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## **Family Plays**

# NOT EVEN A. MOUSE

Christmas drama

by

JEROME McDONOUGH



# NOT EVEN A. MOUSE

"It's great—and my students love it."  
(Joan Ondrovic, St. Mary's Cathedral School, Miami, Fla.)

**Christmas drama. By Jerome McDonough.** *Cast: 8 to 34 actors, flexible.* Jerome McDonough called *Not Even A. Mouse* his short Chrismouse tale for child audiences. 'Twas the night before Christmas and all through the house not a creature was stirring except Andy Mouse. He is searching for a Christmas present for his mom, but it's an adventure full of danger—things like a mousetrap and a jam box nearly put the lights out on his Christmas. *Bare stage with props. Approximate running time: 20 to 25 minutes. Demo/accompaniment CD available. Code: N79.*

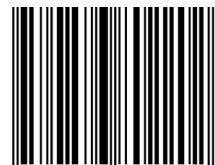
**From the author:** *Not Even A. Mouse* is an ensemble play; that is, a great variety of parts are played by a troupe of players. The only two roles which are constant throughout the show are Annie and Andy Mouse. The ensemble may be made up of as few as six or as many as 32 performers (virtually any combination of men and women). Using 32 performers means assigning each role to a different actor. Using less than 32 performers means that actors will double in several roles. All the "scenery" is made in pantomime by an ensemble, making the show easy to tour as well as a good workout in mime.

## Family Plays

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Title

# Not Even A. Mouse

A CHRISMOUSE TALE

by

**Jerome McDonough**

**With Special Assistance by Brian McDonough**

**Family Plays**

311 Washington St., Woodstock, IL 60098

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# NOT EVEN A. MOUSE

## *Cast of Characters*

Annie Mouse

Andy Mouse

*The Rest of the Cast may be played by an ensemble  
of as few as six or as many as 32 performers:*

Papa Mouse

Cat

Punk Announcer

Mice Without Rats

Cosmic Cruncher 1

Cosmic Cruncher 2

Cosmic Cruncher 3

Country Announcer

Tex Cheddar and the Chunk Band

Crouch Mouse

Slouch Mouse

Vito Moutzarella, the Godmouse

Joseph

Mary

Mama Mouse

“Jam Box”

Mouse Trap

Cosmic Cruncher Video Game

Manger Scene

} Ensemble combinations

★

## DEDICATION

*To my Perfect Gift, Brian  
and to his Perfect Mother, Raenell*

And to the original cast: Shannon Polk, Karen Towery, John Noah, Tambra Goode, Curtis Poynor, Robbie Dunigan, Konii Dalmon, and Teresa Rowley.

With appreciation to Renea Ho-Gland and her most treasured Christmas memory—her baby brother.

## ABOUT THE PLAY

NOT EVEN A. MOUSE is an ensemble play; that is, a great variety of parts are played by a troupe of players. The only two roles which are constant throughout the show are Annie and Andy Mouse. Everyone else—the ensemble—may be called upon to portray parts of a “Jam Box” stereo or the roof of a stable or any of dozens of other functions. The ensemble may be made up of as few as six or as many as 32 performers (virtually any combination of males and females). Using 32 performers means assigning each role to a different actor. Using less than 32 performers means that actors will double in several roles.

The advantages of this performance style are many, including the fact that *all* cast members rightly believe that their parts are vital to the total experience of the show. Another plus is the fact that such a show, using people instead of sets and extensive props, is totally portable. The first production of NOT EVEN A. MOUSE was performed six times on five different campuses between 9:30 in the morning and 2:30 in the afternoon of one school day—with plenty of time in between for a leisurely pizza lunch.

Ensembles are, to me, the essence of theatre. Questions of stardom and billing and importance are set aside and a genuine spirit of togetherness bonds the cast. Come to think of it, that’s what Christmas is about, too.

### *Living Cyclorama Notes*

NOT EVEN A. MOUSE utilizes a technique which I term the Living Cyclorama. This device employs the actors and actresses in the play as a “backdrop curtain” before which the show takes place.

The Living Cyclorama makes entrances and exits a possibility in areas where no actual wings exist. A classroom, a church altar, a shopping mall, a park, even a street corner becomes the stage.

The performers form a large arc upstage of the performance space itself. Any actor not involved in the current scene will stand on this arc, facing away from the audience. This “Cyc” will be constantly changing as actors move out and in, so the cast must try to balance the Left and Right, making such adjustments without calling undue attention to the process itself.

Props and costume elements are placed at the Cyc location where they will be needed. Actors must put on and remove costume elements



without stealing focus. The blocking of NOT EVEN A. MOUSE is written in such a way that the audience's attention should in almost every case be drawn away from any costume preparations.

More important than following the above credos, however, is finding the joy and love of the season. If this is portrayed, everything else becomes unimportant.

### *Music Notes*

Two rather bizarre versions of traditional Christmas songs are called for in the script of NOT EVEN A. MOUSE. For those with little faith in their musical abilities, these optional sections are marked in the script and may be cut, if desired.

A second possibility is to utilize current recordings of Christmas music. It may seem unlikely to find a "punk" version of a holiday selection, but several years ago, as a joke, I called for a record in O, LITTLE TOWN called "Disco Christmas" only to see a record of that same title advertised the following year. Nothing is impossible. The recordings need not be the "Deck the Halls" and "Jingle Bells" called for in the script. Any contemporary pop or rock version of a Christmas song will do for the first, and most Country Christmas tunes will suffice for the other. I might suggest that the songs be novelty renditions, however, as a first choice.

A third possibility is producing one's own music. See the Production Notes at the end of this playbook for suggestions.

A fourth possibility is also available. The publisher can provide a cassette tape with the full punk "Deck the Halls" recorded on it. "Jingle Bells On the Range" is also included on the tape in a special stereo configuration with all musical accompaniment on one channel and the vocal music on the other—allowing it to be used as either an accompaniment tape or as a master for full pantomime.

These are only suggestions. Guitar may accompany both selections, with that instrument and the singers setting the style. A full instrumental set-up may even be used by groups wishing to go that far. But do not let physical arrangements get in the way of helping your audience appreciate their perfect gifts. The play works just as well with no music at all.

*Updating*

Very likely, by the time NOT EVEN A. MOUSE hits print, part of it will be outdated, notably the rock group (“Mice Without Rats”) and such. Permission is hereby given to update the dialogue to make this Chrismouse Tale pertinent to tomorrow’s audiences.

Whether updating group names, individual names, or general concepts, however, do keep the one central motif in mind—mice. Every part of the show is set up from mouse perspective both in size and attitude. What mice like is good, what mice hate is bad. Evaluate any update in this light. I had considered using a rock group called “Stray Rats,” for example, but rats are not mice. This may strike some as hair splitting.

I’ll accept that.

Have fun and have a Merry Christmas!

*Jerome McDonough*

## PRODUCTION NOTES

### *Properties*

Bench (natural or brown)

Long pole or broomstick (brightly painted)—Mouse Trap

Baby doll with two wraps, or two baby dolls—Mary, Mama Mouse

All other props are mimed

### *Costumes*

Each member of the performing ensemble in the original production wore a basic outfit comprised of a "Christmasy" red or green, or red and green top, a pair of jeans, and a pair of soft-soled shoes. (At first, each mouse character also wore a pair of mouse ears but this was abandoned because of the rapid changing of characters and the very fast action—the ears kept falling or being knocked off.)

Each character added a costume accessory or prop, for example:

Annie Mouse—muffler and/or winter hat

Andy Mouse—silly muffler and/or toboggan hat

Papa Mouse—vest or sweater

Cat—rhinestone collar or ribbon

Punk Announcer—"rude" mismatched shirt and tie, mouse ears with safety pins through them (similar punk devices for "Mice Without Rats")

Cosmic Crunchers 1, 2, and 3—matching bright hats or large bowties

Country Announcer—bandana and cowboy hat

Tex Cheddar—Big hat with feather band, microphone

The Chunk Band—hats, bandanas. The bass player "plays" the long stick. One band member may use the bench as a steel guitar.

Crouch, Slouch—"gangster" hats

Vito Moutzarella—larger "gangster" hat, cotton or other padding in each cheek

Joseph—a bit of cloth to suggest a cloak

Mary—a white or blue veil over her head. Child is wrapped in similar cloth

Mama Mouse—perhaps a shawl or other wrap. Child wrapped in a contemporary baby blanket

Other costumes—including Mickey Mouse or Mouseketeers types—are obviously acceptable. Each director must make his own choice.

### *Music*

One of the possibilities for music suggested in the Introduction (p. vii) is your own instrumentation and improvisation. A good friend here is one of the relatively inexpensive small electronic "Keyboards" which have become popular lately. A Casiotone MT-65 was used as the accompaniment instrument in the original production of NOT EVEN A. MOUSE. The keyboard was played through a portable P. A. system to give it the needed punch. A guitar amplifier would do as well.

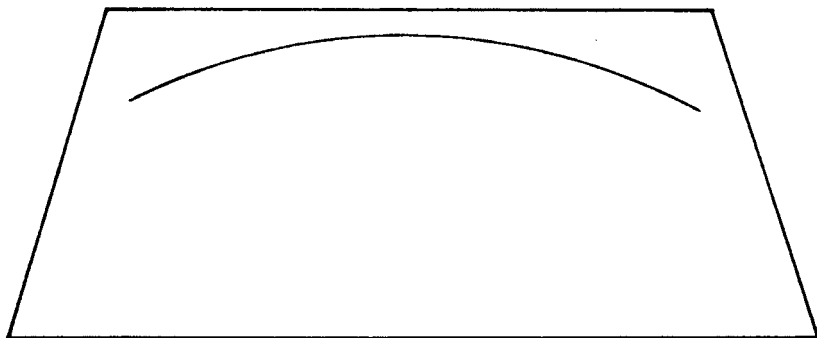
"Deck the Halls" was strictly instrumental and was recorded ahead of time and played on tape during the tour. The first section was played with plain organ chords, without drum machine and with the "Organ" stop for the lead voice. The "Punk" section opened with the drum machine on "16 beat," medium fast, fifty percent. Automatic chords (Key of G) were then added, Bass III, Chord I, no arpeggio, accompaniment at fifty percent. Lead voice was "Funny" with delayed vibrato and reverb On. The rock beat, bass, and chord pattern suggested the very halted, robot-like phrasing of the melody line. For the "tape messing up" section, the volume was raised and lowered rapidly and finally taken out.

"Jingle Bells" featured a laid-back Country feel. "Cowboy" phrasing was suggested by the keyboard settings—automatic chords On (Key of C), Bass I, Chord

1, tempo medium, drum machine on Swing, accompaniment and rhythm fifty per cent. An extra country feel was suggested with an instrumental chorus featuring a lead voicing of electric piano with a late attack (Modulation II on the MT-65) with delayed vibrato and reverb On, which sounded very much like a steel guitar when played through the P. A. system.

*The Set*

The action takes place on a bare stage. The curved line represents the Living Cyclorama formed by ensemble members.



## NOT EVEN A. MOUSE

*[At rise, the Living Cyclorama is in place]*

NARRATOR. *[May be an ensemble member or the director or producer]* This is a story about mice—a very special family of mice—and about what happened to them one Christmas Eve.

*[ANDY and ANNIE MOUSE turn in from the Stage Right side of the Cyc and start moving toward Left, curiously. Just as they reach Stage Left, ANDY trips on his own feet and makes a terrible noise as he falls. PAPA MOUSE turns in from the Cyc]*

PAPA. Andy, you've got to keep the noise down. Mama needs her rest.

ANNIE. Is the baby here yet?

PAPA. Not yet, Annie, but soon. I should get back in, now. *[He exits]*

ANDY. It better be a boy.

ANNIE. Why?

ANDY. I've got enough sisters.

ANNIE. Just me.

ANDY. That's what I said.

ANNIE. Well, I want a girl to make up for the last baby. *[Indicating Andy. He reacts, then speaks]*

ANDY. A girl might be OK—if they take trade-ins.

PAPA. *[Turning back in]* If you two can't be still, please go in the other room and finish wrapping presents or something. *[As he exits, ANDY and ANNIE begin talking again, quietly]*

ANDY. Everything's been wrapped for days. *[Moving toward Center]* Christmas sure is slow.

ANNIE. I wish the baby could be born on Christmas.

ANDY. Some present, huh?

ANNIE. *[Thinks a second]* Andy, the baby is like a present—from Mom to us. We need to give *her* something.

ANDY. What?

ANNIE. We've got to find the perfect gift.

ANDY. How? It's just a few hours until Christmas.

ANNIE. I don't care. Let's go.

ANDY. What about the (gulp) cat? *[An ensemble member moves*

*from the Right edge of the Cyc and falls asleep, cat-like, on the floor Down Right, as Annie speaks]*

ANNIE. We'll get past her. What are you, a man or a—oh, never mind. Come on. *[They see the cat. Panic edges Andy's voice]*

ANDY. There she is.

ANNIE. And fast asleep. Let's sneak by.

ANDY. *[Squeakily]* O . . . K . . . *[They begin sneaking Right. They are almost past when ANDY gets a horrible expression on his face and breathes in quickly—he is about to sneeze. In stark fear, he taps ANNIE on the shoulder. She turns to him. He coarsely whispers his predicament]* Gotta sneeze! *[She shakes her head vigorously, telling him not to sneeze. He keeps loudly whispering in panic as he places his finger under his nose and starts frantically tiptoeing past the cat, then figures he can't get past her and runs back toward Left, then decides it's too far to get back and starts running the other way, then starts back again, getting just to Center when the sneeze starts rising in him again and he stops. ANNIE is pleading with him not to sneeze, but he inhales very dramatically, tosses his head back and brings it forward for the sneeze violently, but all the sound that comes out is . . . a very small sneeze]* Chh. *[He is immensely relieved, as is ANNIE. They both start off Right again, but just as ANDY passes the cat he releases an enormous and unannounced sneeze which wakes the cat instantly. ANNIE runs behind the Cyc, but ANDY is too close to the cat. Thinking rapidly, he thrusts his arms out like the hands of a clock and starts making the sound . . . ]* Tick, tick, tick, tick, (Etc.) *[The CAT looks sleepily at the "clock," stares closely at it to see the time, looks at her own wrist watch, decides it's too early to get up, and settles back to sleep. ANDY keeps ticking as the cat goes back to sleep and as ANNIE moves to him, gesturing "OK." He is too deeply into the role, though. Just as ANNIE reaches him, he breaks into a huge sound of an alarm clock going off]* Brrriiiiiinnnnnnngggg! *[The CAT jumps straight up in the air as ANNIE grabs ANDY and drags him rapidly to far Right. CAT looks about, totally dazed, then shakes it off and cat-walks back to the Cyc]*

ANNIE. Are you crazy?

ANDY. I lost my head.

ANNIE. You nearly did at that. Now no more funny stuff. We'll try the kids' bedroom next.

## BEGINNING OF OPTIONAL SECTION NO. 1.

Cut if music is not used.

*[As ANDY and ANNIE cross toward Center, six ensemble members turn in from the Cyc and form a "JAM BOX" stereo, Left. Two of the members stand about 10 feet apart and hold their arms up, forming circles. Two others kneel before these, making larger circles before their bodies with their arms. Two more face each other, between the first two groups, their arms extended from the elbows toward each other, forming the cassette loading door. ANNIE and ANDY look this arrangement over]*

ANDY. What's that?

ANNIE. They call it a "Jam Box."

ANDY. How's it work? *[ANNIE presses the head of one of the two middle ensemble members. These two bend to the downstage side, from the waist, arms still extended, suggesting the opening of the cassette door]*

CASSETTE DOORS. ZZZZZZTTTT!

ANNIE. Let's go in. *[ANNIE and ANDY crawl in through the cassette door and the "JAM BOX" ensemble instantly re-forms, to become the \*punk band MICE WITHOUT RATS. (Or a new group of ensemble members may form the band.) ANDY and ANNIE watch. (\*This style and the name of the group will change as the years go by. The guideline is to name the group or soloist to fit a mouse motif)]*

PUNK ANNOUNCER. And now, direct from their highly successful Swiss tour, MICE WITHOUT RATS! *[ANNOUNCER applauds vigorously. ANDY and ANNIE listen as the MICE WITHOUT RATS begin their strange version of "DECK THE HALLS" (see introductory notes and appendix). "Deck the Halls" is played in full raucous punk rock style. The mice MUSICIANS dance and "play" in the robot-like New Wave or punk mode. As song is nearing its close, the music starts to distort, slowing down, making awful noises]*

ANDY. What's happening?

ANNIE. The tape's messing up. We'd better get out of here. *[They jump out toward Left as the song dies and the MUSICIANS slump over. The next ensemble combination is formed during the following dialogue. (Ensemble members not in the scene return to the Cyc)]*

ANDY. Made it.

ANNIE. Let's keep moving.

END OF OPTIONAL SECTION NO. 1.

*[Three ensemble members have formed an enormous MOUSE TRAP, Right. One member is curled up on one side, suggesting the cheese. Two others crouch, facing each other, each holding one end of a long pole or broomstick]*

ANDY. *[Seeing the cheese]* There's the perfect gift! Cheese! *[ANDY rushes toward the cheese. ANNIE calls out]*

ANNIE. Andy, don't! That's a . . . *[ANDY is touching the cheese, but hears her and turns nonchalantly, letting go of the cheese just as . . .]*

TRAP. Wham! *[The pole has been swung up and over the "cheese" and slammed to the floor on the opposite side, missing Andy's back by a millionth of an inch]*

ANDY. Huh?

ANNIE. Mouse trap.

ANDY. What is?

ANNIE. *[Pointing behind him]* That is.

ANDY. *[Turns, looks calmly, sees what could have happened, and goes into a shaking, jabbering fit]* Yuh, yuh, yuh, yuh, yuh, yuh.

ANNIE. Settle down. You're all right.

ANDY. Eeeee, eeeeeee, eeeeeee.

ANNIE. Stop it. We have work to do.

ANDY. *[Still shaking]* You think Mom might just like a hanky?

ANNIE. You couldn't give up now, could you? *[ANDY nods his head very profusely and rapidly. Ensemble members form the next combination]* Well, forget it. We keep hunting. *[Looks toward Center]* What's that?

ANDY. Let's not look. *[The ensemble has dispersed to become a table top VIDEO GAME, Center. Two members face each other, defining the edges of the screen. Several others stand between these, arms extended forward, hands clasped together, suggesting video "creatures" which will devour anything in their path. All are frozen. ANDY and ANNIE peer at the game]*

ANNIE. It's a game. I can't quite read the title.

ANDY. *[On tiptoes, looking up, reading]* Comic Dumpster.

ANNIE. *[Crossing, then getting up on tiptoes to see better]* That's Cosmic Cruncher.

ANDY. *[Inspecting the screen]* How's it work?

ANNIE. The switch is there by you. *[ANDY pushes down on the shoulder of the Center screen edge. Video "creatures" (COSMIC CRUNCHERS) start making "Woka, woka, woka, woka" sounds and*



*moving in small patterns, covering short distances, then turning at right angles. They move with no particular direction until Andy speaks]*

ANDY. *[Turning away from the screen] What a stupid game. [COSMIC CRUNCHERS hear this and stop moving. They are perturbed. They look at each other and exchange little angry phrases, talking and gesturing toward Andy]*

COSMIC CRUNCHER 1. Woka, woka, woka.

COSMIC CRUNCHER 2. Woka.

COSMIC CRUNCHER 3. Woka, woka?

COSMIC CRUNCHERS 1 and 2. *[Nodding their heads in assent]*  
Woka.

ANDY. *[Having crossed to Annie, Left] I mean, this dumb game doesn't do anything.*

ANNIE. *What do you expect it to do? [COSMIC CRUNCHERS are moving toward him, moving their arms like huge jaws and making threatening low "woka, woka" sounds as they come. Then the sounds stop]*

ANDY. *Well, it . . . [ANDY becomes aware that the "woka, woka" sound has stopped. He doesn't know that the Cosmic Crunchers are right behind him, however] It got kind of quiet all at once, didn't it? [ANNIE hasn't been able to get a word in and now she can only point with small motions of her finger. ANDY is afraid to look. He points behind him with his thumbs, as if to say, "Is something back there?"; ANNIE nods. ANDY makes no sound, but shapes his mouth into the word, "Oh." VERY slowly he turns and, all at once, the CRUNCHERS scream . . . ]*

COSMIC CRUNCHERS. WOKA! *[ANDY shrieks and the race is on. The CRUNCHERS begin chasing ANDY all over the performance space, even out into the audience. CRUNCHERS will split up and try to corner him, moving the enormous jaws all the time. When they are making little headway against Andy, they turn their attentions to children in the audience, trying to munch on them, too. The "woka, woka" noise is constant and rather loud. ANDY tries to be heard above it as he passes the orchestra pit. (CAUTION: Be very careful when working in the audience. Little people sometimes jump into unexpected places, and some scare very easily.)]*

ANDY. Turn it off!

ANNIE. *[Having trouble hearing above the noise] What?*

ANDY. *[Crossing back the other way] Turn it off! Turn it off!*

ANNIE. What?