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Dramatic Publishing



The Little Mermaid

*A play in two acts by
Linda Daugherty*

*Based on the fairy tale by
Hans Christian Andersen*

The Little Mermaid

Fairy tale. Adapted by Linda Daugherty. From the story by Hans Christian Andersen. Cast: 4m., 5w., with doubling, or up to 17 (5m., 9w., 3 either gender) with the option for some roles to be played by children. Delightful inventions, reverberating with the ecology of land and ocean, render exciting and newly relevant in this adaptation of Hans Christian Andersen's classic fairy tale. In the harmonious world of merpeople, the little mermaid Pearl dreams of the world above. Her sisters Luna and Coral, her father, Anemone the Sea King, and her grandmother, the Great Mother, warn her of dangers above. But Pearl, in love with the handsome prince whose life she saved, trades her voice to the Sea Witch to become human. After the Sea Witch is vanquished by her twin sister, the Great Mother, Pearl regains her voice, marries the prince, and happiness and harmony prevail. Simple set suggesting four locales. Fairy tale costumes with masks. Approximate running time: 90 minutes. Code: LF9.

ISBN-13: 978-0-87602-330-3



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The Little Mermaid



Dramatic Publishing

311 Washington St.

Woodstock, IL 60098-330

Phone: (800) 448-7469

www.dramaticpublishing.com

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"The Little Mermaid premiered at the Dallas Children's Theater on September 27, 1991."

The Little Mermaid premiered at the Dallas Children's Theater on September 27, 1991, where it was directed by Dennis Vincent. In this production, the roles of the GREAT MOTHER and the SEA WITCH were played by the same actress. The character of the SEA WITCH was masked. When both the GREAT MOTHER and the SEA WITCH appeared together in Act II, the SEA WITCH was performed by the actress who played CORAL.

In the Dallas Children's Theater production, the role of PUFFER, the fish, was played by a child and another character played by a child - SEAHORSE - was added. These characters were used in underwater scenes and for transitions.

Original Cast List

QUENBY BAKKE	Pearl, The Little Mermaid
LLOYD BARNES	The Sea King
LINN DAUGHERTY, LAUREN MUNGER	Seahorse, the Sea Horse
TOM HOEFER	Sailor/Eel
JOEL KEITH JOHNSON	Prince Stefan
DAVID JOY	Yorick
DEBI MCGILL	Anemone/Maid
NANCY MUNGER	Sea Witch/Great Mother
BILLY POOLE	Sailor/Eel
RONDA ROBERTS-BARNETT	Luna/Maid
NATALIE ROSS	Coral
MORGANA SHAW	Princess Marianna
MOLLY ZALE, GILLETTE HUGHES	Puffer, the Fish

Cast of Characters

PEARL, THE LITTLE MERMAID..... The youngest of four Mermaid sisters. The beautiful PEARL dreams of the world above. She is adventurous and good-hearted with a beautiful laughing voice .

LUNA..... The eldest Mermaid sister, LUNA is studious, serious and responsible.

CORAL..... The second born, CORAL is feisty, fun-loving and interested in handsome Mermen.

ANEMONE..... The third daughter of the SEA KING, ANEMONE is emotional, excitable and sensitive.

SEA KING..... Father of the four Mermaid sisters and son of GREAT MOTHER, the SEA KING is strong, kind and wise. He wants happiness for his daughters.

GREAT MOTHER..... Grandmother of the Mermaid sisters and mother of the SEA KING. GREAT MOTHER is sympathetic, wise, warm and brave.

YORICK..... Lifelong manservant of PRINCE STEFAN, YORICK is excitable and good-hearted.

THE SAILORS,
WILLIAM and TIMOTHY..... Young, strong, agreeable and energetic.

<u>PRINCE STEFAN</u>	PRINCE STEFAN is handsome, truthful, brave and kind.
PRINCESS MARIANNA (<u>THE MAIDEN</u>)	Young, pretty and gentle, PRINCESS MARIANNA hopes for happiness for everyone.
<u>SEA WITCH</u>	The SEA WITCH is selfish, vindictive and volatile - an evil force with supernatural powers.
<u>PUFFER</u>	A fish playmate of THE LITTLE MERMAID, played by SAILOR WILLIAM
<u>EELS</u>	Servants of the SEA WITCH, played by the SAILORS, WILLIAM and TIMOTHY.
<u>MAIDS</u>	Servants of PRINCE STEFAN, played by LUNA and ANEMONE

For Linn, Evan, Paul and Mother.

THE LITTLE MERMAID

ACT I

Scene 1

SETTING: A beautiful, blue, underwater world in the happy domain of the Merpeople. In their safe coral reef lights shimmer, lacy fans of seaweed sway and bubbles float up to the surface.

AT RISE: Ocean sounds in darkness: waves crash, whales sing and water bubbles. Lights up on four young Mermaids with long flowing hair. LUNA and ANEMONE are listening attentively to CORAL who reads to them from a large ornate scroll. The three SISTERS are draped on shelves of the coral reef, their tails moving to accent their conversation. PEARL, THE LITTLE MERMAID, daydreams while swinging in a seaweed draped swing.

CORAL: *(Reading from the Great Scroll)* "And thus it was for millions and billions of tides that the Merpeople all lived happily together and the great oceans remained unexplored. But on a certain day early in time a large new fish swam into their waters. And the Third Great King of the Merpeople grew curious and sent out explorers farther and still farther into unknown waters. And that is how our Merforefathers came to this happy place." *(Bored)* Fascinating. May we take a little rest, dear Luna?

LUNA: We have not finished our lesson, Coral. But here, little Pearl. Today you will read from the Great Scroll.

THE LITTLE MERMAID: Me? But I ...

LUNA: Read slowly and carefully.

THE LITTLE MERMAID: Me?

ANEMONE: Come, dear Pearl, read. You have such a lovely voice.

CORAL: Very true, Anemone. And while you read, the rest of us will have a little nap.

LUNA: *(Disapprovingly)* Coral!

CORAL: Really, Luna, I'm all ears. *(Yawning)* Begin, little Mermaid.

ANEMONE: Do, little sister.

LUNA: Read us the story of our ancestors.

THE LITTLE MERMAID: *(Nervous and excited, SHE reads from the scroll.)* "When our great, great, great, great, great grandfather Neptune..." My, that was a long time ago! Great, great, great, great, great!

LUNA: Without interruption. Begin again.

THE LITTLE MERMAID: "When our great, great, great, great, great grandfather Neptune first swam to this ocean basin bringing his family and a small band of Merpeople in search of open waters and warmer currents, he brought two of every species to populate these waters." Two? Why two?

(SISTERS giggle and exchange looks.)

LUNA/CORAL/ANEMONE: Continue!

THE LITTLE MERMAID: "Reefs grew where there had been only empty ocean. Forests of sea fans flourished. Clam groves grew. Schools of tiny silver fish multiplied to delight the new settlers. These Merpeople created a world of beauty and sustenance for their new underwater home.

THE LITTLE MERMAID: In those happy days long ago, Merpeople safely rode the warm currents and freely ventured on...
(Amazed)land!"

CORAL: What?!

ANEMONE: Land?!

LUNA: Let me see that! (SHE takes scroll from THE LITTLE MERMAID.)

THE LITTLE MERMAID: Land?!

ANEMONE: Out of the water, Luna? Can it be?

LUNA: Let me read it again. "In those happy days ... warm currents ... freely ventured on ... land!"

THE LITTLE MERMAID: Land!

CORAL: Merpeople on land? That's impossible.

LUNA: I didn't write this, Coral. I just read it.

ANEMONE: Incredible!

THE LITTLE MERMAID: (Overcome) On land? How wonderful! (Not believing) It must be a fairy tale.

ANEMONE: No, little Pearl, it must be true. The history of our people is recorded in the Great Scroll.

LUNA: Yes, now pay attention. Our father wants us to understand our past ...

CORAL: (Irritated) ... so that we may prepare for our future. I know, I know.

ANEMONE: Read on, Luna. I'm sure the Great Scroll will explain why land is no place now for Merpeople.

THE LITTLE MERMAID: (*Dreamily*) Once Merpeople ventured on land ...

CORAL: Don't even think of it, Pearl. That was back in the dark ages, if it happened at all.

ANEMONE: And you're too little to think of such things.

LUNA: When you're eighteen, you'll go to the surface. It's all part of your education. But it's risky business, too.

ANEMONE: I'm sure you'll find the ocean floor more to your liking. I haven't bothered to go to the surface in months.

THE LITTLE MERMAID: I dream of the day when I can go above.

LUNA: Daydream after we finish our lesson. I will continue.

THE LITTLE MERMAID: Yes, please read more, Luna. Tell me why Merpeople no longer visit land. Please.

LUNA: (*Reading*) "Our world below was happy and prosperous for many years, but above the surface the peaceful world began to change. No longer were the coasts dotted with small fishing boats. The inventions of humans- their greed and aggressive natures-drove us gentle Merpeople deeper and deeper."

(*The SEA KING enters unnoticed by his daughters.*)

LUNA: (*Continued*) "And soon man had created a world ..."

(*The SEA KING joins in with LUNA.*)

LUNA/SEA KING: "... in which we Merpeople were no longer welcome."

THE LITTLE MERMAID: (*Delighted to see him*) Father!

SEA KING: *(HE continues quoting from the Great Scroll.)* "Great sailing ships brought 'progress' to the world above and the end to our part in it."

LUNA: *(Whispering to CORAL and ANEMONE)* Look!
(Pointing at scroll) He knows every word!

SEA KING: *(Continuing to quote from the Great Scroll)* "Great ships cast out their devouring nets. Humans began making war on the water, feverishly trading goods from coast to coast, and emptying the ocean of its riches."

THE LITTLE MERMAID: Welcome, Father!

LUNA: Father, you know every word!

SEA KING: As you will soon.

CORAL: *(Unhappy at the prospect)* Every word?

THE LITTLE MERMAID: Father, were we really once on land?

SEA KING: That was a long time ago. A time beyond memory. Only these words tell us it was so. Perhaps in another time it will be possible again, but now we have a graver problem. Stay close to home - - inside the reef and below the surface. There's trouble near and I will not have one of my darlings lost to those who do not share our vision.

ANEMONE: What do you mean, Father?

SEA KING: There is an unnatural restlessness near our waters. The tiny, silver angelfish have left their hatching grounds. Those gentle ones, most sensitive of all ocean beings, sense danger. *(HE continues with difficulty.)* Flashes of electricity were sighted.

LUNA: *(Disgusted)* The eels ...

SEA KING: And sharks were reported swimming round and round - -
(*The MERMAIDS swim back and forth in terror.*)

CORAL: Sharks!

THE LITTLE MERMAID: Oh, no!

(*The MERMAIDS rush to the SEA KING.*)

SEA KING: Those hideous creatures who never sleep, devouring the beautiful and the ugly with no thought or shame.

(*There is an ominous rumble.*)

(*Whispering*) She is near ...

LUNA: What is it, Father?

SEA KING: She is near. The Sea Witch. She is in our waters. I knew one day she would return. Where there is harmony, she will bring chaos.

THE LITTLE MERMAID: The Sea Witch? Who is she, Father?

SEA KING: She is darkness, little Mermaid, and loneliness. She is the one who claims to answer all prayers but only destroys all dreams. A long time ago, she chose a different path. And we must again be rid of her.

ANEMONE: Oh, Father, I'm frightened.

CORAL: Are we in danger?

SEA KING: Stay together and all will be well. I go now to my mother for her counsel.

THE LITTLE MERMAID: Let me come with you to see Great Mother.

SEA KING: This in not the time. Take care, my beautiful daughters. Now back to your lessons. Hear the beauty of the Great Scroll and know they are the loving words of your ancestors. (*Seriously*) And remember - a great wave of darkness is near. (*SEA KING exits.*)

CORAL: Sharks and eels. Disgusting.

THE LITTLE MERMAID: Father will protect us.

ANEMONE: My head is swimming.

LUNA: Lets us keep our heads. I will continue reading. May I have your attention?

ANEMONE: Of course, Luna.

CORAL: Sharks and eels ... ugh. (*SHE shivers in disgust.*)

ANEMONE: (*Irritated with CORAL's interruption*) Read on, Luna.

THE LITTLE MERMAID: Merpeople on land. Just think of it!

CORAL/LUNA/ANEMONE: Sshh!

END OF SCENE I

Act I

Scene 2

AT RISE: A round PUFFER fish enters and swims around the reef. THE LITTLE MERMAID enters and chases PUFFER. THEY play "Hide and Seek," unaware THEY are climbing higher and higher on the rock formation. THE LITTLE MERMAID catches PUFFER. IT squeals like a little pig. SHE pets PUFFER gently and then lets IT go. IT dashes off. SHE laughs at PUFFER'S frantic exit.

THE LITTLE MERMAID: Go, little fish. I will catch you for a ride another time. *(SHE lies back on the rocks to catch her breath and notices the golden light on her arms and face.)* Warm ... so warm ... the light is warm ... and beautiful. It comes from above. I am closer than I've ever been to the light. *(SHE climbs higher and reaches up as if touching the roof.)* The surface of the water! I am near the surface. And the warmth, the light we see in our world below, must come from that great, round ball.

(SHE moves in and out of the light, enjoying its warmth. GREAT MOTHER enters and watches. Her long hair is tied in a large knot that drags along the floor.)

If I swam to the surface, I could just push my hand through and then I would feel ... *(Searching for the word)* ... air! The world where humans live.

(The yellow light flickers.)

Look, a great white fish above like one I've never seen, gliding across the golden ball with ... large flapping fins. *(SHE waves her arms like a flying bird.)* I must feel the air and the warmth. I want to see this beautiful fish.

GREAT MOTHER: It's called a bird, my dear.

THE LITTLE MERMAID: (*Startled*) Great Mother - -

GREAT MOTHER: And it doesn't swim. It flies.

THE LITTLE MERMAID: I didn't mean to be outside the reef. I was chasing a beautiful puffer and ...

GREAT MOTHER: It's warm, isn't it, the closer you are to that yellow sun of theirs.

THE LITTLE MERMAID: So warm and beautiful. Oh, Great Mother, Luna read from the Great Scroll about Merpeople on land. How can I wait? Everything I want to see, to know, lives in the world above me.

GREAT MOTHER: We must be careful of our adventures with the Sea Witch in our waters. She understands too well the happy souls of Merpeople.

THE LITTLE MERMAID: I can't help it. I'm pulled to the surface like the tides.

GREAT MOTHER: You remind me of someone ... And do you think the world above is more beautiful, happier?

THE LITTLE MERMAID: No one understands how I feel.

GREAT MOTHER: You don't think so? I remember one long, happy summer when I spent every moment above the surface.

THE LITTLE MERMAID: You?

GREAT MOTHER: Why do the young think they are the only ones with secrets?

THE LITTLE MERMAID: Tell me your secrets of their world ... please.

GREAT MOTHER: And if I do, Pearl, will you learn from my experience?

THE LITTLE MERMAID: Yes! Yes! Tell me of the world above. (*SHE goes to GREAT MOTHER and lays her head in her lap.*)

GREAT MOTHER: Can we ever understand anything we have not lived ourselves? All right, my dear Pearl ... One lovely dawn, two hundred or more summers ago, when the sun first appeared in the sky, I broke through the surface and came upon a little boat.

THE LITTLE MERMAID: Boat?

GREAT MOTHER: Boats keep humans above the water, safe in their air, for they cannot breath water as we do. They would die. Suddenly with no warning, a fishing boy caught me in his net. I struggled. Our eyes met. His heart melted with my screams and he set me free. All that long, slow summer I swam round and round the little boat as he cast out his nets. We talked of all things. When he was sad, salt water drops fell from his eyes. He had the ocean in his heart. I loved him. But winter came and he did not return in spring.

THE LITTLE MERMAID: A fish boy?

GREAT MOTHER: A fishing boy. Without fins.

THE LITTLE MERMAID: Without? But ...

GREAT MOTHER: Look at your arms, able to grab and hold and touch. Where we have fins, humans have two - -

THE LITTLE MERMAID: (*Interrupting*) Two! Then humans must look like the octopus.

GREAT MOTHER: (*Laughing*) They are more beautiful than any octopus. Their faces and hands, hair, eyes, mouth, just like our own. Half of us mirrors humans.

THE LITTLE MERMAID: But what do these two "tentacles" do? These ... (*SHE does not know what to call them.*)

GREAT MOTHER: "Legs," humans say. They carry them from place to place in a world where the atmosphere is lighter. No floating, gliding, diving up and down. Humans must walk or run on the earth.

THE LITTLE MERMAID: Oh, I want to see!

GREAT MOTHER: You will see this and more for only your own eyes can tell you the truth, but not now. You are still too young to go to the world above the sea, my dear Pearl, and it is dangerous now outside our reef. You will see wonderful things ... heart-breaking things. But you must not go to the surface until your eighteenth birthday.

THE LITTLE MERMAID: Great Mother, what would have happened if the fishing boy had returned that spring?

GREAT MOTHER: I do not know. Perhaps he was wiser than I. I've told you a secret, Pearl, to help you understand that things can happen above the water for which you are not ready. Remember, dear, life below the surface has brought happiness to our people for thousands of years. And you have many gifts for happiness ... your heart, your mind, your beauty ...

(THE LITTLE MERMAID laughs, embarrassed.)

... your laughing voice. Come kiss me, dear. *(SHE kisses THE LITTLE MERMAID.)* Now go back to the reef and play with your sisters.

THE LITTLE MERMAID: Yes, Great Mother. *(SHE starts to go and turns back.)* Great Mother, I will remember. *(The LITTLE MERMAID exits.)*

GREAT MOTHER: Can we ever understand anything we have not lived ourselves? So like me. Circumstances saved my life, but I would not have had it so. I swam round and round that lagoon waiting for my fishing boy. I was so young.