

# A LITTLE PRINCESS

By Eleanor V. Lindsay

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## STORY OF THE PLAY

Here is a faithful adaptation of the book by Frances Hodgson Burnett, originally commissioned and produced by the Dallas Children's Theatre. Set in Victorian England, Sara Crewe, arrives at Miss Minchin's Select Seminary for Young Ladies. There the young, beloved heiress shines as the star pupil — until the death of her wealthy father completely reverses her fortune. Greedy Miss Minchin and her timid sister Amelia, force Sara to become a servant at the academy and live in a cold, miserable attic room. But the change in her life is difficult. Soon Sara is not only penniless, but friendless as snobby schoolmates shun her. Sara uses her vivid imagination not only to overcome adversity and loss but even bring happiness to her faithful friend, Ermengarde, and the scullery maid, Becky. Ram Dass, a lascar from India, who serves, Tom Carrisford, a friend of Sara's father, narrates this story of a girl who never loses the richness of spirit and eventually regains her rightful material wealth. Multiple simple sets.

*Originally commissioned and produced by Dallas Children's Theatre.*

### ORIGINAL CAST

Sara Crewe.....Jessica Angleskhan, Hope Rodgers  
Captain Crewe.....Cooper John Dunston  
Miss Minchin.....Sharon Bunn  
Amelia Minchin.....Emily Scott Banks  
Becky.....Diane Mull  
Lottie.....Christin Siems, Caroline Straty  
Ermengarde.....Jessica Eads-Rundel, Julia Lott  
Lavinia.....Alana Gay, Claire Jordan  
Jessie.....Sara Mokuria, Shannon Wilson  
Ram Dass.....Heland Lee  
Mr. DeFarge / Mr. Carrisford.....Thomas Walker  
Mr. Barrows / Mr. Carmichael.....Reese Chapman  
Lady Pitkin / Cook.....Sarah Einerson  
Directed by.....Artie Olaisen

## **CAST OF CHARACTERS**

(7 m, 11 w)

**SARA CREWE:** 10-13 years of age.  
**MISS MARIA MINCHIN:** A spinster - approximately 40.  
**MISS AMELIA MINCHIN:** Her sister - mid 30s.  
**BECKY:** A cockney in her late teens.  
**ERMENGARDE:** A young schoolgirl 11-13.  
**LAVINIA:** A schoolgirl 13-15.  
**JESSIE:** A schoolgirl 13-15.  
**LOTTIE:** A schoolgirl 9-10.  
**COOK:** The cook.  
**ANNE:** A beggar 9-10.  
**LADY PITKIN:** parent of potential students  
**CAPTAIN CREWE:** Sara's father - late 20s, early 30s.  
**MR. BARROW:** A solicitor.  
**MR. CARMICHAEL:** A solicitor - mid 30s.  
**MR. CARRISFORD:** A businessman, late 30s.  
**RAM DASS:** A lascar from India.  
**M. DeFARGE:** A French teacher.  
**MAN ON THE STREET**

\*NOTE: Some of these roles may be doubled by one actor.

## **SETTING**

*A Little Princess* takes place in various rooms of the Minchin's school, Mr. Carrisford's study, and the streets of London. In order to keep the action flowing smoothly, a unit set can be used with minimum furnishings rather than a fully realistic look.

## **SYNOPSIS OF SCENES**

### **ACT I**

Prologue::	A London Street.
Scene 1:	Miss Minchin's study.
Scene 2:	Schoolroom.
Scene 3:	Schoolroom, later that afternoon.
Scene 4:	Schoolroom, a few weeks later.
Scene 5:	The hallway.
Scene 6:	Schoolroom, several months later.
Scene 7:	Miss Minchin's study and hallway.
Scene 8:	Captain Crewe's study.
Scene 9:	Schoolroom.

### **ACT II**

Scene 1:	The hallway.
Scene 2:	The street.
Scene 3:	Sara's attic room.
Scene 4:	The street.
Scene 5:	Carrisford's study.
Scene 6:	Sara's attic room.
Scene 7:	The hallway.
Scene 8:	Sara's attic room.
Scene 9:	The hallway.
Scene 10:	Mr. Carrisford's study.
Scene 11:	The hallway.
Scene 12:	Sara's attic room.
Scene 13:	The kitchen, a few days later.
Scene 14:	A muddy London Street.
Scene 15:	The hallway.
Scene 16:	Sara's attic room.
Scene 17:	The hallway, some time later.
Scene 18:	The attic, moments later.
Scene 19:	Mr. Carrisford's study.
Scene 20:	The street and hallway.
Scene 21:	The attic.
Scene 22:	Mr. Carrisford's study.

**ACT I**  
**Prologue**

*(BEFORE CURTAIN: A London street. SOUND of Indian music is heard. As this fades, the SOUNDS of turn-of-the-century London grow increasingly louder, with the sound of a horse-drawn carriage traveling over cobblestones finally dominating. RAM DASS is illuminated.)*

RAM DASS: This is the story of a storyteller. Storytellers are rare and to be cherished. I, Ram Dass, was privileged to know this one. But not at the beginning. This story began on a dark winter's day, when the yellow fog hung so thick and heavy in the streets of London that the lamps were lighted and the shop windows blazed with gas, as they do at night. Beneath one lamp a little girl stood with her father. She felt as if she had lived a long, long time. Her father held her very closely in his arms as they gazed into the big, dull square in which stood the house which was their destination.

**End of Prologue**

**Scene 1**

*(AT RISE: The study in Miss Minchin's school. SARA CREWE, a small child with dark hair and a very serious face, and her father, CAPTAIN CREWE, stand in the middle of the study in a tight embrace. There are a number of packages scattered about. Sara is holding a beautiful doll.)*

SARA: Papa, is this the place? Is it, Papa?

CAPTAIN CREWE: Yes, little Sara. It is.

SARA: Well, Papa, if we are here I suppose we must be resigned. It doesn't look at all like India. The furniture is all straight and hard.

CAPTAIN CREWE: Of course not, this isn't India. This is England.

SARA: I'm not sure I like it, but I dare say soldiers, even brave ones, don't really like going into battle.

CAPTAIN CREWE: *(Laughing.)* Oh, little Sara. What will I do when I no longer have you to say solemn things to me? And it isn't a battle. It's a school. And it will be your new home.

*(MISS MARIA and MISS AMELIA MINCHIN enter. Miss Maria is tall and thin with a pinched look in her face. She is dressed severely. Miss Amelia, her younger sister, is plumper with a more kindly expression.)*

MISS MINCHIN: Good afternoon. Captain Crewe is it? I am Maria Minchin, and this is my sister, Amelia.

CAPTAIN CREWE: Good afternoon. As you see, we have finally arrived.

AMELIA MINCHIN: Captain Crewe. We are delighted to welcome you and your daughter. I trust your voyage was a pleasant one.

CAPTAIN CREWE: It was almost too short, knowing that I would be leaving Sara at the end of it. She will miss India I think.

SARA: No Papa, I will miss you.

CAPTAIN CREWE: You see what a treasure she is.

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MISS MINCHIN: And this of course, is Sara. It will be a great privilege to have charge of such a beautiful and promising child, Captain Crewe. In a school such as this, a clever child is a great asset.

AMELIA MINCHIN: Oh, yes. A tremendous asset.

CAPTAIN CREWE: The difficulty will be to keep her from learning too fast and too much. She doesn't read books, Miss Minchin, she gobbles them up. She is always starving for new ones, and not children's books - stories or fables. My Sara wants big fat histories, and biographies and poetry. You may have to drag her away and send her outside. Make her play with her doll.

AMELIA MINCHIN: She has a beautiful doll, I see.

SARA: This is Emily. She is going to be my friend when Papa is gone. I will talk to her about him, and about India.

AMELIA MINCHIN: That's a lovely idea.

MISS MINCHIN: What an original child!

CAPTAIN CREWE: Yes, she is a darling. She is always dreaming and thinking odd things. Take care of her for me, Miss Minchin. If she needs anything my solicitors, Barrow and Skipworth, will supply it. Spare no expense.

AMELIA MINCHIN: Sara's trunk is already in her room.

CAPTAIN CREWE: I picked up a few other things this morning. Just some books and a few warm clothes. England will seem cold to Sara.

MISS MINCHIN: Amelia, would you send for Becky.

AMELIA MINCHIN: Yes, yes. No trouble. Good-bye, dear Captain Crewe. Have a pleasant voyage back to India.

CAPTAIN CREWE: Thank you.

AMELIA MINCHIN: (*Exiting.*) Becky! Becky!

MISS MINCHIN: Come, Sara. You must say good-bye to your papa. I will show you to your room.

CAPTAIN CREWE: Could you give us a moment, please?

MISS MINCHIN: Of course. (*BECKY appears in the doorway.*) Becky, take Miss Crewe's packages to her room immediately. Don't dawdle. (*BECKY picks up the packages and briefly glances at SARA who looks at her with interest. Becky exits.*) I will be waiting in the hall.

### **End of Freeview**

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