trapp?

TRAPP. That music? Of course not. I never do.

BOULT. It's coming from that mountain.

TRAPP. That's impossible. The Zanies live there and the Troll says the Zanies are too awful to make music.

BOULT. I must go there. Right now. It calls me. Doesn't it call to you, citizens? Aren't you curious about it? About who plays such music?

TRAPP. No. Not me. Mrs. Mint?

MINT. Not at all.

MINT & TRAPP. No.

BOULT. (*A little entranced by music.*) Then good day, good citizens. I'll return to see your Troll. (*He exits.*)

TRAPP. We won't worry about him any more. If the Zanies don't burn him up, the Troll will take care of him.

(JACK crawls on backwards carrying a rope. He hides behind the candy factory. MINT and TRAPP have caught him in the corner of their eyes. They both take a step downstage and toward each other, then they freeze in a mild panic.)

MINT. What was that?

TRAPP. I don't know. . . (*Beat.*) It crawled.

MINT. Was it an animal?

TRAPP. What kind?

MINT. I don't know. I was asking you. Was it a Snow Leopard?

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TRAPP. Snow Leopard! Was it?

MINT. I don't know!

TRAPP. It could be a Zanie.

MINT. Zanie?

TRAPP. Did it look like a Zanie?

MINT. I don't know! I've never seen one.

TRAPP. Listen . . . maybe it will grunt and growl and make Zanie noises.

(They listen. As if on cue, JACK makes noises.)

MINT. Zanie!

TRAPP. It's a Zanie! I knew they'd come back!

MINT. Ring the bell for the Troll.

TRAPP. All right. *(He doesn't move.)*

MINT. Well?

TRAPP. *(With all the calm he can muster.)* I don't seem to be able to move. You do it, Mrs. Mint.

MINT. No.

TRAPP. Yes.

MINT. No!

TRAPP. Yes!

MINT. Not this again! I'll do it. *(She begins to slowly move toward the payboard and bell. JACK moves behind TRAPP, unheard.)*

JACK. Hi!

TRAPP. Ah! Oh, it's a boy. . .

MINT. From the Seaside.

JACK. Hi!

MINT. What are you doing here?

(JACK exhibits a raw, naive, vulnerable energy; full of play and curiosity. During this entrance he explores the area, touching things, etc.)