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Family Plays

HANSEL AND GRETEL

Drama adapted by

I.E. CLARK

From the fairy tale by

THE BROTHERS GRIMM



HANSEL AND GRETEL

Hansel and Gretel is a play that everybody can have fun with. Your audiences will love their opportunity to participate. Adults or children can play the title roles, making the play ideal for community, university, high school or elementary theatre.

“It was great! The children loved it.” (Mary Carter, Shelby County Community Theatre, Shelbyville, Ind.)

“I was very impressed by the warmth and depth the script brought to that classic story.” (Rosemary Poole-Carter, Houston, Texas)

Drama with optional music. By I.E. Clark. Based on the story by the Brothers Grimm. *Cast: 4m., 6w., extras.* This three-act version of *Hansel and Gretel* was commissioned and premiered by the famed Casa Mañana Playhouse in Fort Worth, Texas. It may be presented with or without music; a one-act version was added later by popular demand. It is an audience-participation play in which every child is invited to help Hansel and Gretel as they wander through the aisles trying to save themselves. This dramatization not only captures the fright, the fun and the fantasy of the fairy tale written in Germany in the very early 1800s by the Brothers Grimm, but also retains the German flavor of the tale. European folk dances and folk songs may be used. The dances and songs may also be minimized or eliminated entirely, leaving a straight fairy tale play. *The director’s script provides detailed information about costumes, songs, dances and pronunciation of the German words in the text. It also contains the vocal score for the new songs specially written for the play. German folk tunes (two with new lyrics) and two original tunes are included in the piano/vocal score with music for German folk dances (“Herr Schmidt,” “Put Your Little Foot,” “The Garden Waltz”). Approximate running time: 65 to 90 minutes. Background music/SFX CD available. Code: HC6.*

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Hansel and Gretel

HANSEL

AND

GRETTLE

IN THREE ACTS

(Dramatized from the fairy tale
by the Brothers Grimm)

Family Plays

311 Washington St., Woodstock, IL 60098

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I.E.CLARK

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(HANSEL AND GRETEL)

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HANSEL AND GRETEL

This version of *Hansel and Gretel* was first presented by the Casa Manana Playhouse, Fort Worth, Texas, during the month of April, 1970, under the direction of Eugene Mackey. Sharon Bengé was executive director. The original cast was as follows (in order of appearance):

ROBIN ROBIN, <i>a bird</i>	Jac Robertson
STIEFMUTTER	Lou Hancock
HANSEL	David Henry
GRETEL	Marian Capers
FRITZ	David Coffee
FRITZENE	Jan Birdwell
THE YOO-HOO CLOCK	Shelton B. Miller
PAPA	Al Grab
WITCH.	Patti Littlefield
GINGER, <i>a gingerbread cookie</i>	Charlece Thomas
GINGERBREAD PEOPLE	Mike Gerkovich, Sharon Arnout, Denise Miller, Jennifer Seibert, David Coffee, Jan Birdwell

And the TREES



Synopsis of Scenes

ACT I: The home of Hansel and Gretel
on the edge of the Black Forest;
and deep inside the forest

ACT II: The Land of the Hungry Witch, and
her gingerbread house

ACT III: Same as Act II



Once upon a time

ABOUT THE PLAY

Hansel and Gretel is one of the most gripping tales from Fairyland—two little children, afraid and alone, hopelessly lost in a great forest . . . a papa who loves them very much, and a stepmother who doesn't love them at all . . . a gingerbread house with real live gingerbread men dancing about it . . . and a hungry witch with a special taste for roast boy.

This dramatization captures not only the fright, the fun, and the fantasy of the fairy tale written in Germany very early in the 1800's by the Brothers Grimm; it also retains the German flavor of the tale. European folk dances and folk songs may be used, giving your presentation the added value of acquainting your audiences with these important ethnic aspects of our American melting-pot heritage. Or the dances and songs may be minimized—or eliminated entirely, leaving a straight fairy-tale play.

The Director's Production Script (prompt book) for this play (see opposite page) provides detailed information about costumes, songs, dances, and pronunciation of the German words in the text. It also contains the vocal score for the new songs specially written for the play.

Suggestions for staging: In keeping with the traditional German love of food, it is suggested that Hansel, Papa, and Stiefmutter be rather plump—especially Papa, who might even be roly-poly. Whether played by children or adults, Hansel and Gretel should be portrayed as children of six to ten years of age. The German dialect used by Hansel and Papa should not be so authentic that the audience can't understand what they are saying. In fact, all dialect may be omitted; the sentence structure and speech rhythm used in this script given sufficient hint of the German language.

All German words may easily be omitted, too, simply by translating them into English (the translation is given in the Director's Production Script). However, if the actors can pronounce them properly the German words add to the fun of performing—and watching—the play.

Hansel and Gretel is a play that everybody can have fun with. And your audiences will love their opportunity to participate.

**Everything You Always
Wanted to Know About
Directing Plays . . .
But Didn't Know Who to Ask**

Stage directions in this playscript have been kept to a minimum for a specific reason: Many directors want their actors and actresses to create their own characterizations without help from the play publisher. An imaginative cast member often introduces exciting bits of business and line readings if he is made to do his own thinking. But if printed stage directions do his thinking for him, his own creativity is nearly always stifled.

Some directors, on the other hand, are so deluged with details of publicity, ticket sales, and house management that they can never find time to devote full attention to staging, blocking, and characterization. For these harried directors, we provide a Director's Production Script (prompt book) loaded with full stage directions which show every action of every actor in detail.

The Production Script provides the blocking for each scene. It contains drawings and information on costumes, scenery, props, lighting, make-up, and other technical aspects of the play. And it discusses the characterization of each role.

With the help of the Production Script the inexperienced director can present a praiseworthy show.

But our Production Scripts are a dream-come-true for the experienced director, too. Experienced directors know how many hours of research must be spent to stage a worthwhile play successfully. Although the experienced director may decide to ignore many of the stage directions and other suggestions, he will find that the Production Script saves hours of his valuable time by supplying authenticated details of costume, set, period, etc. — the fruits of extensive research into the history of the play, the period in which it is laid, and the circumstances or environment under which it was written.

Nearly all of our Production Scripts are the work of the director who successfully staged the play.

Production Scripts may be obtained from

Family Plays

311 Washington St., Woodstock, IL 60098

HANSEL AND GRETEL

By I. E. Clark

Prologue

[*When the house lights dim, a BIRD flutters down an aisle, and hops upon the stage.*]

BIRD. Hello, everybody. My name is Robin. That's my first name. It's my last name, too. That's right — my whole name is Robin Robin. And I — [*looking around the audience*] let's see now — [*to a man — preferably one about eight years old*] excuse me, sir, but would you mind holding your arms over your head like this? O.K., thank you, yes, you'll do fine. Now . . . [*XDR, on the apron, speaks to a lady in the audience — preferably one about nine years old*] you, ma'am, in the fourth row wearing the _____ [*ad lib*], would you also hold your arms up like this? Fine! You'll do. Now . . . who else? I know! Why don't all of you hold your arms up! Very good, very good! Can you guess what I'm doing? I'm trying you out for parts in this play. That's right — every one of you is going to act in this play we're about to perform. The play takes place in a great forest — that's where I live. It's far away across the sea. The forest is full of birds — all kinds of animals, in fact — and there are some very strange creatures in it, too — some that you've probably never heard of before. But most of all the forest is full of — can you guess what? — that's right — the forest is full of *trees*. Now can you guess what part I want you to play? Right again — the Trees. You're going to be the Trees! Now let's rehearse a bit before the play begins. First of all, when the wind blows, Trees shake their leaves, don't they? Okay, everybody raise both hands and wave them gently like this. Gently, gently. Now you must act the part right and do what I say; otherwise we can't have a play, can we? Fine. Now when the wind blows harder, the Trees sway a little — first this way — that's right

— and then this way. And sometimes, on a very dark night, when all the stars have pulled the covers over their eyes and gone sound asleep, the Trees make a noise — it’s a kind of scary noise — like a low whistle or a quiet moan — like this. All right, let’s hear all the Trees moan — not too loud, though. There, that’s perfect!

Now, whenever we need a forest in this play, I’ll signal to you like this [*raises her hands above her head*]. And this is going to be our secret because humans can’t understand me when I speak. Animals and plants know what I’m saying, but humans hear only a chirping sound. So you and I have a secret — you can hear me because you’re Trees . . . in fact, you’re a whole forest of trees. And Hansel and Gretel live in a little cottage right on the edge of this forest — with their father and their stepmother . . . [*The lights have been coming up on the stage as she speaks this final sentence, and when the lights are full, ROBIN ROBIN has disappeared.*]

Act I

[*The stage represents the parlor of the cottage in which Hansel and Gretel live. Since the family is not wealthy (but not destitute, either) the room is sparsely furnished, with a table or two and chairs — and a Grandfather Clock. As it turns out, the Grandfather Clock can talk — almost like a human being. The STEPMOTHER enters with broom, mop, and feather duster. She roughly pushes HANSEL and GRETEL into the room. They clean the room frantically — HANSEL with the broom, GRETEL with the mop, and the STEPMOTHER with the feather duster, which she uses to pop the children more than to clean the furniture. When she is sure they are working rapidly enough, she puts down the duster, dons a bonnet and shawl, takes a market basket from the table, and exits. The CHILDREN work for a few moments frantically; then GRETEL tiptoes to the door, looks out stealthily, nods at Hansel with a grin. They run out, laughing. HANSEL returns almost immediately, winds the clock, and then runs out. The CLOCK comes to life.*]

CLOCK. Tick, tock, rick, rock,
 Spick, spock, I'm a clock —
 But I can't bong and I can't br-r-r-ing;
 I can't dong or even ding;
 They didn't fit me with a cuckoo,
 So on the hour — what do I do?
 I go — yoo-hoo, yoo-hoo, yoo-hooo!

Made by the Pop of Hans und Gretel —
 He used some wood and a little metal;
 He put in springs and jiggly things — but —
 I can't buzz and I can't whistle,
 I can't count down for a missile —
 Every hour — what can I do?
 Yoo-hoo! yoo-hoo! yoo-hoo! yoo-hoo!

[*For the melody, see the Introduction to the Production Script.*]

GRETEL. [*Runs in*] Hurry, Hansel! The Yoo-Hoo Clock just struck four. Our friends will be here any minute.

HANSEL. [*Following*] Ja, Gretel, I'm coming already. But I don't see Fritz und Fritzene. Wonder where they're at?

GRETEL. Oh, they'll be here in a few minutes. You know Fritzene . . .

HANSEL. Ja — slow like she was a grown-up already. But maybe they don't come today. Maybe they are frightened that — that —

GRETEL. [*Covering her ears*] Don't, Hansel — don't even talk about the Stiefmutter! Oh, Hansel, what are we going to do?

HANSEL. Don't worry — I take care of my sister. I will not let the Stiefmutter hurt you . . .

FRITZ. [*Sticking his head in door, cautiously looking around*] Is — is it all right?

HANSEL. Sure, Fritz — it is all right already — like I told you.

GRETEL. It's safe, Fritz. The Stiefmutter isn't here — not now, at least. Where's Fritzene?

[FRITZ motions to his sister, and FRITZENE peeks in cautiously.]

FRITZENE. Wie gehts.*

HANSEL and GRETEL. Hi, Fritzene!

FRITZENE. Are you sure the Stiefmutter won't come back early again — like yesterday? My leg still hurts —

HANSEL. We all watch out, and if we see the Stiefmutter — you can run away quick.

FRITZENE. I'm glad we don't have a Stiefmutter at our house.

FRITZ. I brought you a present, Gretel. [*He takes a small box from his pocket and holds it out to her.*]

GRETEL. Oh — what is it! [*She takes the box and opens it eagerly. She looks at the contents for a moment and then throws it down with a scream.*]

HANSEL. What is it yet? Ach, it's about to get away already! [*He catches it and holds up a small snake.*] A little snake-in-the-grass! [*In catching the snake, he accidentally steps on the box it was in.*]

FRITZENE. You mean a grass snake. Fritz found it just before we left home. Boys are so mean. [*HANSEL and FRITZ enjoy the compliment.*]

HANSEL. Gretel is scared of snakes — just like the Stiefmutter.

GRETEL. It's been so long since I had a real present!

HANSEL. It's just a little joke, Gretel. I tell you what — we give you a real present — we dance, like you always want — ain't so, Fritz?

FRITZ. Well — [*dancing isn't his favorite pastime*]

HANSEL. What you want to dance, Gretel?

GRETEL. How about — how about the Herr Schmidt?

HANSEL. Okay — but we better hurry so the Stiefmutter won't catch us again. What we going to do with your little snake-in-the-grass, Fritz?

FRITZENE. It's a grass snake.

*For pronunciation of German words, see Production Script

FRITZ. I want to keep him for a pet – but – [*he picks up the crushed box.*]

FRITZENE. Oh, put him in your pocket – hurry!

HANSEL. I'll put him in this sewing basket. Then he won't run away. [*He drops the snake into a sewing basket on the table.*]

[*The children dance a Herr Schmidt, or some other German folkdance. * FRITZ is not enthusiastic at first, and HANSEL implies that he is obviously being a martyr for his sister's sake. But as the dance progresses, the boys have as much fun as the girls. They move faster and faster until everyone falls down laughing.*]

GRETEL. That was fun! Let's dance some more.

HANSEL. Ach already, Gretel. I'm poopydooped.

FRITZENE. Oh, come on, lazy!

FRITZ. [*He doesn't want to admit he enjoyed the dance*] Come on, Hansel – anything to keep the cry-babies happy. Everybody know how to do the schottische?

GRETEL. Sure – come on!

HANSEL. Well, maybe one more just – but it's getting late.

[*They begin the schottische, but before it has progressed far, the YOO-HOO CLOCK strikes five, showing a great deal of agitation, for he sees the STIEFMUTTER (which is what we shall call the Stepmother from here on) coming, and he tries to warn the children.*]

CLOCK. Yoo-hoo, yoo-hoo! yoo-hoo-oo-oo-oo! yoo-hoo yoo-hoo!

[*But they are having so much fun, they don't notice. STIEFMUTTER enters and surveys the scene with great displeasure.*]

STIEFMUTTER. Hansel! Gretel! Why aren't you working! Always these neighbor children to make you waste time!

FRITZ. Oh, oh – your Stiefmutter!

*See Production Script

[STIEFMUTTER chases the children, trying to hit them with her walking stick. After a frantic scramble in which she manages to land one or two blows, FRITZ and FRITZENE run through the door and disappear. HANSEL and GRETEL hide behind the clock. STIEFMUTTER drops her stick and grabs Hansel and Gretel and shakes them.]

STIEFMUTTER. You miserable children! I can't take my eyes off of you for a second. All you think about is pleasure.

HANSEL. But Stiefmutter – only for a minute just –

STIEFMUTTER. Shut up! You don't care if we starve. Your Papa makes clocks nobody buys, and his children waste the whole day dancing!

GRETEL. We just wanted to rest a while, Stiefmutter . . .

STIEFMUTTER. Rest – that's all you think about. Why can't you be like me – I always find something useful to do with my time – cooking, cleaning the house – [*she picks up a garment on the table and exhibits a tear in it*] look at this pile of clothes I've got to patch! [*HANSEL and GRETEL remember the snake and look at each other in horror. HANSEL tries to sneak to the table and grab the sewing basket while STIEFMUTTER examines the torn garment. When GRETEL sees that she is about to put the garment down, she tries to distract her attention.*]

GRETEL. Uh – could I help you with that, Stiefmutter?

STIEFMUTTER. No! Now get out to your woodpile – I've got to do this sewing. [*She turns to her sewing basket just as HANSEL reaches for it. She slaps his hand and grabs it away from him.*] Leave that alone, you mischievous brat – I said get out to your woodpile! [*She rummages around in the basket and draws out the snake – she holds it for a moment in frozen terror and then throws it and the basket from her with a scream. HANSEL can't quite suppress a laugh, which does not go unnoticed.*] All right, boy – come here! As if I didn't have enough worries trying to keep us all from starving.

HANSEL. But, Stiefmutter, I didn't –

STIEFMUTTER. Oh, then it was you, little miss smarty!

GRETEL. No, ma'am.

STIEFMUTTER. Don't lie to me – why did you put that snake in my basket?

GRETEL. [*She begins to cry – and uses a term she has used since she first learned that words can work to one's advantage*] Bruzzer dood it!

STIEFMUTTER. Come here, Hansel!

HANSEL. I'm sorry already, Stiefmutter. I didn't mean to – it's a little snake-in-the-grass only.

[*STIEFMUTTER gives him a sound spanking.*]

PAPA'S VOICE. [*Offstage*] High-low, high-low high-low high-low! Where is everybody at already? Papa's home! Where are mein little kitty-katzes?

STIEFMUTTER. Don't you tell your Papa I gave you a whipping – or I'll whip you harder, do you hear?

HANSEL. Ja, Stiefmutter.

PAPA. [*Entering*] What a fine day, ain't it! A day when a man wants to be mit his family just, and listen to the laughter of his kids . . .

STIEFMUTTER. [*Curtsying sweetly*] Guten abend, Husband. How many clocks did you make today?

PAPA. Enough for a long time. [*He laughs at his pun.*]

STIEFMUTTER. What's so funny?

PAPA. Clocks . . . a long time . . . clocks . . . time . . .?

STIEFMUTTER. [*She fails to see the humor*] Oh. But you did make some clocks – we need the money –

PAPA. We could have made more, but the clocks went on strike! [*He laughs again. She doesn't think it's funny. He picks up his pipe from the table.*]

STIEFMUTTER. You smoke too much. Tobacco is expensive.

[*PAPA blows on the pipe to clear the bowl, and soap bubbles rise from it. We can tell from the faces of Hansel and Gretel that they have played a joke on their Papa.*]

STIEFMUTTER. See. Like I said. The smoking gives you gas.

PAPA. Somebody put soap in my pipe.

HANSEL. I did it, Papa. Please don't spank me already, Papa.

GRETEL. I talked him into doing it, Papa. And I don't think you ought to spank him either because he just got a spanking.

HANSEL. Shhh, Gretel . . .

GRETEL. She told *you* not to tell — I didn't say *I* wouldn't.

STIEFMUTTER. [*Losing her cool and the gloss of housewifeliness that she tried so hard to convey*] These horrible children put a snake in my sewing basket!

HANSEL. I told her I was sorry, Papa. It was a little snake-in-the-grass only — and I meant to take it out before the Stiefmutter got home from the store.

PAPA. Ach, now, these rain clouds in the eyes, that's not the way to greet a Papa when he first comes home from work. Hey! I got an idea already — just like a clock striking — bong! bong! bong! [*four different notes, like Big Ben*]

HANSEL. What, Papa?

PAPA. What you say to a picnic — in the forest?

HANSEL. [*Without enthusiasm*] That — that would be a good idea, Papa — [*he looks furtively at Gretel; there is fright in her eyes*] I guess . . .

PAPA. Wife, you take Gretel and go see if you two ladies can find something we can make mit a picnic in the forest.

[*STIEFMUTTER grabs GRETEL; they exit. GRETEL looks back at Hansel, trying to convey a message with her eyes.*]

HANSEL. Why do they call it the Black Forest, Papa? It looks green to me.

PAPA. It looks black to some people, son — especially people who don't get close enough to really see. But it don't matter what color you call it, it's a good forest — and it would be a good forest even was it pink mit spinach polka dots. Ain't so!

HANSEL. I guess so, Papa. Papa?

PAPA. Ja, Hansel?

HANSEL. If my real mama was alive, would she spank me so much, like the Stiefmutter?

PAPA. Maybe so, Hansel. Mamas and Papas – real ones and step ones – want their children to be nice children, and they want their nice children to grow up to be nice grow-ups.

HANSEL. But what good do the spankings do?

PAPA. Maybe they help you remember that you got to think, when you start to do something – “Is what I’m fixing to do gonna hurt somebody?”

HANSEL. Oh. [*Pause*] Papa?

PAPA. Ja, Hansel?

HANSEL. Did the soap in your pipe hurt you already?

PAPA. Nein. A little bad taste just.

HANSEL. And the little snake-in-the-grass. It didn’t bite the Stiefmutter.

PAPA. Nein. She was a little scared only.

HANSEL. Papa?

PAPA. Ja, Hansel?

HANSEL. The spanking hurt me, Papa.

PAPA. Well . . . already – what we going to do when we get on the picnic in the forest, hunh?

HANSEL. Do we have to go on the picnic, Papa?

PAPA. What’s this! Everybody loves a picnic – sure we go – und be a happy one big family.

HANSEL. But last time we had a picnic – it was not so happy . . .

PAPA. Ja – you and Gretel lost yourselves. I worried about mein lieblings. This time you stay close to the Stiefmutter and me und don’t go wander off somewheres.

HANSEL. Papa?

PAPA. Ja, Hansel?

HANSEL. We didn’t wander off.

PAPA. Then how you lose yourself? A goblin comes and carries you off, hunh?

HANSEL. Stiefmutter took us way into the forest to find firewood – and she left us.

PAPA. Ach – the Stiefmutter wouldn't do that to such sweet little children.

HANSEL. But Papa – she –

PAPA. Little kids don't always pay attention to what they do – you and Gretel play and dance and first thing you know, you get in a thick clump of trees and – prrrrt! – you're lost already.

HANSEL. But Papa – that's not –

[*STIEFMUTTER and GRETEL enter with a picnic basket.*]

PAPA. Ja – the eats! Time to go! Come along, everybody. [*They exit. The YOO-HOO CLOCK shows great distress and strikes 6 o'clock with moans and foreboding groans. The stage grows dark (or curtain may be closed); ROBIN ROBIN appears on the apron and signals to the audience by raising her arms and fluttering her hands like leaves in the wind. PAPA and STIEFMUTTER enter apron. HANSEL and GRETEL follow, frightened, walking hand in hand. PAPA and STIEFMUTTER pass out of the light and wait, talking silently.*]

GRETEL. Did you tell him, Hansel?

HANSEL. I was first trying when you and Stiefmutter came with the eats. He don't listen.

GRETEL. Oh, Hansel, I'm scared.

HANSEL. I take care of you, Gretel.

GRETEL. But suppose she tries it again. Did you bring some pebbles, like last time?

HANSEL. No, Gretel – how could I? We first decided a few minutes ago to have a picnic.

GRETEL. But suppose she takes us way out in the forest again and leaves us – how will we ever find our way back?

HANSEL. We think of something, Gretel.

[*A wolf howl is heard in the distance. The trees, led by ROBIN ROBIN, moan.*]

GRETEL. There are wolves in the forest, Hansel.

HANSEL. Oh, maybe one or two. Little wolves.

GRETEL. And all kinds of strange creatures – maybe even goblins and witches!