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Dramatic Publishing

A Participation Play for Children

the dinosaur play

BY
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(THE DINOSAUR PLAY)

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for giving this play life**

THE DINOSAUR PLAY
A Participation Play for Children
For Five Characters
(Two Men, Two Women, One May Be Either)

C H A R A C T E R S

MAMMAL

EGG (later, BABY TANK)

TANK

TYRANNOSAURUS REX

BRONTOSAURUS

Place: **The swamp.**

Time: **Millions of years ago.**

the dinosaur play

(The play begins in darkness with the environmental sound track. But there is already, within the darkness, the first echoes of a world millions and millions of years ago. Swampy vapors [dry ice] spill out into the theatre in the darkness. A strange-looking tree with large removable flat leaves stands in one corner of the stage. Then a howling, the howling of Brontosaurus, a very lonely sound, comes from far, far off in the distance.

The light changes from the night to dawn, the dawn of a tropical steamy world. The theatre is fully lit now. Visible on a platform, some distance away from the audience, is a single solitary dinosaur egg.

The sound of water. An actor [MAMMAL] dressed in ordinary clothes comes out. He stops as he hears the sound of Brontosaurus howling, slowly raises his arms [he is in short sleeves] and looks at them.)

MAMMAL. I feel strange. I feel as though my arms are covered with fur. Look at your arms. (Points to one child.) And yours. And yours. All of our arms are covered with fur. (Looks around.) This doesn't feel like our world. We must be some place else. Some place millions and millions and millions of years ago. Who are we? We're small, furry. We can think. We don't lay eggs. We don't. We . . . must be . . . the very first mammals. (Slowly backs toward the egg.) And if we're the very first mammals and it's so long ago, then that -- (Points to egg.) -- must be a dinosaur egg.

(The EGG taps out "help, help, help.")

MAMMAL. Do you hear tapping? Do you? Do you? Is it coming from that egg? Don't worry. I'll talk to it. (Sits on platform.) Egg?

(The EGG stops tapping.)

MAMMAL. What is it? What are you trying to say to us?
(The EGG refuses to tap.) The egg won't talk to me.
It must talk to . . . to children. Let's try it. (Goes
to audience.) I need two of you to come up here and
listen to the egg. Try and understand what it's telling
us. (By now he should be leading two children to the
egg.) Be the egg's interpreters.

(The EGG taps once again, "help, help, help.")

MAMMAL (to first child). What do you think the egg wants?
(Child responds.) What do you think the egg wants?
(Second child responds. To audience:) What do you
think the egg wants? (Audience responds.) You all
could be right. (Leads children back to seats.)

(The EGG sighs.)

MAMMAL. Maybe you guessed right. Maybe you didn't.
I don't know.

(The BRONTOSAURUS howls far, far away.)

MAMMAL. That doesn't sound like a person I know, or an
animal. Listen. I don't know what the rules are here.
I don't know what to expect. I'm going to need all your
help to figure things out. All right? (Children respond.)
Now, what could the very first mammals possibly do
for a dinosaur egg? (Points to children he had talk to
the egg earlier or audience member who said "get out.")
Wait. You said, "get out." The egg wants to get out.
That's like "hatch." All right. (Points to one child.)
Would you come down here and ask the egg if it wants
to hatch? (Leads child to the egg.)

(The child asks the EGG if it wants to hatch. EGG taps
back twice.)

MAMMAL. Two taps?

(EGG taps back twice again.)

MAMMAL. Two taps again. The egg tapped back twice.
Two taps . . . two taps must mean . . . (Pause a beat
to let audience guess.) . . . yes. Yes, I want to hatch.
Yes, I want to be born. We did it. (Leads child back
to seat, very pleased.) We found out what the dinosaur
egg wants.

(EGG taps once.)

MAMMAL. One tap.

(EGG taps once.)

MAMMAL. The egg tapped back once.

(EGG taps once.)

MAMMAL. That must mean . . . no.

(EGG taps twice.)

MAMMAL. Yes? I don't want to be born? I do want to be
born? (To EGG.) You're a very confused egg.

(EGG bangs furiously, obviously having a terrible
tantrum.)

MAMMAL. And difficult. I know you're losing your temper.
I know you're angry.

(EGG rubs softly.)

MAMMAL. And sad? (To audience.) What's wrong with
this dinosaur egg? What does it need to help it hatch?
(Children respond.) A mother? You think this egg
needs a mother? (To child who guessed "mother.")
Would you please ask this egg if that's what it needs --
a mother to help it hatch?

(The child goes to EGG, asks EGG if it needs a mother
to help it hatch. EGG taps back yes three times, then
has another tantrum.)

MAMMAL (leading child quickly back to seat). Yes, yes, yes. Oh, oh. The egg is losing its temper again. If we don't find out what the egg wants once and for all it's going to crack its head open, it's so angry and impatient. What do you suppose this egg wants us to do for it now? (Pauses for suggestions, then:) First you -- (Points to child who guessed "get out.") -- said it wanted to hatch, then you -- (Points to child who guessed "mother.") -- said it wanted a mother, then . . . (Stops dead, turns to audience.) Wait a minute. I am getting a crazy idea. A dinosaur mother. (Goes to one child.) Do you think this egg wants us to find a dinosaur to be its mother? (Child responds.) But that . . . that's preposterous. We cannot find a dinosaur to be this egg's mother.

(EGG has another tantrum.)

MAMMAL (going right up to EGG). All right, Egg. (EGG stops tantrum.) All right. (Whirls to audience.) You really want to try and find a mother for this dinosaur egg? (Children respond. MAMMAL goes to one child.) I need someone to go to the egg and tell it that we will find a dinosaur to be its mother. (Picks child, leads child to EGG.)

(Child tells EGG that he or she will find a dinosaur to be the egg's mother. EGG lets out a very long, satisfied sigh.)

MAMMAL. Was that good? (Audience responds. MAMMAL leads child back to seat, then returns to the stage area and positions himself in front of place where the Tank will enter.) Well, that's good. Now all we have to do is find a dinosaur to be this egg's mother in this world full of swamps, flat grassy plains and -- (Environmental sound stops.) -- eerie silences. That's all. Just find a mother for . . .

(TANK charges onto the stage at "eerie silences," snorting and bellowing and screaming with rage, fist over fist on his forehead, simulating the horn of the Triceratops. He keeps snorting and pawing the ground and growling

until MAMMAL says, "I wish he could talk.")

MAMMAL (who has leaped behind post or any part of the theatre where he is still visible to audience). If you're scared, cover your faces. Why is he so angry? (To various children.) I wish he could talk. I wish he could talk. I wish he could talk.

TANK (by the third "I wish he could talk," he is saying his first lines). Rrrr . . . rrrr . . . Any one of you come near me and I'll ram you. I'll gut you. I'll tear you to ribbons. I'll . . .

MAMMAL. He's talking. He is talking. All right. I need one of you to come with me -- (Picks child.) -- and make friends with him. (Goes very gingerly up to within a few feet of the TANK. To child.) You tell him, "We want to be friends." You do it. (Child approaches TANK and says, "We want to be friends." MAMMAL adds:) You see, we're mammals and we . . .

TANK (roaring). Mammals! (Chases MAMMAL and child back into audience.) Mammals are dirty, small, furry, sneaky, ratty creatures that . . .

MAMMAL (from a safe place). I resent that.

TANK. . . . are going to take over this world from us dinosaurs because we're dying and you know it. And . . . you eat dinosaur eggs.

MAMMAL (charging up to TANK). That's a horrible thing to say. (TANK growls and chases MAMMAL back into audience.) Did . . . did you say that dinosaurs are dying?

TANK. I haven't seen another tank for weeks, months. This is the first swamp I've come across in my journeys for weeks. Forests are everywhere -- and what decent dinosaur can find food in a forest? You mammals are the only ones who are fat these days. I've lost so much weight it's ridiculous.

MAMMAL (to audience). Everyone. We must make friends with this dinosaur. Please tell him you would not eat a dinosaur egg. (Audience tells TANK they would not eat a dinosaur egg.)

TANK (growling, then:) Hmm! Maybe I believe you. Maybe I don't.

MAMMAL. Anyway you eat us, don't you?

TANK. Certainly not! I eat only green plants.

MAMMAL. We're getting nowhere. One of you has got to come with me and ask this, this . . .

TANK. Triceratops. You can call me the tank.

MAMMAL. . . . tank a very important question. (Picks child; leads child to EGG and points to it.) Sir, do you see that egg? (TANK nods. To child:) I want you to ask the tank if he is the father of that egg. (Child does so.)

TANK. The father of that egg? (Laughs.)

MAMMAL. That's right. That's what we want to know.

TANK. You're asking me if I am the father of that egg?

MAMMAL. Yes. Please.

TANK (growling this out). Never seen it before. Don't care about eggs. I'm alone. I travel alone.

MAMMAL (leading child back to seat). Well, at least we tried. Everyone. Would you please tell the tank what the egg needs? (Children respond with "The egg needs a mother.")

TANK (snarling back). I don't believe you. Dinosaur eggs don't talk.

(EGG wakes up and taps out furiously, "I do so talk.")

TANK (turning quickly). Did somebody say something?

(EGG taps, "I did, you idiot.")

TANK (approaching audience). Are you tapping your foot? Are you?

(EGG taps out, "It's me, you idiot.")

TANK. Do you know who is tapping? Do you? (The audience responds: "The egg, the egg.") The egg? (The EGG stops tapping. TANK goes up to EGG.) You couldn't be talking.

(EGG taps back, "says you.")

TANK. All right, you talk. You mean you want me to cooperate with these . . . mammals?