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Wiggle Worm’s Surprise

From the celebrated Paper Bag Players of New York comes this Christmas mini-musical, all about the most unlikely hero in the forest.

Christmas fantasy. Book by Judith Martin. Music by Donald Ashwander. Cast: 7 either gender, or use as many actors as you wish. Wiggle Worm, the cheerful sprite of the woods, tickles the winter roots of his forest friends, waking them to song and laughter. Two woodcutters arrive to cut Christmas trees. This is Wiggle Worm’s finest hour. The woodland entertainer devises a strategy that saves the forest and all ends in the merriest Christmas ever. Ecology was never so charmingly dramatized. Characters are trees, rocks, piles of leaves, Wiggle Worm and two woodcutters. Costumes match the names and with them you require no scenery. Music in book. Created for in-school performance. Code: WC8

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**A Contemporary Christmas Play**

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Play by
JUDITH MARTIN

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

BIG TREE
LITTLE TREE
A BIG PILE OF LEAVES
ROCK
WIGGLE WORM
BIG WOODCUTTER
LITTLE WOODCUTTER

The cast can be expanded easily by the addition of more Trees, Rocks, Piles of Leaves and Woodcutters.

SETTING

A FOREST

COSTUMES

The Trees can wear brown garments to suggest their trunks, and tie branches of evergreens, such as pine branches, to their bodies and hold branches in their hands. Or, they could wear cardboard pine trees, cut from cartons and painted green, with openings for the actor’s face. The rock could sit on the floor inside a burlap or huge brown paper bag, or in a big piece of wrapping paper; cut an opening for the face. A Big Pile of Leaves might wear a paper poncho, painted with leaves or pasted with paper leaves, with a hole for the face.

Wiggle Worm can wear a long striped jersey garment made of two turtlenecked jersey tops. Cut off the neck and sleeves of one jersey and sew it to the first jersey to create an ankle length tube. Pull turtleneck up to form a hood. Or, the Wiggle Worm could wear a long hooded cotton jersey in a bright color. The Woodcutters wear bright plaid shirts, or lumber jackets with trousers, boots and caps to make them look big and burly.

SCENERY

No scenery is needed in this play since the costumes of the cast of characters create the scene of a forest. If a more ambitious production is planned, one could get some big boxes, paint trees on them and set them behind the characters to give the feeling of a very dense forest.

(The scene opens in THE FOREST, which is created by the cast standing very still in their costumes.)
BIG TREE: It's quiet.

LITTLE TREE: It's cold.

ROCK: It's gloomy.

LEAVES: It's raw.

BIG TREE: It's winter!

ROCK: No people.

LITTLE TREES: No picnics.

BIG TREE: It's December!

(In comes WIGGLE WORM, wiggling as he walks.)

WIGGLE WORM: Cheer up everybody. Jokes and songs and laughs are coming your way.

ROCK: Who's that?

LEAVES: What's that?

WIGGLE WORM: You remember me. The life of the party.

TREES: Who is it?

(WIGGLE WORM sings and wiggles as he slithers and dances around the TREES, ROCK and LEAVES. His feet seem to be tickling the roots of the TREES and the bottoms of the ROCK. Half dancing, half stepping, his wiggling body gets a wiggling, ticklish reaction from whomever he is near. Sometimes WIGGLE WORM puts his arm around his friends and actually tickles with his fingers; then his forest friends laugh aloud. The TREES shake, the ROCK rocks and LEAVES twirl.)

WIGGLE WORM:
Tickle on the bottom,
And tickle on the top,
Tickle in the middle,
And laugh a lot!

(All the members of the FOREST join the song.)
Hee, hee, hee, hee,
Ha, ha, ha!
Tickle on the bottom,
And tickle on the top,
Tickle in the middle,
And laugh a lot!

Right side up
And upside down
Giggle, giggle, giggle,
And tunnel underground.

Hee, hee, hee, hee,
Ha, ha, ha!
Tickle on the bottom,
And tickle on the top,
Tickle in the middle,
And laugh a lot!

ENTIRE FOREST: It’s Wiggle Worm. Welcome, Wiggle Worm!

WIGGLE WORM:
Greetings, greetings,
Season’s greetings.
Hello, Trees,
Hello, Rock.

LITTLE TREE: Did my roots need a tickle!

ROCK: I’ve never been so glad to see someone.

LEAVES: You’re exactly what I needed, but what are you doing around here in the dead of winter?

WIGGLE WORM: Just looking for a place to spend Christmas.

LITTLE TREE: But the ground is frozen. How can you tunnel down?

WIGGLE WORM: I can always find a little warm spot somewhere.

BIG TREE: Look here, Wiggle Worm. I personally never thought you were funny.

LITTLE TREE: I did. At that party last summer I nearly split my bark laughing.
ROCK: And I was rocking with laughs.

BIG TREE: You all made a dreadful racket. It was a loud raucous party. Bad enough in the summer. Certainly all wrong for quiet wintertime.

LITTLE TREE: Big Tree, you don’t own this park. It’s public property. And if we feel like having a party . . . we can!

LEAVES: I love to whirl around a little -- and the evergreens look great waving their branches up and down.

BIG TREE: Well, I think you all look silly. A pine forest should be dignified and reserved. As for the Wiggle Worm -- he shouldn’t even be around in the winter. We have enough of him all summer.

WIGGLE WORM: You have hurt my feelings.

LITTLE TREE: Don’t listen to him, Wiggle Worm. Big Tree is a big grouch.

WIGGLE WORM: I’m not staying where I’m not wanted. I’m leaving.

(With exaggerated dignity WIGGLE WORM wiggles away.)

ROCK: (to BIG TREE) Now you’ve done it. There goes all the fun.

(From far away, voices are heard. They are rough and loud.)

WOODCUTTERS’ VOICES:
This way.
Come on.
I saw them over here.

LITTLE TREE: Hey, I hear someone coming.

ROCK: Who could they be at this time of the year?

LEAVES: They’re too noisy for bird watchers.

BIG TREE: Have they got picnic baskets?

ROCK: Is it a class of school children?

LITTLE TREE: Good grief, they’re woodcutters!
(The WOODCUTTERS arrive. They sing their song with lots of gestures to show how big and tough they are.)

WOODCUTTERS:
Chop a tree,
Chop a tree,
Chop, chop, chop a tree.
Chop a tree,
Chop a tree,
Chop a tree down.

Chop a tree,
Chop a tree,
Chop, chop, chop a tree.
Chop a tree,
Chop a tree,
Sell 'em in town.

Trim a limb,
Trim a limb,
Trim, trim, trim a limb.
Trim a limb,
Trim a limb,
To make our pay. We

Chop a tree,
Chop a tree,
Chop, chop, chop a tree.
Chop a tree
To decorate
For Christmas Day.

BIG WOODCUTTER: Here's that nice bunch of trees I told you about.

LITTLE WOODCUTTER: They're beauties. Especially this big one.

BIG WOODCUTTER: We can sell them for lots of money. Let's cut them right down.

LITTLE WOODCUTTER: Wait a minute. This seems like part of the National Forest. No one is allowed to cut these trees without a permit.

BIG WOODCUTTER: Doesn't look like part of a National Forest to me. And I don't see any signs.
LITTLE WOODCUTTER: We'd better find out.

BIG WOODCUTTER: If we waste a lot of time asking questions, we'll miss out on the best time to sell trees. It's almost Christmas now. Come on, let's get the saw and the ax and the ropes.

LITTLE WOODCUTTER: O.K. If you say so.

(WOODCHIPPERS leave to get their equipment.)

LITTLE TREE: What'll we do?

ROCK: I can't believe it!

BIG TREE: But they can't do this to me!

LITTLE TREE: They liked you best of all.

LEAVES: Don't quarrel now. Somebody think of something.

LITTLE TREE: I can't think. I'm too scared.

ROCK: It would be awful to lose our friends the trees. If only Wiggle Worm were here. He could think of something.

BIG TREE: He did have good ideas.

LITTLE TREE: (calling) Wiggle Worm, we need you!

LEAVES: He's probably far away or way underground some place.

LITTLE TREE: Wiggle Worm, wherever you are we need you! Big Tree, you call him — you hurt his feelings.

BIG TREE: Wiggle Worm — We need you!

(WIGGLE WORM comes back.)

WIGGLE WORM: Did I hear someone calling?

LITTLE TREE: Please help us!

WIGGLE WORM: What's your trouble?

BIG TREE: Don't be angry.
WIGGLE WORM: A Wiggle Worm never bears a grudge. What's your problem?

LEAVES: Woodchoppers are here!

WIGGLE WORM: Here?

LITTLE TREE: They're going to cut us down for Christmas trees.

BIG TREE: And at my age!

WIGGLE WORM: They wouldn't dare.

BIG TREE: Yes they would. They went to get their ropes and axes.

LITTLE TREE: I'm so frightened. I can't breathe.

BIG TREE: I'm trembling all over.

LITTLE TREE: I'm losing my needles!

WIGGLE WORM: Calm yourselves, friends.

ROCK: What will you do? They're so big. You're so little.

WIGGLE WORM: Take courage and be prepared for action. I have a plan.

(WIGGLE WORM hides behind ROCK. The WOODCUTTERS come back with their cutting equipment. They are singing their song.)

WOODCUTTERS:
Chop a tree,
Chop a tree,
Chop, chop, chop a tree.
Chop a tree,
Chop a tree,
Chop a tree down.

(WOODCUTTERS put down their ropes and axes.)

LITTLE WOODCUTTER: Whew! This stuff is heavy. Let's sit down for a minute.

BIG WOODCUTTER: I must admit I feel like sitting down myself.

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(They sit on ROCK to rest.)

LITTLE WOODCUTTER: My arms hurt. That's a big ax.

BIG WOODCUTTER: Well, it's a big tree.

LITTLE WOODCUTTER: Are you sure it's all right to cut down these trees?

BIG WOODCUTTER: Stop worrying.

(Now WIGGLE WORM can be seen by the audience, but not by the WOODCUTTERS. They always seem to be looking the wrong way and the WIGGLE WORM is very clever and very quick, now tickling his forest friends, now hiding, then tickling again.)

LITTLE WOODCUTTER: I feel something funny. Is this rock rocking?

BIG WOODCUTTER: No, you're just tired.

(TREES wave their branches, brushing LITTLE WOODCUTTER on the head.)

LITTLE WOODCUTTER: What was that?

BIG WOODCUTTER: Nothing.

(TREES brush BIG WOODCUTTER'S hat.)

LITTLE WOODCUTTER: Say, this place is getting creepy. Let's start work.

(LITTLE WOODCUTTER starts to sing "Chop A Tree." LEAVES brush his face.)

LITTLE WOODCUTTER: Did you feel that?

BIG WOODCUTTER: That's just the leaves blowing in the wind.

LITTLE WOODCUTTER: It didn't feel like wind.

(Soon the whole FOREST is whispering and moving up and down to WIGGLE WORM's song.)
FOREST:
  Tickle on the bottom,
  And tickle on the top,
  Tickle in the middle,
  And laugh a lot!

BIG WOODCUTTER: I hear something strange.

LITTLE WOODCUTTER: I see something strange.

FOREST, ROCK and LEAVES: (shouting)
  Hee, hee, hee, hee.
  Ha, ha, ha!

(The WOODCUTTERS get more and more frightened as the entire FOREST moves and shakes to the rhythm of WIGGLE WORM's song.)

LITTLE WOODCUTTER: Let's get out of here!

(They grab equipment and run.)

BIG WOODCUTTER: Hurry, hurry!

LEAVES: Hurray for Wiggle Worm!

ROCK: Three cheers for Wiggle Worm! You tickled me so hard I thought I'd roll right over.

BIG TREE: I was laughing so hard I nearly fell over.

LITTLE TREE: We certainly scared them. They won't be back in a hurry.

WIGGLE WORM: Come on everybody, it's holiday time. This party's just begun.

EVERYONE:
  We're sooo happy, we're sooo glad
  It's the best Christmas time we've ever had.

BIG TREE: And I'm a hundred years old and I should know.

EVERYONE:
  We're sooo happy, we're sooo glad
  It's the best Christmas time we've ever had.

(As the play ends the FOREST dances and sings to WIGGLE WORM's Song.)

THE END

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