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Dramatic Publishing



A FULL-LENGTH PLAY

Heidi

by

JUNE WALKER ROGERS

from the novel by

JOHANNA SPYRI



THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY



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(HEIDI)

ISBN 0-87129-200-9

HEIDI

A Full-Length Play for Children

For Three Men and Nine Women, Six Children

CHARACTERS

People of the Magic Mountain:

AN ELF
HEIDI
GRANDFATHER
PETER
BRIGITTE
GRANDMOTHER
DETE

People of Dörfli:

GRETA
ELSA
BARBEL
TWO GIRLS

People of Frankfurt:

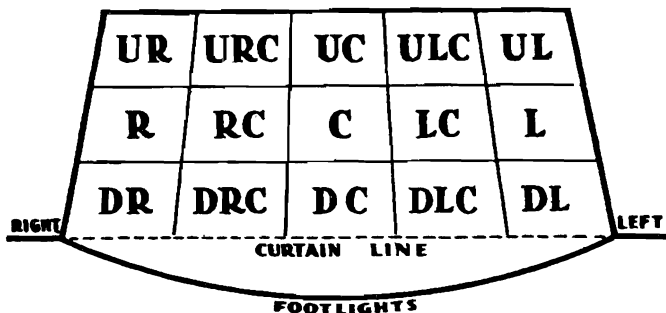
CLARA
MR. SESEMAN
MRS. ROTTENMEIER
SEBASTIAN
TINETTE
MISS HELPMANN

TIME: Many years ago.

PLACE: The Magic Mountain, the town of Dörfli,
and the Seseman home in Frankfurt.

NOTE: The play may be performed in two acts, or
without an intermission, at the discretion of the
director.

CHART OF STAGE POSITIONS



STAGE POSITIONS

Upstage means away from the footlights, *downstage* means toward the footlights, and *right* and *left* are used with reference to the actor as he faces the audience. R means *right*, L means *left*, U means *up*, D means *down*, C means *center*, and these abbreviations are used in combination, as: UR for *up right*, RC for *right center*, DLC for *down left center*, etc. A territory designated on the stage refers to a general area, rather than to a given point.

NOTE: Before starting rehearsals, chalk off your stage or rehearsal space as indicated above in the *Chart of Stage Positions*. Then teach your actors the meanings and positions of these fundamental terms of stage movement by having them walk from one position to another until they are familiar with them. The use of these abbreviated terms in directing the play saves time, speeds up rehearsals, and reduces the amount of explanation the director has to give to his actors.

ACT ONE

(After the house lights go out there is a beat, and an impish-looking ELF pops through the curtain. He is dressed in Tyrolean pants, shirt, and a Tyrolean hat with an enormous feather on it.)

ELF (surprised at seeing the audience). Oooh! What are you all doing on my mountain? Don't tell me it's turning into a tourist attraction! I won't allow it! Everybody climbing up and down and eating sandwiches would ruin it! And it's a magic mountain! What? You don't believe this is a magic mountain? Well, it is! Do I look like the type of elf who would lie to you? (He makes a very innocent expression.) Of course, I have to admit, it once had another name. "The Falcon's Nest." (He raises his hands as though they were claws, flaps his arms and flies around, then suddenly stops.) This ugly falcon lived at the top of the mountain and there it stayed and stayed and stayed always watching us. (He imitates the falcon's look.) Well, since you're here, you may as well see the mountain. We'll start at the bottom. Dörfli.

(GRETA, the baker's wife, enters L carrying a basket of rolls. A sign on the basket reads "ROLLS.")

GRETA

Fresh rolls! Get your morning rolls!

ELF

It's morning market time.

(He disappears through the curtain.)

(ELSA, the butcher's wife, enters.
She, too, carries a basket.)

ELSA

I'll take two, Greta. (GRETA put rolls in
ELSA's basket. ELSA gives her money, then
turns to GRETA.) Fritz picked out the tender-
est cut of meat for you.

GRETA

Thanks, Elsa.

(BARBEL enters L. She is the candle-
maker's wife and she, too, has her
basket.)

BARBEL

Candles! Blue is the color for the day!
Candles!

GRETA (holding one of Barbel's candles up).

What a beautiful blue. It matches the color of
my eyes. (Fluttering her lashes.) I'll take
three. (Takes candles and puts them in her
basket, gives BARBEL money.)

BARBEL

A candle for each eye. Everyone says she
must have an eye in the back of her head, be-
cause she sees all, knows all and . . .

ELSA and BARBEL (together).

Tells all!

(They both laugh.)

ELSA (handing BARBEL a package). Here's your meat, Barbel.

BARBEL

And here's your money.

(BARBEL gives GRETA's money, which was ELSA's first, back to ELSA. All three react to this round robin transaction. BARBEL and ELSA start out L.)

GRETA

I'm sorry you girls have to hurry . . . (They keep going.) Otherwise you could hear the latest news.

(BARBEL and ELSA stop in their tracks.)

BARBEL (to ELSA)

Perhaps - a minute or two.

(ELSA shrugs "Why not?" and they rush back to GRETA, who pretends she's busy with the rolls in her basket.)

BARBEL and ELSA

Well?

GRETA (teasing)

Well . . .

ELSA (annoyed)

Forget it. Come on, Barbel.

GRETA

Honestly, girls, you never let me have any fun. Anyway . . . guess who's back in town . . . (Looking off R.) . . . oh, oh! and coming this way?

BARBEL and ELSA (trying to see).

Who? Who?

ELSA (amazed).

Why, it's Dete!

GRETA

Dete! She always thought she was too good for the likes of us . . . now she's back from the big city.

BARBEL

And she has a little girl with her.

ELSA (all-knowing).

That must be her sister's child - - poor little orphan.

GRETA

What could they possibly be doing here?

ELSA

We'll know soon enough. (Getting the girls into a huddle.) Let's pretend we don't see them!

(DETE enters R, and calls back offstage.)

DETE

Heidi! Heidi, will you please try to keep up with me?

HEIDI (offstage).

Coming, Aunt Dete.

DETE (puffing).

What a trip! And we still have a whole mountain to climb!

(HEIDI enters. She is eight. She is obviously weighed down by the clothes she is wearing. She has two dresses on over a skirt and blouse, two hats over a kerchief on her head, and heavy boots over the shoes she wears. Around her shoulders is a large shawl. A pair of shoes, tied together, hang around her neck.)

HEIDI

I can't walk any faster.

DETE

Are you tired, Heidi?

HEIDI (lifting the hats and wiping her brow).

No. Hot!

BARBEL (who has been peeking at them, coming over to HEIDI).

Well, no wonder. The poor child must be wearing every stitch of clothing she owns.

DETE (defending herself).

It's easier than carrying them.

BARBEL (pretending surprise).

Why, Dete! What a surprise seeing you here!

(DETE makes a mock-surprise face, then crosses to GRETA and ELSA and taps them on the shoulder. They do little screams.)

DETE

It's all right, girls, you can turn around now.

GRETA (catty).

I never thought you'd come back to Dörfli, Dete, dear.

ELSA

Are you home to stay . . . or just passing through?

DETE

That's a good question.
(All lean forward to hear the answer, but DETE just smiles sweetly.)

HEIDI (tugging Dete's sleeve).

Aunt Dete, is Grandfather's house far from here?

GRETA (astounded).

You . . . don't mean . . . that you're taking her to Alm-Uncle's do you?

BARBEL

How could you do a thing like that to a child?

DETE (shrugging).

Alm-Uncle's her grandfather.

ELSA

But he's a hermit.

HEIDI

What's a hermit?

BARBEL (ignoring HEIDI).

And he doesn't want anyone to bother him.

HEIDI

What's a hermit?

DETE (firmly).

He certainly wouldn't harm his own grand-daughter. (Meekly.) Would he?

GRETA (in a preaching voice).

Anyone who's given up on God and people is capable of anything.

DETE (putting an arm around HEIDI).

You're frightening the child.

HEIDI

I'm not frightened. I just want to know what a hermit is.

DETE

I know. And I'm frightened. But, it's got to be done, so let's get it over with. (To the women.) Bye, girls. You can go back to your cackling now.

ELSA, BARBEL and GRETA

Hmm . . . the nerve . . . imagine!
(They exit L, talking to each other like cackling hens. DETE laughs.)

DETE (giving her hand to HEIDI).

Hold my hand, Heidi. (They turn upstage.)

(The curtain opens. DR is a cutout of the front of a rundown hut. There is a tree stump in front of it. UL is a cutout of another hut, obviously better built. There is a bench in front of it. The back drop should depict mountain peaks giving the feeling that the huts are high up on the mountain. The scenery should be as simple as possible.)

HEIDI

Oh, Aunt Dete! I know I'm going to love it here! (Taking a deep breath.) Even the air seems different.

(DETE takes a deep breath and starts coughing.)

(PETER, the goatherd, comes running in from R, followed by two or more children who are trying to get a feather that PETER holds over his head.)

DETE

That Peter! He was always playing. He should be tending the goats. That's what he's paid for.

HEIDI

But they're having so much fun.

DETE (plopping down on the stump).

Having fun is for the lazy. (Looking in her bag.) Why don't we have the rest of the cheese? Maybe that will give me the strength to face . . . him.

HEIDI (watching the children).

I'm not hungry, Aunt Dete.

(HEIDI walks closer to the children, trying to get into their game.)

DETE (not noticing).

Children are never hungry. It amazes me that they ever grow up at all.

(PETER and the other children are blocking HEIDI out of their games. She clomps around after them in her heavy boots. One girl grabs one of Heidi's hats, the other girl takes the second, and they toss them back and forth. HEIDI, realizing the boots are getting in her way, removes them, and the children jump over them. DETE, eating the cheese and engrossed, continues, thinking HEIDI is beside her.)

Now, Heidi I want you to know that I'm sorry I can't take you with me to Frankfurt, but my new employer said, "No children," so what can I do?

HEIDI (to children)

I'd like to play, too.

PETER

No. You don't know our games.

HEIDI

I bet I can do something you can't do.

OTHERS

Bet you can't.

HEIDI

Turn your backs.

(Reluctantly, they turn. HEIDI removes her top dress and holds shawl in front of her.)

Abracadabra. Turn back again!
(They turn and when she swings the shawl away,
they see she is wearing another dress.)

FIRST GIRL
It's magic!

SECOND GIRL
Can you do it again?

HEIDI (laughing).
It's possible.

PETER
Yes. Yes. One more time!

HEIDI
Well, then . . . turn around . . . (An after-
thought). . . and hop on one foot.
(They turn and hop as she removes second
dress and again shields herself with shawl.)
Abracadabra alla kazam!
(They turn back and see her in blouse and
skirt, as she swings shawl away. They ap-
plaud. HEIDI bows.)
Thank you. Thank you. But I have to tell the
truth. It wasn't magic.

FIRST GIRL
We know. But it was fun!

PETER
What's your name?
(Before she can answer DETE rises and calls.)

DETE
Heidi! Heidi, where are you?

(PETER points to HEIDI as if to say "Is that you?" and HEIDI nods. He and the others try to hide HEIDI from DETE.)

HEIDI (waving over the other children's heads)
Here. Here!

DETE

Heidi, is that you? Where are all your clothes? (The children try to hide the clothes behind their backs and DETE chases them, trying to get the clothes, huffing as she runs.) What have you done to my little Heidi? If I get my hands on you . . . (The children drop the clothes and run off past DETE, except PETER whom DETE catches by the shirttails.) Not so fast there! Who's going to help Heidi carry her clothes? (PETER stares at the ground as HEIDI tries to gather up the clothes but keeps dropping them. DETE takes out a coin and holds it in front of PETER, who grabs it and runs over to help HEIDI pile clothes into the shawl.) It works every time! All right, now. Line up. And let's keep together. (HEIDI and PETER, laughing, line up behind DETE and they begin to march in a snake pattern around the stage to indicate climbing the mountain, with PETER carrying shawl like knapsack over his shoulder.)

ALL

Up, up, up we go
Up so high,
We can almost
Touch the sky.

(During the march DETE once starts to go

backward and HEIDI pushes her on as PETER pushes HEIDI on.)

DETE (pointing to hut UL).

There! There it is, Heidi!

HEIDI (excited)

Oh! Grandfather's house!

PETER (stopping, amazed).

Grandfather. (Stuttering.) He ... he ... he's your ... your ... grandfather?

HEIDI (running ahead).

Yes, and I can't wait to see him. (Reaching the hut, she calls.) Hello . . .

(An echo [a voice off stage] is heard calling, "Hello ... Hello ... lo ... lo ... lo.")

Anybody home?

(The echo: "Home . . . home . . . home . . .")

(The GRANDFATHER appears at the door. He has bushy eyebrows and a long beard, a scowl on his face. He resembles a fierce-looking Santa Claus. HEIDI holds out her hand.)