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Dramatic Publishing

The Brave Little Tailor



Adapted by Brian Guehring
From the fairy tale by the Brothers Grimm

The Brave Little Tailor

Adapted by Brian Guehring from the fairy tale by the Brothers Grimm. Cast: 2 to 3m., 1 to 4w., 1 to 9+ either gender. A mischievous silly jester (who speaks in verse) introduces the audience to a young tailor who has been discounted his entire life because he is small. This meek tailor in the village is bullied by his boss, smothered by his mother and harassed by customers. The young tailor, however, dreams of fighting dragons, and during one vivid fantasy he manages to kill seven flies in one blow. Rumors spread around the village and get exaggerated until the king hears of a tailor who can kill seven giants in one blow. The tailor is brought before the cowardly king and his beautiful stepdaughter. The tailor then must find his own courage (with the help of the princess and the jester) to battle a rampaging unicorn, two troublesome giants and a fierce dragon. *Flexible staging. Approximate running time: 60 minutes. Code: BL2.*

*Front Cover: Omaha Theater Company, Omaha, Neb., featuring Katie Grant.
Photo: Madeline Jahn Wahl. Cover design: John Sergel.*

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The Brave Little Tailor

Adapted by
BRIAN GUEHRING



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The Brave Little Tailor was originally developed through improvisational workshops in the fall of 2004 with the Omaha Theater Company. This 60-minute play was then produced by the Omaha Theater Company for school groups and public audiences in January 2005 with the following cast and production team:

CAST:

Little TailorKatie Grant

Master Tailor, Baker, King,
Unicorn, Big Giant, Dragon.....Andrew McGreevey

Ma, Jam Seller, Lady in Waiting,
Princess, DragonStephanie Kidd

Jester, Baker's Wife,
Bigger Giant, Dragon.....Konrad Case

PRODUCTION TEAM:

DirectorJaneve West

Costume DesignerKathryn Neary

Set & Light DesignMark Lewis

Development Dramaturg..... Michael Miller

The Brave Little Tailor

CHARACTERS

LITTLE TAILOR: A small young man in his late teens. He is a dreamer but has been told his entire life that he is too small and young to do anything. Therefore, he has become unsure of himself. He is now an apprentice at the town's tailor shop to support his mother. He is an excellent fly swatter.

MA: The little tailor's overprotective mother. She won't tell her son why her husband left, but she is terrified that her son might leave and be killed. She is also afraid to be left alone. She loves her son dearly.

KING: The inept ruler of the kingdom. He exudes confidence. This king thinks of himself first and will do anything to save himself from danger or trouble. He appears brave but is actually quite spineless.

PRINCESS: The king's stepdaughter. She is goodhearted and positive. She believes strongly in the little tailor. She will become a good ruler, concerned more about the safety of the people than herself.

JESTER: The court jester who speaks the truth through verse. He is also the narrator of the story, who pushes the characters along.

MASTER TAILOR: The overconfident, overbearing owner of the tailor shop.

BAKER'S WIFE: An overbearing woman who believes the customer is always right, and the employee is always wrong.

JAM SELLER: A pushy and poor jam seller.

BAKER: The shy town baker.

LADY-IN-WAITING: The terrified lady of the court.

UNICORN: A magical creature, normally harmless, who is on a rampage and destroying the town and farm. Possibly played by an actor in costume with canes in front to create four-legged unicorn (à la *The Lion King*).

GIANTS: Two cruel, dim giants who bully the townspeople into providing them with food. They are bitter rivals. One BIG and one BIGGER. Possibly played by actors with huge platform-esque shoes and oversized clothes, or puppets.

DRAGON: A huge, ancient dragon who is a constant threat to the kingdom. Possibly played by a huge puppet with one actor manipulating the head and other actors manipulating wings.

Possible doubling for different sized casts can be found in the back of the book on page 49.

SETTING

Ye Olde Tailor Shoppe: An old shop full of clothes and fabrics.

The Town Square: The gossip center of the village.

The King's Court: The royal throne room.

Outside the Castle: A courtyard.

The Woods: Home of the unicorn.

The Mountain: Home of the giants.

The Dragon's Lair: Home of the dragon.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

I love fairy tales. When the artistic director of the Omaha Theater Company approached me in 2003 about adapting a fairy tale for our season, I jumped at the chance. I had fun re-reading the classic fairy tales and trying to find one that spoke to me. I quickly settled on *The Brave Little Tailor*.

I connected to the theme of a young person overcoming the perception that he or she is too small to accomplish something. I remember the times as a child when adults or other kids would dismiss my abilities because I was “too small,” how frustrated that made me feel and how I wanted to prove my critics wrong.

The original production was for a company of four actors. We had fun developing the play with improvisation workshops to fine-tune the characters' motives and voices. I also wanted to challenge myself by writing Jester's lines completely in verse. I was very pleased with our first production.

The next production of this script was for a large youth cast. The Omaha Theater Company holds production camps each summer, and the script has to match the number of kids who sign up for the camp. With all of the different characters in this play, this script was flexible to fit a wide range of cast sizes. The script has since been produced several times as a four-person touring show and several times as a large-cast youth production. Town Hall Theatre (Centerville, Ohio) even did the large-cast version in their main season, then immediately toured it to the schools with the small four-person cast.

I am proud of this adaptation of *The Brave Little Tailor* and I hope it fits your production needs, whether you are touring with a small cast or directing a large youth company.

The Brave Little Tailor

SCENE 1: Ye Olde Tailor Shoppe

(The play opens with a simple little tune playing as the LITTLE TAILOR is working at the tailor shop. The LITTLE TAILOR isn't great at sewing; he often messes up or pricks a finger. But he works hard, takes his time and does a good job. The JESTER is sneaking around and spying on the LITTLE TAILOR. The JESTER nods his heads and addresses the audience.)

JESTER. Have you ever felt tiny, little or small?

Or heard, "You're too young to do anything at all"?

Have you been scared of something much bigger than you?

Or felt there was nothing little old you could do?

Well don't be fooled by appearances and faces,

Courage is found in the unlikeliest places.

And many who are big and act so powerful and brave,

When faced with real danger may meekly behave.

You see courage is something we all find within.

Courage comes from the heart when it is genuine.

How did I learn this and know that it's true?

I learned it from a small boy and he'll show you, too.

Let me introduce you to this boy whose story I'll share.

He lived a long time ago, when giants weren't so rare.

He also was told he was too small and too meek,

He had no confidence and rarely would speak,

But then things started to spin out of control.
He had problems and trouble, all that rigmarole,
When danger found him, what did the small boy do?
Well, sit back and watch, and soon you'll know, too.

(The LITTLE TAILOR holds up the simple shirt he has finished. He is very proud of it. He then puts in the "finished" pile which is very small.)

LITTLE TAILOR. That's a nice job, if I say so myself. At this rate, I'll be finished by ... *(He goes back to the "to do" pile, which is huge.)* my 100th birthday.

(He puts the next item on the mannequin and sighs. He is tired. He opens the window, takes a deep breath, smiles at the birds and sunshine and goes back to work. MA enters with a rush of energy.)

MA. Oh, thank goodness. You're alive! I thought you had been devoured by a wolf.

LITTLE TAILOR. A wolf, Ma?

MA. Well, you didn't come home for lunch, and I didn't know what happened. And you know how dangerous this kingdom is.

LITTLE TAILOR. There aren't a lot of wolves inside the tailor shop, Ma.

MA. I'm just glad you are all right. *(She hugs LITTLE TAILOR.)* Why didn't you come home for lunch? Are you too old to spend time with your mother?

LITTLE TAILOR. No, Ma! I've just been working non-stop since sunrise. I haven't had a break all day.

MA. Oh, my poor son. If you don't eat properly, how are you ever going to grow up to be a big man?

LITTLE TAILOR. I think this is as tall as I'll get, Ma.

MA. I know, son. I was just trying to make you feel better about being the smallest boy in the village. I know how everyone makes fun of you.

LITTLE TAILOR. Thanks, Ma.

MA. Well, I brought you a lunch. It's nothing much, just some cheese and homemade bread.

LITTLE TAILOR. Thanks, Ma.

MA. You know I love you. I just worry about you. Especially in this drafty shop. Now, who would open a window when it's so cold outside today?

LITTLE TAILOR. Actually, it's a beautiful day outside ...

MA (*closes the window. As she starts to clean up the shop a bit*). No. You don't want any cold breezes or flies coming in here. Now, make sure you do everything the master tailor says, young man.

LITTLE TAILOR. Of course, Ma.

MA. I'll see you tonight. I love y ... (*She finds a book.*) What is this?!

LITTLE TAILOR. It's my book. It's an exciting quest of a brave knight—

MA. What have I told you about reading these kinds of books?

LITTLE TAILOR. That they're a waste of time.

MA. That's right. You don't need to fill your head with stories about knights and ogres and adventure. Your father read books like this. And you know what happened to him ...

LITTLE TAILOR. Actually, I don't, Ma. What happened to Father?

MA. We don't talk about your father ... Let's just say that he started dreaming and thinking he could do more than he could. He left us, and now he's gone. Understand?

LITTLE TAILOR. Yes, ma'am.

MA. Son, it's a dangerous world out there. There are robbers, giants and dragons. Trust me, you're too small to survive in that kingdom. You should be happy working in this tailor shop and living in our comfortable home.

LITTLE TAILOR. Of course, Ma.

MA. Now don't waste your time dreaming, it will just depress you in the end.

LITTLE TAILOR. If you say so, Ma.

MA (*takes book and starts to go*). I'll see you at home. I don't know why he would want to read a book like this ... (*Exits.*)

LITTLE TAILOR. Because it was my father's book.

(LITTLE TAILOR sighs and starts to eat his lunch. MASTER TAILOR enters.)

LITTLE TAILOR (*cont'd*). Good day, master tailor.

MASTER TAILOR. What is that smell?

LITTLE TAILOR. My ma brought me Limburger cheese in my lunch.

MASTER TAILOR. Well, open some windows before I pass out.

LITTLE TAILOR. If you say so, sir. (*He opens the window.*)

MASTER TAILOR. Isn't it a little late to still be eating lunch? When do you ever work?

LITTLE TAILOR. I stayed late last night and started early this morning. I haven't had a lunch break.

MASTER TAILOR. Well, you're behind in your work. Look, young man, I took you in as my apprentice out of pity. You're too small to do anything else in town.

LITTLE TAILOR. I will work even harder to make up for my mistakes.

MASTER TAILOR. Good. Now I'll be in back taking a nap. Make sure I am not awakened.

LITTLE TAILOR. Yes, sir.

(MASTER TAILOR goes to the back. LITTLE TAILOR sighs and starts to work again, a little faster. The LITTLE TAILOR hears buzzing as some flies enter. BAKER'S WIFE enters loudly.)

BAKER'S WIFE. Where is the master tailor?

LITTLE TAILOR. He's not available. Would you mind keeping your voice down?

BAKER'S WIFE *(in a loud obnoxious voice)*. Are you saying that I have a loud, obnoxious voice?

LITTLE TAILOR. No, ma'am. *(He waves his hands in front of his nose to brush away flies.)*

BAKER'S WIFE *(louder)*. And now you think I smell?

LITTLE TAILOR. No, ma'am. There are just flies in here ...

BAKER'S WIFE. It's because you have trash on the table. *(She picks up the cheese.)*

LITTLE TAILOR. That's my lunch.

BAKER'S WIFE *(throws it out the window)*. Now close the windows, and you won't have any more flies.

LITTLE TAILOR. Well, I could, but the master tailor ...

BAKER'S WIFE. Didn't the master tailor teach you anything, little boy? The customer is always right.

LITTLE TAILOR. Yes, ma'am. *(He closes the window.)*
Now, how may I help you?

BAKER'S WIFE. These dresses I bought here five months ago are too small.

LITTLE TAILOR. Oh, well that explains it. You must have been measured before you were pregnant.

BAKER'S WIFE. Pregnant? What?

LITTLE TAILOR. You're going to have a baby. After the baby is born, I'm sure the dresses will fit again.

BAKER'S WIFE. I'm not pregnant. Are you calling me fat?

LITTLE TAILOR. No, no. I'm sure since your husband is the baker and his pastries are very tasty...

BAKER'S WIFE (*practically shouting*). I did not come in here to be insulted by a boy who knows nothing about tailoring! I demand my money back!

(*MASTER TAILOR enters.*)

MASTER TAILOR. What is going on out here?

BAKER'S WIFE. There you are, you incompetent fool! First I spend too much money on these dresses from your shop. Then they don't fit because you can't measure properly. Then I am insulted by your help!

MASTER TAILOR. I am so sorry, ma'am. Of course, this was my apprentice's mistake. It's been very difficult since I took this boy in to help me. I'm sure you understand.

BAKER'S WIFE. What are you going to do about it?

MASTER TAILOR. Well, I will personally remake these dresses.

BAKER'S WIFE. And you will make me an extra one. Deliver them to my home.

MASTER TAILOR. Of course. And may I say, you are looking beautiful today.

BAKER'S WIFE. Why thank you, master tailor! (*She exits.*)

MASTER TAILOR. Well, you will have to stay late tonight and make the dresses for the baker's wife.

LITTLE TAILOR. I thought you said you would make them personally.

MASTER TAILOR. I lied. This time make the dresses a couple of sizes bigger than her current measurements.

LITTLE TAILOR. Yes, sir.

MASTER TAILOR. Why are the windows closed? Didn't I tell you to open them?

LITTLE TAILOR. Well, the baker's wife told me ... Never mind. I'm sorry. *(He opens the window.)*

MASTER TAILOR. Well, I obviously am not going to get any sleep here today. You'd better start working. *(He leaves.)*

LITTLE TAILOR. Yes, sir. Have a nice evening, sir. *(He sighs and looks at the pile of clothes he must work on.)*

JAM SELLER *(from outside the window)*. Jam for sale! Sweet jam for sale! Hey, little tailor, do you want some jam?

LITTLE TAILOR *(out window)*. Oh, no, thank you. I don't have any money to spare.

(JAM SELLER enters the shop.)

JAM SELLER. Wouldn't you like some jam for your bread? Strawberry? Raspberry? Boysenberry?

LITTLE TAILOR. I'd like some, but I have no money. And I should get back to work.

JAM SELLER. Here, try the jam. It's very good.

LITTLE TAILOR. I'm sure it is—

(JAM SELLER shoves jam into LITTLE TAILOR's mouth.)

LITTLE TAILOR *(cont'd)*. That is tasty.

JAM SELLER. That will be one silver coin.

LITTLE TAILOR. What? I didn't buy any of your jam!

JAM SELLER. You ate some. That will be one silver coin for that jar. If you don't buy the jam, I will yell out to the street that you robbed me. You ate my jam without paying for it.

LITTLE TAILOR. Oh, please don't. I'm sorry. I only have one silver coin, I need it for—

(JAM SELLER takes the coin and puts down a jar of jam.)

JAM SELLER. Here is your jam. It's been a pleasure doing business with you. *(Leaves.)*

LITTLE TAILOR. Well, I had better get back to work, or I'll never get home. (*Starting to sew.*) Cut the fabric, thread the needle, sew the cloth. The same thing everyday. I shouldn't complain. I have a simple life and a steady job. No big problems. Just rude customers, a mean boss, a smothering mother and pesky flies. (*Waving away the flies.*) Now, a brave knight has real problems: jousting in battles, protecting the people and fighting evil villains. (*Starts to get into his fantasy and starts acting out the part of a knight with the needle as his sword.*) Wait? What is this? I am now being attacked by flying dragons. (*Starts treating flies like dragons.*) I am surrounded. (*Ducks down away from flies.*) I will have to sneak up on them ... (*Picks up bread with jam.*) and ... (*He squishes the flies and looks at them.*) Hey, look at that! I killed seven in one blow! I killed seven in one blow! (*Shouts it out the window.*) I killed seven in one blow!

JAM SELLER (*on street*). What was that, kid?

LITTLE TAILOR. I killed seven in one blow.

JAM SELLER. Seven what?

LITTLE TAILOR. Oh ... flies. Just flies. I just killed seven flies in one blow. Sorry. I should get back to work. (*He closes the window.*) I guess I got a little carried away there. Maybe Ma is right. I should probably stop reading those stories and putting crazy thoughts in my head. I'm such a little guy. I wouldn't stand a chance against a real dragon. I could never be that brave. Oh well, back to work.

SCENE 2: The Town Square

(*BAKER'S WIFE walks by and sees JAM SELLER laughing. BAKER'S WIFE is conceited and in a hurry. She doesn't want to talk to the dirty JAM SELLER.*)

BAKER'S WIFE. What's so funny?

JAM SELLER. Do you know the little tailor?

BAKER'S WIFE. Unfortunately.

JAM SELLER. He says he killed seven flies in one blow.

BAKER'S WIFE. Well, that shop is infested with flies.

JAM SELLER. Can you imagine that little runt attacking anything? He's scared of a mouse.

BAKER'S WIFE. Those, too? Indeed.

JAM SELLER. Would you like to buy some jam? Just try it ...

BAKER'S WIFE. No.

JAM SELLER. Good day, then.

(JAM SELLER leaves laughing. BAKER'S WIFE is shaking her head as she enters the bakery. BAKER is working very hard and not paying a lot of attention to his wife's latest complaints.)

BAKER'S WIFE. Are you even going to greet me?

BAKER. Sorry, dear.

BAKER'S WIFE. How many times do I have to tell you to talk to the customers? Make them feel welcome.

BAKER. If you say so, dear.

BAKER'S WIFE. That is why our sales are so poor.

BAKER. I'm sorry, dear.

BAKER'S WIFE. It's not all your fault, though. The new king keeps raising the taxes. Things are so bad in this kingdom now; nobody can afford to buy anything.

BAKER. As you say, dear.

BAKER'S WIFE. I just came back from the tailor's shop. It's dreadful. The tailors are incompetent. The shop has an awful smell, and the place is infested with flies and mice. Are you listening?

BAKER. Of course, dear.

BAKER'S WIFE. The master tailor makes the little tailor take care of them. He just killed seven mice in one blow.

BAKER. Yes, dear.

BAKER'S WIFE. It's the only thing he's good for. He's a terrible tailor.

BAKER. If you say so, dear.

BAKER'S WIFE. Did I tell you the tailor tried to rob me? They're both crooks.

BAKER. I'm sorry, dear.

BAKER'S WIFE. Are you even listening to me?

BAKER. Of course, dear.

BAKER'S WIFE. Humph ... Well, make sure you talk to the customers ...

BAKER. Yes, dear.

(BAKER'S WIFE exits to the back of the bakery, where she lives with the BAKER. A very nervous LADY-IN-WAITING enters.)

LADY-IN-WAITING. What a quaint, little, safe shop.

BAKER. Yes, dear ... Oh, I mean ... May I help you?

LADY-IN-WAITING. I thought I'd spend a day here in the country to calm my nerves. It's getting too dangerous near the palace. First there were wolves, then giants. Now a dragon is stirring again. I needed to get away from it all.

(Pause.)

BAKER. Uh ... It's no safer here.

LADY-IN-WAITING. Really?

BAKER. I heard the tailor shop was just robbed.

LADY-IN-WAITING. Robbed? Oh, dear. What happened?

BAKER. Seven crooks tried to rob it. Seven big men. The little tailor apprentice killed all of them in one blow.

POSSIBLE DOUBLING

Cast of 4:

Little Tailor

Master Tailor/Baker/King/Unicorn/Big Giant/Dragon

Ma, Jam Seller, Lady-in-Waiting, Princess, Dragon

Jester, Baker's Wife, Bigger Giant, Dragon

Cast of 5:

Little Tailor

Master Tailor/Baker/King/Big Giant/Dragon

Ma/Lady-in-Waiting/ Dragon

Princess/Unicorn /Jam Seller

Jester/Baker's Wife/ Bigger Giant/ Dragon

Cast of 6:

Little Tailor

Master Tailor/King/Dragon

Baker/Unicorn/Big Giant/Dragon

Ma/Lady-in-Waiting/ Dragon

Princess/Unicorn /Jam Seller

Jester/Baker's Wife/ Bigger Giant/ Dragon

Cast of 9:

5 Leads:

Brave Little Tailor

Princess

King

2 Jesters (split lines into two parts)

4 Chorus members/Puppeteers:

Lady-in-Waiting/Dragon

Ma/Jam Seller/Dragon

Master Tailor/Baker/Bigger Giant/Dragon

Baker's Wife/Unicorn/Big Giant/Dragon

Cast of 13:

7 Leads:

Brave Little Tailor

Princess

King

4 Jesters (split lines into four parts)

6 Chorus members/Puppeteers:

Lady-in-Waiting/Dragon

Ma

Master Tailor/Big Giant/Dragon

Baker's Wife/Dragon

Baker/Bigger Giant/Dragon

Jam Seller/Unicorn/ Dragon

Cast of 16:

7 Leads:

Brave Little Tailor

Princess

King

4 Jesters (split lines into four parts)

9 Chorus members/Puppeteers:

Lady-in-Waiting/Dragon

Ma

Master Tailor/Dragon

Baker's Wife/Dragon

Baker/Dragon

Jam Seller/ Dragon

Big Giant/Townsperson

Bigger Giant/Townsperson

Unicorn/Townsperson

NOTE: To accommodate more actors, Jester's part can be split into 2 or 4 parts and the lines divided among the performers.

With a large cast, Lady-in-Waiting can be added into the Throne Room scenes and given a couple of King's lines. Also, townspeople can be added to react to King's speeches.