

THE UGLY DUCKLING

Adapted by Jack Neary
from the story by Hans Christian Andersen

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STORY OF THE PLAY

The classic Hans Christian Andersen tale gets a fresh and funny spin when a six-person cast of theatre administrators and techies are challenged to tell the story of "The Ugly Duckling" utilizing makeshift props and costumes and their own manic imaginations.

The reluctant tech director is coaxed into portraying U.G. ("Eugene") Duck, the oddly-shaped, slightly weird, totally sweet "duckling" who runs away from home to make sure his mom and family don't have to deal with his strange looks and demeanor anymore, only to learn that his real contribution to life was needed back home more than he ever imagined.

The other five actors take on many and varied characters as the story unfolds, including the wealthy cowboy ducks Destry and Dulcinea; Seigfried the barnyard manager duck and his sidekick Roy the Rooster; the motorcycle riding Wild Ducks; and even the noisy and looney farmer's wife Minerva.

Several children from the audience fill the non-speaking roles of ducklings, Eugene's "normal" brothers and sisters, in Act I.

The laughter comes fast and often in this warm and witty re-telling of "The Ugly Duckling."

This play, originally entitled THE MISDIRECTED THEATRE PRESENTS "THE UGLY DUCKLING," was first staged by the Foothills Theatre Company, Worcester, Massachusetts, Michael Walker, Artistic Director, in July, 2001. The play was directed by Jack Neary, and stage managed by Rosie Brownell. Cast members were Robert H. Clark, III; Wil Darcangelo; Tara Donoghue; Steven R. Gagliastro; Zachary Hutchins; and Sarah Madaj.

Performance Time: About 75 minutes including an intermission.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(3 m, 2 f, all playing multiple roles)

MARGARET: Somewhat officious artistic director; Mother Duck Bella; a Wild Duck; a Farmer; and a Swan.

OZZIE: Stage Manager, Roy the Rooster, a Wild Duck, a Farmer; and a Swan.

CYNTHIA: Young and attractive costume/props person, Narrator, Dulcinea Duck, and a Wild Duck.

JASON: Technical director and lighting designer, and the Ugly Duckling.

LARRY: Sound technician; Siegfried Duck; a Wild Duck; a Farmer; and a Swan.

WARREN: The UPS driver; Destry Duck; Sweet Old Lady, and the Swan King.

SETTING

The stage is bare, except for a random selection of platforms and boxes and chairs and tables. Settings are designed by the actors spontaneously throughout the play utilizing these materials. Also, costumes and props, which are established in the play as emanating from the UPS crate, may, as the play progresses, be acquired from offstage or from hidden places onstage, to accommodate the flow of the story.

PROPS AND COSTUMES

Headphones; large sandwich; large crate; clipboard and pen; flowery hat; 6 yellow (child-size) baseball caps; 1 red baseball cap; index cards; batting helmet; 1 green baseball cap; 2 cowboy hats, toy whistle, catcher's equipment, 4 black baseball caps; 4 sawhorses; numbered cards; old lady outfit for Warren; 3 straw farm hats and stalks of straw; 5 white baseball caps; 5 white dinner jackets (one with decorations); and 5 red bow ties.

ACT I

(AT RISE: MARGARET enters. She is officious and energetic. She greets the audience.)

MARGARET: Good morning, good morning, good morning, good morning, good morning! *(Waits for response.)* I said, Good Morning! *(Gets better response.)* You know I don't like it when you keep your joy all bottled up! Be free with your response, and let me know how happy you are to see me! GOOD MORNING! *(Gets big response.)* Ah, yes, that's more like it! Now I feel the joy! Thank you so much! My name is Margaret LaFontaine, Artistic Director of the Children's Theatre here at (name of theatre). I hope you feel the joy as well, because today we here at (theatre name) have a very special treat for you!

For those of you who missed our last production, I should tell you that we had arranged for the magnificent Misdirected Theatre Company to put on their production of "Robin Hood," but, as it turned out, they got lost on the way to the theatre and my courageous crew members and I had to put on the show ourselves. And if I do say so, we did a marvelous job! Anyway, we have no such problem today. Once again, we have invited the Misdirected Theatre Company to perform for us, this time with their acclaimed production of that classic fairy tale by Hans Christian Andersen -- "The Ugly Duckling"! And I know we don't have a problem today, because I just spoke backstage to the actors of the Misdirected Theatre, and they are all here, and they are ready to go! So, without further ado, let me present to you for your enjoyment and utter theatrical pleasure ...

(OZZIE, the stage manager, runs breathlessly down the aisle to the stage, yelling as he runs.)

OZZIE: Margaret! Wait! Hold up! Just a second! Wait! Margaret! MARGARET!!! *(HE has reached the stage.)*

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MARGARET: Ozzie! What's the matter? *(To audience.)*
Some of you know Ozzie, our stage manager. *(To*
OZZIE.) Ozzie, catch your breath! What is the problem?
OZZIE: I need ... I need ... I need I need ... I need ...
MARGARET: What? What do you need?
OZZIE: Air. I need air.
MARGARET: *(Pulls up a chair, seats OZZIE.)* All right.
Here. Relax. Calm down. Now tell me what is so urgent
that you have to interrupt my curtain speech?
OZZIE: Remember how you just said that the Misdirected
Theatre has arrived and that they are ready to go?
MARGARET: Yes.
OZZIE: Well, that's only partially true. They have arrived.
MARGARET: I know.
OZZIE: But they're not ready to go.
MARGARET: Why not?
OZZIE: They're not ready to go, because ... they went!
MARGARET: What do you mean, they went?
OZZIE: I mean they went! They were ready to go, but they
went! They left! They hit the road, Jack.
MARGARET: My name is Margaret.
OZZIE: They hit the road, Margaret.
MARGARET: What? Why?
OZZIE: They just realized that they had booked themselves
at another theatre today. Same show. Same time.
MARGARET: Well, so what? Is that our fault? If they
double-booked themselves, but were already here, ready
to go, then why did they leave and go to the other theatre?
OZZIE: They said since they were here, then they weren't
there, so they figured if they went there, then they would
have been here, and there, and would have met their
obligation at both theatres!
MARGARET: But ... but ... but that's crazy! How can they
think they're meeting both obligations if they don't do the
show here?
OZZIE: They said they were going to be fair about it. They
were going to travel to the other theatre, and not do the
show there, either. That way, everybody is happy!
MARGARET: I'M NOT HAPPY!

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OZZIE: Hey! Don't bite my head off! I'm just the messenger.

MARGARET: I am a professional Theatre for Young Audiences Artistic Director! I have gathered a young audience, and I have promised them professional theatre! I have nothing to show them! How do you think that makes me look?

OZZIE: Uh ... stupid?

MARGARET: STUPID! STUPID IS RIGHT!

CYNTHIA: (*Entering.*) Margaret, did you hear? Isn't it great?

MARGARET: What do you mean, great? This is terrible! For the second time in a month, I'm stuck without a show!

CYNTHIA: But why can't we do what we did last time? Act it out ourselves, like we did with "Robin Hood"?

MARGARET: Because that was different! I knew everything there was to know about Robin Hood! I was able to guide you all through the story because of my expertise and storytelling panache!

CYNTHIA: So?

MARGARET: So?! I know nothing about "The Ugly Duckling." Nothing at all!

CYNTHIA: Guess what?

MARGARET: What?

CYNTHIA: I do! I just love "The Ugly Duckling"! It's my favorite story of all time! Let ME be the storyteller!

MARGARET: (*Condescendingly pulling CYNTHIA aside.*) Oh. Cynthia. Sweetheart. Our adequately-qualified costumes and props person ... it takes much, much more than "just loving" the story to be a storyteller. It takes years of training and practice. It takes charm. It takes grace. It takes polish. In short, my dear ... it takes ... talent.

CYNTHIA: It also takes a big chunk out of the box office if we have to give these people their money back.

MARGARET: Cynthia! Tell the story!

CYNTHIA: Great! Ozzie! Get me the actors!

OZZIE: By actors, you mean ...?

CYNTHIA: Larry and Jason!

End of Freeview

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