

# Excerpt terms and conditions



This excerpt is available to assist you in the play selection process.

You may view, print and download any of our excerpts for perusal purposes.

Excerpts are not intended for performance, classroom or other academic use. In any of these cases you will need to purchase playbooks via our website or by phone, fax or mail.

A short excerpt is not always indicative of the entire work, and we strongly suggest reading the whole play before planning a production or ordering a cast quantity.

*Dramatic Publishing*

*Colorized covers are for web display only. Most covers are printed in black and white.*

# **All I Really Need to Know I Learned by Being in a Bad Play**

**One-act comedy  
by  
Werner Trieschmann**

# All I Really Need to Know I Learned by Being in a Bad Play

**Comedy. By Werner Trieschmann. Cast: 3m., 3w., 11 either gender, expandable.** Based on several disastrous theatrical experiences, *Bad Play* peels back a tattered curtain to examine the process of putting on a show that is less than good. A stuffy narrator (what bad play is complete without a stuffy narrator?) guides the audience through the whole sorry process. We go from the audition—where the director is more worried about roast beef than paying attention to the warm-up exercise, and the neurotic cast pretends to be bacon—to rehearsals—where a passive-aggressive stage manager gives everyone grief. There's also a special meeting of the Small Part Support Group and a production of *Romeo and Juliet* set in a Starbucks with costumes of potato sacks and bowler hats. This bad play within a play won't win any awards, but *All I Really Need to Know I Learned by Being in a Bad Play* will keep audiences in stitches. **Simple set. Approximate running time: 45 minutes. Code: AC7.**

Cover design: Jeanette Alig-Sergel

ISBN-10 1-58342-608-6  
ISBN-13 978-1-58342-608-1



02008

9 781583 426081

[www.dramaticpublishing.com](http://www.dramaticpublishing.com)



*Dramatic Publishing*

311 Washington St.  
Woodstock, IL 60098  
ph: 800-448-7469



Printed on recycled paper

# **All I Really Need to Know I Learned by Being in a Bad Play**

By

WERNER TRIESCHMANN



**Dramatic Publishing**

Woodstock, Illinois • England • Australia • New Zealand

\*\*\* NOTICE \*\*\*

The amateur and stock acting rights to this work are controlled exclusively by THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY without whose permission in writing no performance of it may be given. Royalty must be paid every time a play is performed whether or not it is presented for profit and whether or not admission is charged. A play is performed any time it is acted before an audience. Current royalty rates, applications and restrictions may be found at our website: [www.dramaticpublishing.com](http://www.dramaticpublishing.com), or we may be contacted by mail at: DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY, 311 Washington St., Woodstock IL 60098.

COPYRIGHT LAW GIVES THE AUTHOR OR THE AUTHOR'S AGENT THE EXCLUSIVE RIGHT TO MAKE COPIES. This law provides authors with a fair return for their creative efforts. Authors earn their living from the royalties they receive from book sales and from the performance of their work. Conscientious observance of copyright law is not only ethical, it encourages authors to continue their creative work. This work is fully protected by copyright. No alterations, deletions or substitutions may be made in the work without the prior written consent of the publisher. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, videotape, film, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher. It may not be performed either by professionals or amateurs without payment of royalty. All rights, including, but not limited to, the professional, motion picture, radio, television, videotape, foreign language, tabloid, recitation, lecturing, publication and reading, are reserved.

For performance of any songs, music and recordings mentioned in this play which are in copyright, the permission of the copyright owners must be obtained or other songs and recordings in the public domain substituted.

©MMVIII by  
WERNER TRIESCHMANN  
Printed in the United States of America  
*All Rights Reserved*  
(ALL I REALLY NEED TO KNOW I LEARNED BY BEING IN A  
BAD PLAY)

ISBN: 978-1-58342-608-1

## **IMPORTANT BILLING AND CREDIT REQUIREMENTS**

All producers of the play *must* give credit to the author of the play in all programs distributed in connection with performances of the play and in all instances in which the title of the play appears for purposes of advertising, publicizing or otherwise exploiting the play and/or a production. The name of the author *must* also appear on a separate line, on which no other name appears, immediately following the title, and *must* appear in size of type not less than fifty percent (50%) the size of the title type. Biographical information on the author, if included in the playbook, may be used in all programs. *In all programs this notice must appear:*

“Produced by special arrangement with  
THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY of Woodstock, Illinois”

**AUTHOR'S NOTE:** I worry about this play. I don't worry that it's not funny or that audiences won't enjoy it. I worry that it looks easy to do. I know what you're saying, "C'mon, this is a modern-day, huge-cast comedy with a simple set. It ain't Shakespeare." I so agree. HOWEVER, earning laughs with one or two people is hard enough but toss in a whole mess of actors and you are talking about a real challenge. I believe that comedy is timing, sharing and stillness. The enemy of comedy is the opposite of those three things. This play has lots of moments where actors could hog the spotlight, mug their way through scenes and step on their fellow actors' lines. Resist those urges. Take pride in setting up a joke so somebody else can deliver the punchline. It is always true but doubly so for this little hopefully screamingly funny play: less is more. What else? Oh yeah, knock 'em dead!

# All I Really Need to Know I Learned by Being in a Bad Play

## **CHARACTERS:**

ACTORS – A group of actors

NARRATOR

FLAPJACK

DIRECTOR

DIRECTOR'S INNER VOICE

ACTOR'S INNER VOICE

ROMEO

JULIET

COUNSELOR

BILL

SAMANTHA

KELLY

FRANCIS

WARMUP COACH

TERRY

TYBALT

USHER

KAY

**TIME:** Showtime.

**PLACE:** A basically empty stage of whatever flavor you happen to have handy.



**SETTING:** A podium set off on one side of the stage. Scattered about are a few chairs or simple black boxes that can be turned into different objects.

**CAST NOTE:** The generic term **ACTOR** is used to describe a cast member that can be either male or female. The lines given to **ACTOR** can be assigned to whoever and however you wish. A character with a specific name such as **FLAPJACK** or **DIRECTOR** should be given to single actor (however, the **DIRECTOR**, **COUNSELOR**, etc., can be one of the **ACTORS** should you need to double these roles). In almost every case, these parts can be cast with males or females, so feel free to change pronouns whenever necessary.

## **All I Really Need to Know I Learned by Being in a Bad Play**

*(Lights up on the stage. There is a podium off to one side of the stage. ACTORS are standing or sitting around the stage—that is, hanging out. The NARRATOR walks in and stands at the podium. He notices the ACTORS aren't paying attention. He clears his throat or taps the podium until they all are watching him.)*

NARRATOR. Welcome. The question I would like to address in this forum today is, “How do we learn in this life?” Of course there is formal education. The august institutions of higher learning are where our finest minds apply themselves to the rigors of how to get into a fraternity and make fake I.D.s. There are also vocational programs where you can study air conditioning repair and then proceed to make more money than God. Or you could forget all of that and raise alpacas. However, what I will address in our time here today are life lessons. These are quite significant. For instance, I think we can all agree that if somebody happens to warn you a pot is hot...

*(An ACTOR carries in or wheels in on a tray a large steel pot that has steam coming out of it. The ACTOR stops or puts the pot down.)*

ACTOR *(to the other ACTORS)*. Watch it. This is hot!

NARRATOR. It doesn't quite make the same impact if you touch that same pot and burn your hand.

*(An ACTOR walks up and touches the pot.)*

ACTOR. Ow!

NARRATOR. See, that's a lesson with bite. That's one you'll never forget.

*(The ACTOR touches the pot again.)*

ACTOR. Wow! That is really hot!

*(The rest of the ACTORS rush in to touch the pot. All of them burn their hands and have a corresponding exclamation such as "Ochie!" "Dang!" "Rassafratsen!" and such. [This needs to happen fairly quickly].)*

NARRATOR. Another lesson. There are certain kinds of people who never learn.

FLAPJACK. I am going to lick it.

*(The other ACTORS grab FLAPJACK before he sticks his tongue on the pot.)*

FLAPJACK *(disappointed)*. Aww, flapjacks!

NARRATOR. As I was saying, there are certain people who never learn. We call them actors.

*(All ACTORS now wave and bow, acknowledging the audience and hamming it up.)*

ACTORS. Thank you! Yes! Hi! Heyo!

NARRATOR. Yes, so the point I will make to you today is that the theater happens to be a place where we learn many life lessons. Or, in other words...

ACTORS. All I Really Need to Know I Learned by Being in a Bad Play!

NARRATOR. Yes. And now—

ACTORS. All I Really Need to Know I Learned by Being in a Bad Play!

NARRATOR *(annoyed)*. Yes, I believe they heard you. So let's move—

FLAPJACK. All I Really Need to Know— *(NARRATOR glares at FLAPJACK)*. Aww, flapjacks!

NARRATOR. Yes. So. How does a bad play begin?

ACTOR. With a train wreck!

ACTOR. With a lot of monkeys running around!

ACTOR. With a Ferris wheel on fire!

ACTOR. With a narrator.

ACTOR. Oh yeah, that's one way.

ACTOR. Boy, there are some stinky plays with narrators.

ACTOR. What a lame device.

ACTOR. Like they come out all, you know, stuffy and probably stand in front of a podium. "How do we learn in this life, bladey, bladey, blah..."

NARRATOR *(glaring at ACTOR)*. Ahem. Anybody with sense knows that a bad play begins with a bad director.

*(Turns and looks at the ACTORS.)* I said, “a bad play begins with a bad director.”

ACTOR. Oh. Sorry.

*(The ACTOR shoves the DIRECTOR toward the NARRATOR.)*

NARRATOR. Here’s our director. *(The DIRECTOR waves at the audience and smiles.)* The director is never happy. *(The DIRECTOR stops smiling.)* Directors, as a rule, prefer to suffer for their art. Which is a good thing because that’s exactly what they do—suffer. They also wear a beret.

*(One of the ACTORS finds a beret and slaps it on the DIRECTOR’s head.)*

DIRECTOR *(taking off the beret)*. Hey! I look like an idiot wearing this!

NARRATOR. Tough cookies. *(The ACTOR shoves the beret back on the DIRECTOR’s head.)* Ever since early man performed the rudimentary choral odes and dialogue that would form the basis of the very first plays, the idea of theater was to communicate man’s condition to his fellow man, to have an honest reflection of what it is like to live on this earth at this point in time. What’s interesting is how each play since that time has begun with a series of big fat lies. The first lie is called the audition.

*(DIRECTOR now finds a chair and sits. Now DIRECTOR’S INNER VOICE, wearing a sign saying “DIREC-*

*TOR'S INNER VOICE," appears and stands beside the DIRECTOR.*

*An ACTOR appears. Then the ACTOR'S INNER VOICE, wearing a sign that says "ACTOR'S INNER VOICE," walks up and stands beside the ACTOR.)*

DIRECTOR. Hello. I'm the director. Thank you for auditioning today.

DIRECTOR'S INNER VOICE. Hello, I'm the idiot who volunteered his precious time to ride herd over this army of cats, God help me.

ACTOR. Sure. When I saw the poster for the show, I knew I had to audition.

ACTOR'S INNER VOICE. Cast me! Cast me! CAST ME!

DIRECTOR. Great. What will you be doing for us today?

DIRECTOR'S INNER VOICE. Please God don't let it be Blanche/Stanley from *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

ACTOR. Blanche/Stanley from *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

ACTOR'S INNER VOICE. Cast me! Cast me! CAST ME!

DIRECTOR. Great. Take your time. Whenever you're ready.

DIRECTOR'S INNER VOICE. Please for the love of God hurry. Have you seen how many people are waiting outside to audition?

ACTOR'S INNER VOICE. I'll do some vocal warmups to show how professional I am.

ACTOR. Meeemaaamooowwmeemaaamooowwww.

ACTOR'S INNER VOICE. Castmeeeeecastmeeeeecastmeeee.

DIRECTOR'S INNER VOICE. Killmeeeeenooooowkill-meeeeenowwww.

DIRECTOR. OK. We ready?

DIRECTOR'S INNER VOICE. I already know you are only appropriate for a palace guard.

ACTOR. Sure.

*(The ACTOR mimes the monologue, speaking but nothing coming out. Needless to say, the ACTOR is acting up a storm. The DIRECTOR, meanwhile, has a big fake smile plastered on his face.)*

ACTOR'S INNER VOICE. This is going great. He seems really to like what I am doing.

DIRECTOR'S INNER VOICE. I wonder if there's any roast beef left at the house.

ACTOR'S INNER VOICE. Oh now I am really going to wow him. *(The ACTOR is down on his knees pounding the floor.)*

DIRECTOR'S INNER VOICE. Oh God, don't pound the floor.

ACTOR'S INNER VOICE. Behold as I pound the floor!

DIRECTOR'S INNER VOICE. All right, De Niro (Strep) time to wrap it up.

ACTOR'S INNER VOICE. I'm getting to the end, need to really have a big finish. *(The ACTOR is really gesticulating, overacting to beat the band. The DIRECTOR yawns.)* Hey, is he yawning? *(The DIRECTOR looks at his watch.)* Hey, is he looking at his watch? *(The DIRECTOR pulls out a calculator and starts punching numbers.)* Hey, is he doing his taxes!?

ACTOR *(wraps up his monologue with a flourish)*. That's it.

DIRECTOR. OK, thank you. Thank you very much.

ACTOR. Sure, not a problem.

DIRECTOR. That was interesting.

ACTOR. Oh. OK.

ACTOR'S INNER VOICE. Interesting! Oh my GOD, did you hear that? He said interesting! He wouldn't say interesting unless he loved me! He's going to cast me! Probably in the lead! Yes, he'll give me the lead AND a great character part. Wow! Double cast! That's a bold move. That might make some of the other actors jealous, but that's OK. They'll see that it was the best thing to do for the play. I think it was the pounding on the floor that sold him. He said interesting!

ACTOR. You know I have another couple of minutes I could do.

ACTOR'S INNER VOICE. I can give you more interesting!

DIRECTOR'S INNER VOICE. I'd rather be chewed on by rabid dogs.

DIRECTOR. I wish I could see more, but I have so many others to see today.

ACTOR'S INNER VOICE. You don't want more interesting?

DIRECTOR. Oh, wait, I wanted to ask. You mentioned on your bio sheet that if you weren't cast you'd be willing to be a stage manager.

ACTOR. Um. Yes. But, um, you said—

DIRECTOR. So yes? Great. Thank you. We'll be in touch. OK, who's next?

ACTOR'S INNER VOICE. Stage manager?

NARRATOR. So, as you can see, the audition process is—

ACTOR. Hey, that wasn't really nice.

NARRATOR. Your point?



ACTOR. That...wasn't nice! To show the actor up there acting his heart out and the director is worried about roast beef. What's the lesson in that? That the theater is cruel and life is unfair?

NARRATOR. Um. Yes.

ACTOR. You sure are a mean ol' narrator.

NARRATOR. I am only explicating the lessons that come from being in a less than good play.

ACTOR. I will have you know it's quite traumatic to audition. Standing on stage all by yourself. Your heart is racing and you feel like you've been chewing sawdust. And then when it's over you go through all that stress and anxiety of waiting to hear...

*(An ACTOR walks in.)*

ACTOR. Did you go to the lobby? Is the cast list out?

ACTOR. Yes I did and there was a piece of paper up—

ACTOR. AND?!

ACTOR. It was some security notice about a murderer being loose on campus.

ACTOR. Argghh. Why is this taking FOREVER?

ACTOR. It's like a glacier.

FLAPJACK. Yeah, I'm cold too.

ACTOR. No, Flapjack, it's slow.

*(An ACTOR runs up holding a piece of paper.)*

ACTOR. Here's the cast list! I've got it!

*(All ACTORS converge and check out the cast list.)*

ROMEO. Romeo! Awesome!

*(The new ROMEO peels off from the crowd still checking out the list.)*

JULIET. Juliet. Sweet!

*(The new JULIET turns and looks at the new ROMEO. The two instantly fall in love and stare at each other with great passion.)*

ACTOR. I'm a Capulet!

ACTOR. I'm a Montequé.

*(Half of the ACTORS stand behind JULIET and pull her away from ROMEO and the other half stand behind ROMEO and pull him away from JULIET.)*

ACTOR *(to NARRATOR)*. No. It's not traumatic to be cast as Romeo or Juliet! It's traumatic to be cast as...

FLAPJACK *(holding the cast list)*. Palace guard number five. Aww, flapjacks!

ACTOR *(to NARRATOR)*. To be cast in a small role can scar a person.

FLAPJACK. And you can't always get over the rejection by eating a lot of pancakes.

*(ALL turn and stare at FLAPJACK.)*

ACTOR. Sometimes you have to have professional help.

*(All the ACTORS put the chairs and boxes into a circle. An ACTOR walks out and puts up a sign that reads, "Small Part Support Group. Meeting today.")*

COUNSELOR *(standing up)*. OK, I think we can go ahead and get started. I first want to welcome you all to the Small Part Support Group. There are tiny cups of orange juice in the back if you want something to drink. We also have donut holes.

BILL. Are there any regular-size donuts?

COUNSELOR. No. The purpose of the Small Part Support Group is to come together in a safe environment to talk about the shame we all feel in being cast in ridiculously small roles. Who would like to share first?

*(SAMANTHA stands up.)*

SAMANTHA. Hi. My name is Samantha.

GROUP. Hi Samantha.

SAMANTHA. I wasn't sure if I could come here today.

This is so embarrassing. But I played...I was cast as...

COUNSELOR. Go ahead. You are with other actors who have had absurdly small roles.

SAMANTHA. In a school presentation about tooth decay I was cast as a piece of...celery!

COUNSELOR. Oh dear.

SAMANTHA. The lead role was the tooth with a cavity. That was a great part! That tooth got to sing a song and cry about being pulled!

COUNSELOR. We appreciate the courage it takes to share this.

BILL. Did you have any lines?