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*Dramatic Publishing*

# **The Neverending Story**

## **(Atreyu and the Great Quest)**

By  
MICHAEL ENDE

Adapted for the stage by  
DAVID S. CRAIG



**Dramatic Publishing**

Woodstock, Illinois • Australia • New Zealand • South Africa

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(THE NEVERENDING STORY)

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“*The Neverending Story* was first commissioned and produced by Imagination Stage, Janet Stanford, artistic director, and the Seattle Children’s Theatre, Linda Hartzell, artistic director.”

“The stage adaptation of *The Neverending Story* has been authorized by Verlag fur Kindertheater Uwe, Weitendorf, Hamburg.”

## PRODUCTION HISTORY

*The Neverending Story* was commissioned in 2006 by Imagination Stage (Janet Stanford, artistic director) and the Seattle Children's Theatre (Linda Hartzell, artistic director).

It was subsequently produced in the 2007/2008 season as follows:

West Coast Premiere: Seattle Children's Theatre, Seattle, Wash., December 7, 2007.

Rockeater/Cairon/Troll/Falkor . . . . . Hans Altwies  
Bastian . . . . . Gabriel Baron  
Nighthob/Childlike Empress . . . . . Emily Chisholm  
Teacher/Witch/Morla/Uyulala . . . . . Lisa Estridge  
Dad/Gmork . . . . . Bradford Farwell  
FairyAdult/Ygramul/Urgl . . . . . Sarah Harlett  
Bookseller/Chancellor . . . . . Timothy Hyland  
Caretaker/Artax . . . . . Chad Jennings  
Atreyu . . . . . Michael Place

Directed by . . . . . David Bennett  
Scenic Design by . . . . . Carey Wong  
Costume Design by . . . . . Catherine Hunt  
Puppets designed and built by . . . . . Douglas N. Paasch

East Coast Premiere: Imagination Stage, Bethesda, Md.,  
June 28, 2008.

Bookseller/Nighthob/Falkor . . . . . Michael John Casey  
Attendant/Childlike Empress . . . . . Mollie Clement  
Bully/Sassafranian/Morla/Urgl . . . . . Julie Garner  
Artax . . . . . Max Lawrence  
Bastian. . . . . Michael Nguyen-Mason  
Gmork/Cairon/Engywook . . . . . Carl Randolph  
Father/Caretaker/Chancellor . . . . . Mark R. Ross

Directed by . . . . . Janet Stanford  
Scenic Design by . . . . . Dan Conroy  
Costume Design by . . . . . Kathleen Geldhard  
Puppets designed and built by . . . . . Eric Van Wyk

The playwright acknowledges Roseneath Theatre and The  
Canadian Stage Company in the development of this script.

# THE NEVERENDING STORY

## CHARACTERS (in order of appearance)

\* indicates characters in the real world. All other characters live in Fantastica.

### ACT ONE

- \* **Bastian, a boy of ten**
- \* **Bastian's Father**
- \* **Bully #1**
- \* **Bully #2**
- \* **Bully #3**
- \* **The Bookseller**
- \* **Gmork (in human form)**
- \* **Pedestrians (3)**
- \* **The Caretaker**
- \* **Teacher (voice only)**
- \* **The Bat in the school attic (puppet)**

Gmork, a werewolf

Purple Buffalo (3 - one of whom speaks)

Atreyu, a young hunter (ah-TREY'-you)

Artax, a horse (R'-tax)

An Elder of Atreyu's people

Cairon, a centaur (KAE'-ron)

Eribo, a small man with a sword, in a balloon (eh-REE'-bo)

A Sassafran adult (played by a child) (sass-a-FRAY'-knee-n)

Sassafran children (2 - played by adults)

A Troll

The Purple Buffalo (Atreyu's Dream)

Morla the Ancient One (MOR'-la)  
Falkor, a Luck Dragon (FALL'-core)  
Ygramul the Many, a large spider-like creature (played by 3 or  
more actors) (ee-GRAH'-mull)

## ACT TWO

Engywook (ENG'-gee-wuk), a gnome  
Urgl (RRR'-gull), his wife  
Uyulala (you-you-LA'-la), a being of sound and light  
Geese (birds played by puppets or people)  
The Four Winds - Lirr (LEER), Baureo (BOW'-ree-oh), Sheerek  
(SHE'-wreck) and Mayestrel (MAY'-est-ruhl)  
Maya's Entourage  
The Childlike Empress

Other Pronunciations: The Auryn (OAR'-in), Ende (EN'-day).

Set: In writing the play, the playwright has imagined two elevated towers framing the acting area stage left and right. The stage right structure represents the Caretaker's broom closet below and Bastian's attic above. The stage left structure is also a two-storey structure where Atreyu hides at the end of Act One and where Engywook has his observatory in Act Two. In a semicircle (extending upstage) between these structures are hung two layers of curtains, one light and the other dark. The dark curtain emerges through the light, pushed by actors off-stage, when the Nothing is active. The light curtains droop and fall as the Nothing consumes more and more of Fantastica.



# THE NEVERENDING STORY

## PROLOGUE

*(A bare stage.*

*We hear a drum call. Others respond. Soon the air is filled with the thunder of drumming.*

*The drummers enter, moving downstage or through the audience. They begin to shout, encouraging one another. The sound reaches a climax. The drumming ends with a crash and a shout.*

*A thunder clap. Lightning. Rain.*

*The drummers fade away.)*

# ACT ONE

## SCENE ONE: Bastian's Dad

*(Lights up on BASTIAN's FATHER standing motionless in front of an ironing board. BASTIAN enters the light dressed in a private school uniform carrying a book.)*

**BASTIAN** *(gently)*. Father... *(louder)* Father!

**FATHER**. Yes, Bastian.

**BASTIAN**. I think you may be burning my shirt.

*(The FATHER lifts up a shirt with an iron-shaped burn.)*

**FATHER**. Well look at that.

**BASTIAN**. It's OK.

**FATHER**. No it's not. It's ruined.

**BASTIAN**. I've got another one.

**FATHER**. You do?

**BASTIAN**. I'm wearing it. See?

**FATHER**. Well then...

**BASTIAN**. Were you thinking about Mom?

**FATHER**. Yes. She always did the ironing, remember?

**BASTIAN**. And when she ironed, she sang.

**FATHER.** Did she ever. Even when she was sick she sang and sang... I've made your lunch.

**BASTIAN.** Do I have to go to school today?

**FATHER.** Of course. Is there anything wrong?

**BULLY #1.** Hey, Bastian.

**BULLY #2.** Come on out.

**BULLY #3.** We're waiting.

**BASTIAN.** Oh no. I just thought maybe we could, you know, have a mental health day. You could sit in your chair and I could read you some of this amazing book.

**FATHER.** We don't have time for books, Bastian. I have to work and you have to go to school.

**BASTIAN.** It's just one day.

**FATHER.** But it's not "just one day," is it? It's every day. These books are filling your mind with fantasy and make believe and it's not good for you. Real things. Useful things. That's what's important. For both of us.

**BASTIAN.** OK.

**FATHER.** Good boy. (*BASTIAN turns to go.*) Bastian. (*The FATHER holds up his book bag.*) Lunch.

**BASTIAN.** Thanks.

**FATHER** (*as he exits*). And don't try and come home early. I'll be here all day.

*(The lights widen. The BULLIES move forward.)*

**BULLY #3.** Look who's here.

**BULLY #2.** Baby Bastian.

**BULLY #1.** What'cha reading, Bastian, huh?

**BULLY #2.** What'cha reading?

**BULLY #3.** What'cha reading?

**BULLY #1.** What'cha reading? (*He snatches BASTIAN's book.*)

**BASTIAN.** Give it back!

**BULLY #3.** Ooo. Look. He talked.

**BULLY #2.** Talk to yourself like ya do at school.

**BULLY #1.** He talks to himself?

**BULLY #2.** All the time. Don't'cha, baby? (*He pushes BASTIAN.*)

**BULLY #1.** That's sick. (*He pushes BASTIAN.*)

**BULLY #2.** Sick little baby. (*He pushes BASTIAN down.*)

**BULLY #3.** Hey! Leave the poor guy alone. He needs help. He needs a little "solitary confinement."

**BASTIAN.** No!

*(BASTIAN manages to dodge between two of the BULLIES who collide. BASTIAN runs. The BULLIES give chase.)*

**BULLIES.** Ow! Way to go! He's getting away! Get him!

*(Lights up on the bookstore. BASTIAN runs through the door. A jingly bell rings as he enters. BASTIAN hides behind the door as the BULLIES run past.)*

**BULLIES** (*cont'd*). He went down here. C'mon! Get him! Wait for me!

*(The BULLIES exit. BASTIAN stands motionless.)*

**SCENE TWO: The Bookseller**

*(The lights come up on a large, high-back chair behind a desk made entirely of books. The chair is facing up-stage, concealing its occupant. A small cloud of smoke appears from behind the chair and then a voice.)*

**BOOKSELLER.** Either come in or go out but whatever you do, close the door!

*(BASTIAN does so. A bell jangles. The chair spins around revealing the BOOKSELLER. He is a rotund man with ferocious whiskers. He is smoking a huge, hooked pipe.)*

**BOOKSELLER.** Good grief! A child! A youth! A juvenile! What are you doing in my store?

**BASTIAN.** The door was open.

**BOOKSELLER.** And because the door was open you thought you could just walk right in?

**BASTIAN.** Yes sir.

**BOOKSELLER.** Then you can just walk back out.

**BASTIAN.** Please sir. Let me stay a little longer.

**BOOKSELLER.** Stay?! Listen, “sonny.” I don’t like “children.” Oh I know it’s popular to think children are the most wonderful creatures in the world but as far as I’m concerned they’re good for nothing except screaming, whining, breaking, tearing and smearing books with jam. See all these wonderful books? Not one for “children.” What’s the point? Children don’t read anymore. They just sit and watch television until their brains dry up and then play video games un-

til their thumbs fall off. So now that we understand each other, close your mouth, turn around and get out! (*The BOOKSELLER turns back to his desk. BASTIAN goes to speak.*) And close the door behind you!

(*BASTIAN walks slowly back toward the door, stops, and then summoning all his courage turns back.*)

**BASTIAN.** Not all children are like that.

(*A clap of thunder. The BOOKSELLER turns slowly.*)

**BOOKSELLER** (*menacing*). What did you say?

**BASTIAN.** I said not all children are like...like what you said.

**BOOKSELLER.** And I suppose you're different.

**BASTIAN.** Yes sir. I like books.

**BOOKSELLER.** You *like* them?

**BASTIAN.** No. I love them.

**BOOKSELLER.** Which ones?

**BASTIAN.** Well...I don't love math books. I love books about heroes that take me to faraway lands.

**BOOKSELLER.** What's your name?

**BASTIAN.** Bastian Balthazar Bux.

**BOOKSELLER.** Interesting. Three B's. My name is Carl Conrad Coreander.

**BASTIAN.** Three C's.

**BOOKSELLER.** Precisely. Why did you come in here?

**BASTIAN.** I was running.

**BOOKSELLER.** From the police?

**BASTIAN.** No sir. From bullies.

**BOOKSELLER.** Bullies! Ha! Did you give them a good punch in the nose?

**BASTIAN.** No sir.

**BOOKSELLER.** Why not?

**BASTIAN.** “Fighting doesn’t solve anything.”

**BOOKSELLER.** Oh please...

**BASTIAN.** They were bigger than me.

**BOOKSELLER.** But you still have a voice. Why didn’t you talk back at them?

**BASTIAN.** I tried that but they threw me into a dumpster and tied down the lid.

**BOOKSELLER.** So now you’re frightened.

**BASTIAN.** Yes.

**BOOKSELLER.** And you run away.

**BASTIAN.** Yes.

**BOOKSELLER.** And you’re no good for anything.

**BASTIAN** (*weakly*). I can read.

**BOOKSELLER.** But can you read all night, under your blankets, with a flashlight, hiding from your parents because they have some ridiculous notion that you need a good night’s sleep?

**BASTIAN.** Yes.

**BOOKSELLER.** And do you cry, real tears, when a story comes to an end, because you’ll never see the characters that you love again?

**BASTIAN.** Yes.

**BOOKSELLER.** And can you imagine a story so clearly that you think what you’re reading is real?

**BASTIAN.** Yes.

**BOOKSELLER.** And would you like a book that will never end?

**BASTIAN.** Oh yes.

*(The BOOKSELLER reveals the large book.)*

**BOOKSELLER.** Then you should read this one. It's called...*The Neverending Story.*

**BASTIAN.** May I?

**BOOKSELLER.** No.

**BASTIAN.** Why not?!

**BOOKSELLER.** Because I don't sell books to children!  
*(The phone rings. The BOOKSELLER stares at BASTIAN for a few rings.)* I'm going to get that and when I come back you'd better be gone.

*(He goes to his desk and answers the phone. While he's talking, BASTIAN approaches the book, hesitates, grabs it, runs out the door and exits.)*

**BOOKSELLER** *(cont'd)*. Hello?... Yes, I'm Carl Conrad Coreander... Yes, I do have that title but it's part of my private collection... Normally, yes, but the book... *(he smiles)* has just left the store... I tell you the book is gone... No! There's absolutely no point in— *(the other person hangs up)* coming down here. *(The BOOKSELLER goes to his front door and anxiously looks up and down the street as the store light fades.)* Good luck, Bastian.

*(Drumming. Wind and rain.)*



**SCENE THREE: Running and Hiding**

*(GMORK enters. He is wearing a trench coat, hands in his pockets, with a fedora pulled low over his eyes.*

*PEDESTRIANS carrying umbrellas walk across the stage into the wind. BASTIAN follows them. He is trying to conceal the book under his coat. GMORK steps forward.)*

**GMORK.** Where did you get that book, little boy?

**BASTIAN.** From the bookstore.

**GMORK.** The bookseller said it wasn't for sale.

**BASTIAN.** He gave it to me.

**GMORK.** I think you're lying. I think you stole it. And now, little thief, you're going to give it to me.

*(He lunges toward the terrified BASTIAN who steps back and falls. GMORK reaches down, when suddenly the school bell rings and the school playground lights snap on.*

*The three BULLIES loudly race across the stage and off into the school. The CARETAKER enters with a broom.)*

**CARETAKER.** Come along, Mr. Bastian, we don't want you late for school again.

*(BASTIAN gets up and runs off past the CARETAKER. GMORK exits, furious. The CARETAKER exits following BASTIAN.*

*The lights change. We are now inside the school.*

*As we hear the following scene, we see BASTIAN, on his way to class. He doesn't know what to do with the book.)*

**TEACHER (OFF).** Good morning, class.

**BULLIES (OFF).** Good morning, Miss Rowling.

**TEACHER (OFF).** Tolkien?

**BULLY #1 (OFF).** Here, miss.

**TEACHER (OFF).** Pullman?

**BULLY #2 (OFF).** Here, miss.

**TEACHER (OFF).** Ende?

**BULLY #3 (OFF).** Here, miss.

**TEACHER (OFF).** Bux? Bastian Bux? Bastian Balthazar Bux!?

*(BASTIAN hides in the CARETAKER's broom closet. The CARETAKER enters and heads toward the broom closet. BASTIAN sees him coming and looks for a place to hide. He finds a ladder in the back of the broom closet, climbs it, pushes through the trapdoor at the top and closes it just as the CARETAKER opens the door below. The CARETAKER puts down his bucket and mop, closes the door and exits.*

*BASTIAN is standing in the dark attic. We can hear the wind blowing and the rain beating on the roof.*

*He gropes his way around. Inadvertently, he pulls the sheet off a hanging skeleton. He turns on a light. He takes off his coat, looks for a place to hang it and sees*

*the skeleton. He stifles a cry. He hangs his coat over the skeleton.*

*The attic has old books, a blackboard, stuffed animals and some old gym mats. BASTIAN pulls one of these down to make a seat.)*

**BASTIAN.** What have I done? I'm a thief. A criminal. I will be expelled from school. I will never be able to go home. I'll have to hide up here for the rest of my life with nothing but this book. *(He lifts the book onto his lap. Reverently.) The Neverending Story. (He struggles briefly and then the book opens. A bat flies up, around the room and off.)*

**BASTIAN (cont'd).** Chapter One. Atreyu lived on the Grassy Plains.

*(Instantly, there is drumming. Figures race across the stage; twirling, leaping, howling shadows released as the story begins. Curtains fall and billow as if in a storm. Lights flash. Huge shadows sweep the stage. The theatre shakes to its foundations as the drumming reaches crescendo.*

*GMORK enters, dressed as before, striding downstage. As he walks, his coat and hat are stripped away revealing him as a werewolf. He howls and exits.*

*The drumming stops.)*