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*Dramatic Publishing*

# **Thaddeus and 'Tila** **(A Crane and Frog Tale)**

A Play

by

JOSE CRUZ GONZALEZ



**Dramatic Publishing**

Woodstock, Illinois • England • Australia • New Zealand

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*Thaddeus and 'Tila (A Crane and Frog Tale)* premiered at the Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park on March 26, 2005. The play toured through Ohio, Kentucky and Indiana schools from March 28 to April 22, 2005. Directed by Bert Goldstein, set designer Tammy Honesty, costume designer Kim Cook, choreography Linda Reiff, stunt coordination k. Jenny Jones, supplemental music David Kisor, stage manager Annalisa Mickelson, study guide Patricia Tarpey, director of education Bert Goldstein, education associate Anita Trotta, education intern Amanda Keller. Edward Stern, producing artistic director, Buzz Ward, executive director.

## CAST

Thaddeus . . . . . Shawn Knight  
'Tila . . . . . Sunshine Cappelletti  
Birdie/Father Crane . . . . . Brian Edgecomb  
Mos/Brother Crane . . . . . John Graham  
Sala/Mother Crane . . . . . Deborah Radloff

# **Thaddeus and 'Tila** **(A Crane and Frog Tale)**

A Play in One Act  
For 5 to 8 actors

## CHARACTERS:

THADDEUS FROG is a teenage frog who dreams of flying. He wears a flight helmet and goggles on his head.

'TILA CRANE is a tall and awkward teenage crane who wears glasses.

BIRDIE is an aging hummingbird. He wears small glasses and carries a walking stick. He has a backpack that holds various charts and geographic instruments. Also plays FATHER CRANE.

MOS is a short teenage mosquito. He is leader of the Westside March Pond bullies. He makes an annoying buzzing sound when he's around others. Also plays BROTHER CRANE.

SALA is a teenage salamander. She's a follower hanging out with MOS. She also plays MOTHER CRANE.

Approximate running time: 50 minutes.

MUSIC NOTE: Producers should feel free to create their own melodies for the two original songs in the play.

## Thaddeus and 'Tila (A Crane and Frog Tale)

*(A green marsh, a sloping hill, blue sky and white clouds. An earth tremor is momentarily heard and then it fades away. Music. PUPPETEERS introduce birds on rods flying high across the sky. THADDEUS, a teenage frog, pops his head out of the pond watching them. He wears an old leather flight helmet with goggles attached to it.)*

THADDEUS. I see birds fly so high in the sky. I wish I could be one. I wouldn't have a care in the world. I could go anywhere I wanted. Eat and sleep whenever I wished. With nobody telling me what to do. But I'm stuck here in a pond. Expected to do what all frogs do. Rib bit, rib bit, rib bit.

*(A fly is heard buzzing about. THADDEUS reaches out grabbing and eating it. He holds a puppet crane that he has made and plays with it. MOS, a teenage mosquito, and SALA, a teenage salamander, enter spying on THADDEUS.)*

THADDEUS. But that's not for me! I want to be a bird instead of a frog. Soaring high in the playground of

heaven. If I had one wish that's what it would be. A frog turned into a bird the likes of me.

*(THADDEUS stands up placing his flight goggles on. He crosses his fingers making a wish and then stretching out his arms imagining he's gliding in the air. He makes a bird call. MOS and SALA burst out laughing.)*

MOS. You must be trippin', fool!

SALA. He's lost all his marbles!

MOS. Whoever heard of a frog with wings!

SALA. He's just babbling.

MOS. Wishes don't come true.

SALA. They never do.

THADDEUS. Anything can happen, you just got to believe.

MOS. Did I hear him right, Sala?

SALA. I think you did, Mos.

MOS. Crazy frog. His brain's gotten waterlogged.

SALA. Mushy Head.

THADDEUS. There's nothing wrong with me!

MOS. Has he challenged my reputation, my dignity? *(MOS buzzes down to THADDEUS.)*

THADDEUS. I didn't mean anything by it, Mos.

MOS. Oh, yeah?

THADDEUS. You're not going to sting me, are you?

MOS. I might.

*(SALA slithers down to THADDEUS.)*

THADDEUS. Sala.

SALA. 'S'up, fool!



THADDEUS. Look, I don't want any trouble.

MOS. You dizzz me and my compadre and you don't want trouble? What are you looking at!

THADDEUS. Nothing!

MOS. You calling me "nothing"?

SALA. Oh-oh.

MOS. Are you referring about me being a mosquito?

THADDEUS. Mosquito?

MOS. Are you thinking because I'm a mosquito I shouldn't be taken serious?

THADDEUS. I didn't think that.

MOS. Oh, so you mean to say I don't count because I am a mosquito?

THADDEUS. No, I think you're a very IMPORTANT mosquito.

MOS. That's right! The universe hears my roar. Sala, tell it like it is! (*MOS vocalizes a backbeat for SALA.*)

SALA. You're Mos, the mosquito

Who's nobody's clown

He'll suck your blood

Baddest dude'n town.

MOS. Word.

THADDEUS. Okay, you're right. I take it back. Wishes don't come true and there's something definitely wrong with me.

MOS. Don't think you're better than us.

THADDEUS. I don't.

SALA. We come from the same 'hood.

MOS & SALA. Westside Marsh Pond!

THADDEUS. I'm down with that.

MOS. Down with that?

SALA. He's "down with that!" (*MOS and SALA bust out laughing.*)

MOS. Hand over your spare food, chump!

THADDEUS. All I've got is a slice of earthworm, sprinkles of spider legs and a nibble of fruit.

MOS. I don't give a hoot. Give me the loot! (*THADDEUS hands over his lunch pail to MOS.*)

SALA. See ya, Mushy Head.

THADDEUS. Mos. Sala. Whew...

*(MOS and SALA exit through the pond. The sound of birds are heard flying above. THADDEUS puts on his goggles, crosses his fingers, sticks out his arms and imagines soaring once again.)*

THADDEUS. I leap off the ground into thin air. Choosing to go wherever I dare. Everything below me is suddenly small. I hear a bluebird's call. I whoosh past the swallows, crows, and a mighty eagle hiding behind a cloud that looks like beagle. It barks at me, so I fly off to see families of geese and cranes filling the sky heading towards a new land. And I understand why it's so grand. Whoosh!

*(He exits. A tremor is heard again and then silence. A CRANE FAMILY enters. Their wings are long and magnificent. They are in formation moving as one. There is FATHER CRANE, MOTHER CRANE, BROTHER CRANE and 'TILA. 'TILA, a teenager, pops her head out to see.)*

'TILA. Are we there yet?

*(The CRANE FAMILY rhythm is broken disrupting everyone.)*

FATHER CRANE. 'Tila!  
MOTHER CRANE. 'Tila!  
BROTHER CRANE. 'Tila!  
'TILA. Sorry! So sorry!

*(The CRANE FAMILY regains their rhythm.)*

FATHER CRANE. Girl, you got to stay in formation!  
'TILA. Yes, I know!  
MOTHER CRANE. You've got to go with the flow!  
'TILA. I'm doing my best!  
BROTHER CRANE. Dork!  
MOTHER CRANE. Harold Junior, you stop that right now!  
'TILA. Why must we always fly?  
MOTHER CRANE. We've already discussed this.  
'TILA. Why can't we stay in one place?  
FATHER CRANE. I'm trying to concentrate here.  
'TILA. As soon as I meet someone new we leave. I've never had a friend. I wish I did. It's not fair.  
FATHER CRANE. When I was a little chick I did what my parents told me. I never complained. They'd say "Fly high." I'd say, "How high?" They'd say, "Stand tall." I'd say, "How tall?" But today's generation has got it so easy. It's as if they expect everything to be served to them in a silver beak.  
MOTHER CRANE. Now, Harold, don't work yourself up.  
FATHER CRANE. We're migrating south for the winter. That's what cranes do. We follow our instincts.

MOTHER CRANE. Remember what Doctor Crane said.

FATHER CRANE. Yes, I know, Gladys, my blood pressure, my ticker. I don't need to be reminded.

MOTHER CRANE. We've got a long trip ahead so you kids better behave.

'TILA. Dad, I got to go.

FATHER CRANE. Now?

'TILA. Yes, now.

BROTHER CRANE. Just do it in the sky, Dorkess!

'TILA. Oh, gross!

MOTHER CRANE. Harold Junior, I'm going to wash your beak out with soap!

*('TILA punches her brother.)*

BROTHER CRANE. OW! (*BROTHER CRANE hits back.*)

'TILA. OW!

'TILA & BROTHER CRANE. MOM!

FATHER CRANE. ENOUGH!

MOTHER CRANE. What is it, Harold?

FATHER CRANE (*concerned*). I can't find our rest stop. Our species have been flying to this spot for generations. Something's different. Something's changed. I have a bad feeling about this.

'TILA. Dad, what's that ahead of us?

FATHER CRANE. It looks like a giant—

MOTHER CRANE. Oh, my gosh!

FATHER CRANE. Look out!

ALL. POWER LINES!

*(The CRANE FAMILY tries to avoid the power lines. As they exit 'TILA is knocked unconscious. 'TILA lands in*

*the pond as feathers drift to the ground. THADDEUS enters with his arms stretched out as if he's flying.)*

THADDEUS. Whoosh! The geese and ducks are surprised to see a frog flying so easily. So I wave to them and they wave back. And we chatter about this and that in the language of quackity-quack! Hey, what's that? (*THADDEUS sees 'TILA in the pond. He looks up toward the sky. Then looks at his crossed fingers. He uncrosses them.*) Birdie! Birdie, come quickly!

*(BIRDIE enters marching. He is a hummingbird. He wears small pair of glasses and carries a walking stick. He has a backpack that holds various charts, geographic instruments and a branch holding a leaf flag waving in the air.)*

BIRDIE (*singing*).

March along, brave hummingbirds  
A step one-two, keep lively you  
Never fear what stands ahead  
A step one-two, a-daubo-blee-do  
Hummingbirds sing with pride—

THADDEUS. Birdie, something's fallen from beyond into the pond!

BIRDIE. What can it be? I can't see. Well?

THADDEUS. I think it's a crane.

BIRDIE. But that's insane. They never land here.

THADDEUS. She dropped from the sky.

BIRDIE. How odd. Irregular. Peculiar.

THADDEUS. We've got to do something.

BIRDIE. Don't look at me. I can't swim. Jump in!  
(*THADDEUS pulls 'TILA out of the pond.*) Careful now.

Watch your step.

THADDEUS. Birdie, she's turning blue. What should I do?

BIRDIE. Give her mouth-to-beak resuscitation!

THADDEUS. What?

BIRDIE. It's her only salvation! Hurry! (*THADDEUS gives 'TILA mouth-to-beak resuscitation. 'TILA spits out a small fish. She begins to breathe on her own.*) It worked?

THADDEUS. I did it!

BIRDIE. Of course you did! Led by my brilliant evaluation of the situation!

THADDEUS. Birdie, I feel a pulse. I see color in her cheeks. She's stirring awake. She wants to speak—  
(*'TILA suddenly awakens slapping THADDEUS on the face.*) OW!

BIRDIE. Ooh!

'TILA. How dare you kiss me!

THADDEUS. I wasn't kissing you!

'TILA. Then what were your lips doing on my beak?

THADDEUS. I was saving your life!

'TILA. You must be a sicko or a psycho!

THADDEUS. Sicko? Psycho?

'TILA. Or do you think you're a frog prince who needs a kiss from a princess?

THADDEUS. Frog prince? Princess? What are you talking about?

'TILA. Talk to the wing!

THADDEUS. Birdie, say something!

BIRDIE. That went well. (*Beat.*) Are you all right, miss?

'TILA. Yes, I'm fine. Who are you? Let me see your face.  
Come closer.

BIRDIE. I'm Lieutenant Birdie Hummingbird Legionnaire,  
explorer extraordinaire of the Royal Geographic Society.  
I'm sure you've heard of our notoriety.

'TILA. No. 'Tila Crane. You're the biggest hummingbird  
I've ever seen.

BIRDIE. I'm sure you must've heard of me.

THADDEUS. He's world famous. His stories are all true.  
Everybody— (*'TILA gives THADDEUS the wing.*)

BIRDIE. Well, I was swallowed up by an enormous blue  
whale and survived to tell about it. It aired on Hum-  
mingbird World News. Surely you must've watched it.

'TILA. No.

BIRDIE. Certainly you must've heard of my ballooning ad-  
venture where I crisscrossed the earth in record time.  
Hummingbird BBC broadcast it across the airwaves.

'TILA. Nope.

BIRDIE. But surely you must've read about me in the  
Hummingbird Dispatch-Times-Republic newspaper  
where I was awarded the Nobel Prize for—

'TILA. No, I've never heard of you!

BIRDIE. Well, it's a pity, isn't it?

'TILA. Who's he?

BIRDIE. This fine young frog is Thaddeus.

THADDEUS. Your wing, it's injured.

'TILA. You needn't concern yourself, Froggy. I'm out of  
here. (*'TILA tries to move her wing but can't.*) Ouch!

THADDEUS (*quickly makes a wing sling out of a leaf. He  
hands it to BIRDIE. Whispering.*). Don't look at me. I  
don't want another smack.

BIRDIE. Right, I'll take the flak. Will you allow me, 'Tila?

'TILA. You're not going to expect a kiss from me too, are you?

BIRDIE. You needn't worry. I'm a gentle bird and a scholar.

'TILA. I don't trust that frog. I'm keeping my eyes on him. Where'd he go?

THADDEUS. I'm over here.

'TILA. What's that thing on your head?

THADDEUS. It's a flight helmet and goggles.

'TILA. What do you think you are, a bird or something?

THADDEUS. Hey, I'm leaving. I don't need this abuse!  
(*THADDEUS storms off.*)

BIRDIE. Thaddeus, dear chap, please come back! (*Beat.*)

'TILA. What?

BIRDIE (*places the wing sling around 'TILA's arm*).

Thaddeus isn't a bad fellow. He's a good lad and my only true friend. He jumped into the pond to save you.

Brought you back to life after you turned blue. There.

'TILA. Where am I?

BIRDIE. In Westside Marsh Pond. You'll find it a most agreeable location where its inhabitants find inspiration.

'TILA. Why do you keep doing that?

BIRDIE. Doing what?

'TILA. Rhyming everything. The way you talk.

BIRDIE. Well, we do that a lot. You'll be doing it too. For instance, if I say "beak" then you'll say—

'TILA. Eucalyptus?

BIRDIE. Let's try again. If I say "creek" then you'll say—

'TILA. Aardvark?

BIRDIE. No. If I say "cheek"?

'TILA. Chrysanthemum?

BIRDIE. No!