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Family Plays

THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES

A PLAY FOR CHILDREN

dramatized by
Jeanine Dwinell Henry
Meg Bryant Davenport



THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES

A delightful, funny re-telling of the Hans Christian Andersen story. The vain and childish Emperor is duped by two schemers who convince him they can make him a unique suit of clothes that is not only beautiful, but magical—it can only be seen by those who are honest. Afraid he won't be able to see the cloth himself, the Emperor enlists the aid of his two ministers, who complicate matters when they are afraid to admit they cannot see it. This play was designed to travel, but also plays well in a formal theatre. It requires a cast of five actors, male or female, and involves audience participation. Code: E66.

RUNNING TIME: 50 MINUTES

CAST: 5 CHARACTERS WITH OPTION TO ADD EXTRAS.

The play has been performed with an all female cast as well as mixed gender. **SETTING:** Simple, suitable for touring.

PLAYWRIGHTS:

Jeanine Dwinell Henry lives in Cocoa Beach, Florida, with her husband and two children. She holds a M.A. in Theatre from Florida State University and a B.A. in Theatre from Agnes Scott College. She is currently Director of the Junior Players, a division of the youth theatre program at the Titusville Playhouse in Titusville, Florida.

Meg Bryant Davenport lives in Titusville, Florida. She holds a BA in Theatre from Agnes Scott College. From 1989-2003 she served as Technical and Artistic Director for the Titusville Playhouse. She worked with Arts Outreach in Los Olivos, California in 2004, and currently stays home with her three children.

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(THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES)

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“Produced by special arrangement with
Family Plays of Woodstock, Illinois”

ORIGINAL PRODUCTION CREDIT

The Emperor's New Clothes was originally produced by the Utopian Theatre Company in Atlanta, Georgia, and opened on June 18, 1988. The play was directed by Meg Bryant.

Emperor: Jeanine Dwinell
Minister Puckering: Chrissie Lewandowski
Minister Timely: Margaret Shippen
Sylvester Schemes (Sly): Todd Hagstette
Demetrius Witt (Dim): Jeanie Norton

PROFESSIONAL PRODUCTION CREDIT

The Emperor's New Clothes was originally produced professionally by Theatre in the Square in Marietta, Georgia, and opened on July 8, 2002. Palmer Wells was the producer and Susan Reid was the director.

Emperor: Tony Brown
Minister Puckering: Shontelle Thrash
Minister Timely: Clint Thornton
Sylvester Schemes: Anthony Jackson
Demetrius Witt: Aimee Ariel

Stage Manager: Juliana Ryan
Sound Design: Clint Thornton
Production Coordinator: Brian Patterson
Set Design/Technical Director: Crawford Pratt III
Light Design/Master Electrician: John Acton
Costume Design: Michael Reynolds
Properties: Kathleen Parish
Asst. Technical Director: David Jensen

Artistic Associate/Literary Manager: Jessica Phelps West

PRODUCTION HISTORY

June 1988 – Originally produced by The Utopian Theatre Company, Atlanta, Georgia.

December 1991 – The Blackfriars of Agnes Scott College, Decatur, Georgia.

February 2000 – The Blackfriars of Agnes Scott College, Decatur, Georgia.

April 2000 – Rising Stars Theatre, Titusville Playhouse, Titusville, Florida.

June-July 2002 – Theatre in the Square, Marietta, Georgia.

March 2004 – Appalachian State University, Boone, North Carolina.

LIST OF CHARACTERS

EMPEROR: enthusiastic, bouncy, and childlike.

MINISTER PUCKERING: plays “yes” man to the Emperor, always saying what he thinks the Emperor wants to hear.

MINISTER TIMELY: punctual, always watching the clock. Tries to keep the Emperor on schedule, but without much success.

SYLVESTER SCHEMES known as SLY: the leader of the con-artist duo.

DEMETRIUS WITT known as DIM: the nitwit of the con-artist duo.

NOTES

This play was developed to tour with a small cast. The director is free to cast “extras” to assist with scene changes, sound effects etc., which the Ministers are called to do in the script.

Please note that in the original production women played all of the characters, even though masculine pronouns are used in the script. The director may cast women and/or men in any role(s), as best suits the production and may also change the gender of the pronouns as desired. Character *names* should not change.

In the original production, it was necessary for the weavers to leave their trunk on stage so that it was used in both the Emperor’s room and the weavers’ room. In a subsequent production, however, this was found distracting and the trunk was struck by “extras” who also moved the door delineating the two rooms. Directors should feel free to handle this however necessary.

Dedicated to Dudley Sanders,
mentor and friend.

THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES

A Play for Children

dramatized by Jeanine Dwinell Henry and Meg Bryant Davenport

SCENE 1

The space is empty, except for a chair and a gift-wrapped box. The EMPEROR and the TWO MINISTERS enter, mid-conversation. MINISTER PUCKERING is wearing a hand mirror around his neck, and he holds this for the EMPEROR periodically throughout the play. MINISTER TIMELY wears a clipboard and stopwatch, and carries a pencil.

PUCKERING: And sir, you have a meeting at 2:00 with—

EMPEROR: *(Ignoring him)* Oh, look! I've got a present to open!

TIMELY: Sir, you simply cannot—

EMPEROR: I wonder what it is. I just love surprises!

TIMELY: Your Majesty, you have a meeting in five minutes with the Prime Minister of—

EMPEROR: *(Turning on him, with the box in his hands)* I don't care about the Prime Minister. I've got a present!

PUCKERING: Oh, yes, of course, sir. The meeting can wait.

TIMELY: No, it can't!

(PUCKERING glares at him. The EMPEROR remains oblivious.)

EMPEROR: Look at the pretty bow!

TIMELY: Sir, what about your lunch appointment with—

EMPEROR: Cancel my appointment! Cancel all my appointments!

TIMELY: Are you sure?

PUCKERING: Of course he's sure!

EMPEROR: Of course I'm sure! *(He has finally gotten the package open and is admiring a brilliant bow tie.)* Look at this!

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PUCKERING: (*Admiring*) Oh, yes!

EMPEROR: Isn't it lovely?

PUCKERING: Yes, sir, it is. Don't you think so, Timely?

TIMELY: (*Mildly sarcastic*) Yes. It's the scrumpdilliest bow tie in the empire.

EMPEROR (*Missing the sarcasm*) Scrumpdilliest! That's just what I thought about it! The scrumpdilliest in the whole world! It looks scrumpdillious on me, doesn't it?

PUCKERING: Yes, Your Majesty. It goes very well with your cape.

EMPEROR: And my shoelaces!

TIMELY: Your Majesty, I really think—

PUCKERING: (*Interrupting*) And it really makes your crown shine!

EMPEROR: I am the most attractive Emperor in the whole world!

PUCKERING: Of course you are, Your Majesty.

EMPEROR: Let's have a parade!

PUCKERING: Excellent idea, Your Majesty! When would you like to have it?

EMPEROR: Now!

TIMELY: Now, sir? You simply do not have the time to have a parade now, Your Majesty!

EMPEROR: I want to! I want a parade! I want to have a parade so everyone can see me in my new bow tie!

PUCKERING: All right sir, we'll schedule that parade for—

TIMELY: Tomorrow morning. That's the earliest we can possibly do it.

EMPEROR: But the bow tie won't be new in the morning!

TIMELY: But sir!

EMPEROR: The most important thing is for my people to have faith in me as an Emperor. How are they going to have faith in me if they don't see how good I look?

TIMELY: I guess I see the logic in that.

PUCKERING: All right, sir. We'll have that parade right now!

EMPEROR: That's ... scrumpdillious! After all, the reason I'm such a good ruler is that I'm the best-dressed person in the world.

PUCKERING: Absolutely right, Your Majesty!

TIMELY: *(Exiting)* I'll just try to re-schedule these appointments.

PUCKERING: You do that.

(TIMELY goes off and gets three kazoos. The EMPEROR and PUCKERING continue.)

EMPEROR: Assemble the people! Announce the parade!

PUCKERING: *(Stepping onto the chair and proclaiming grandly)* Hear ye, hear ye! The Grand Emperor announces that he will hold a parade beginning immediately. The people are commanded to convene at once!

EMPEROR: *(Whispering)* Tell them to bring their binoculars.

PUCKERING: And bring your binoculars, bring your glasses! You are commanded not to miss the Emperor's new clothes!

(TIMELY blows his kazoo once as he enters. He gives the EMPEROR and PUCKERING theirs.)

EMPEROR: *(To the audience)* Oh, look! The band has arrived already! We shall march to the tune of "Row, Row, Row Your Boat." Puckering, Timely, to your stations!

(The EMPEROR, PUCKERING, and TIMELY each takes a section of the audience and quickly instructs the children as to their part in the parade. PUCKERING's section mimes playing drums and makes

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the noise of drums, TIMELY's does the same for horns, and the EMPEROR's section sings and claps their hands. After this short instruction period, the EMPEROR continues.)

EMPEROR: Are we ready?

PUCKERING & TIMELY: Ready, sir!

EMPEROR: Then let the parade begin!

(The EMPEROR, TIMELY, and PUCKERING march, dance and skip their parade through the audience, singing and playing their kazoos with the children and showing off the EMPEROR's bow tie. The parade ends with the EMPEROR climbing onto his chair with the MINISTERS on either side.)

EMPEROR: Hooray! Hooray for the band!

(The EMPEROR and MINISTERS continue to bow and wave to the audience as the WEAVERS enter through the audience carrying a trunk.)

DIM: Hey, Sly, what's this?

SLY: It looks like they had a parade, Dim.

DIM: Who's the guy with the funny hat?

SLY: That's the Emperor, silly! That funny hat is his crown.

DIM: That's the Emperor? I always wondered what he looks like.

SLY: You know what he looks like, Dim. His picture is on every piece of money in the empire!

DIM: Oh. I didn't recognize him. He looks different in person.
Taller.

SLY: Can you tell what he's doing?

DIM: It looks like he's showing off his bow tie.

SLY: That's no reason to have a parade!

DIM: It must be a holiday!

SLY: What?

DIM: They're having a parade 'cause it's a holiday!

SLY: It's not a holiday, Dim!

DIM: Oh. Well then why are they having a parade?

SLY: I don't know, but this guy should. *(He flags down PUCKERING who is following TIMELY and the EMPEROR out.)* Excuse me. Can you tell me what's going on?

PUCKERING: I'm sorry, the Emperor is waiting for me... *(He tries unsuccessfully to get past SLY.)* What's your question again?

DIM: What holiday is it?

SLY: *(Jumping in as fast as he can)* We were wondering, sir, how you chanced to be having a parade this fine afternoon?

PUCKERING: The Emperor has just received a gift of a bow tie, which he wanted to share with his subjects.

SLY: A bow tie?

PUCKERING: Yes, a bow tie.

DIM: He held a whole parade just to show off a new bow tie?

SLY: Of course he did. That makes perfect sense to me.

DIM: It does? *(To the audience)* Does that make sense to you?

PUCKERING: It is a very regal bow tie, and His Majesty wanted to reassure his people that he was maintaining his place on the best-dressed list. After all, only an emperor with a fabulous fashion sense is fit for his job. And now, if you'll excuse me, I have to be going. *(He exits.)*

SLY: Boy, Dim, I wish we could get into the royal bow tie racket. We could make a bundle, now that the Emperor has made it a hot fashion item. Do we have any connections in the bow tie business?

DIM: Jake makes those great bows and arrows! Maybe we could use those.

SLY: That's not quite the same thing. (*They ponder for a moment.*)
There's got to be a way to get some money out of this!

DIM: (*After a moment of waiting*) Well?

SLY: Well, what?

DIM: Well, how do we get money out of this?

SLY: I don't ... Hey, wait a minute! What about the weaving scam?

DIM: Yeah, the weaving scam! (*Pause*) What weaving scam?

SLY: You know, the one where we tell them we'll weave this really
incredible cloth.

DIM: But we can't weave!

SLY: Don't be such a monkey head! This is the one where we just
tell them we'll weave the cloth, and then they give us money for
supplies and we split. I'll bet they fall for it hook, line and sinker.

DIM: I thought this was the weaving scam, not the fishing scam!

SLY: Hush!

*(SLY turns to commiserate with the audience over DIM's stupidity
as DIM sits in the chair pouting. Slowly DIM realizes that this is the
EMPEROR's chair, and he begins to imitate the EMPEROR in a grand
voice.)*

DIM: Why yes, I'd love to have some of your wonderful cloth. (*He
stands, and then continues to SLY in his own voice.*) Hey, wait a
minute. He's an emperor. Why would he want cloth from people
like us?

SLY: Well ... we'll tell him ours is extra special!

DIM: (*Sarcastic*) Extra special! What are you going to tell him, it's
solid gold?

SLY: No, he's an emperor. He has plenty of solid gold cloth. Ours
has to be something he can't get anywhere else in the world.

DIM: You mean like magic cloth?

SLY: Yeah, magic cloth. But what can it do?

(As SLY & DIM are scheming, the EMPEROR and TIMELY enter on the other side of the stage, mid-argument. They do not notice the weavers.)

DIM: Maybe it can—

SLY: Shhhh!

(The EMPEROR is admiring himself in PUCKERING'S mirror.)

TIMELY: Sir, it is absolutely imperative that you stop wasting time with the bow tie and come back to the office! You have some very important people to see this afternoon.

EMPEROR: Timely, I'm tired of you bothering me all the time about appointments. I never know if you're telling me the truth. I don't remember anything about important people to see.

TIMELY: But Sir—

EMPEROR: I'm sure somewhere in the empire I could find someone better for your job. *(He exits.)*

TIMELY: *(Sputtering and following him off.)* Sir, that's simply not true! I'm always honest, and I'm very good at my job!

SLY: *(Watching them go.)* Hey, I've got it! Something the Emperor would love to have. We'll tell him the cloth is invisible.

DIM: Who'd want cloth you can't see?

SLY: We'll tell him that only people who are completely honest and fit for their job can see it.

DIM: You think that'll work?

(The MINISTERS and the EMPEROR enter, led by TIMELY.)

SLY: Shh! Here comes the Emperor. Now just let me do the talking. *(To the EMPEROR)* Excuse me, Your Majesty ... *(He kneels, and motions for DIM to join him. SLY then hesitates for just a moment, not certain what to do. He jumps back up. DIM follows.)*