

AESOP'S HOP

by Wade Bradford

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STORY OF THE PLAY

Welcome to the mythical Forest of Fables, home of the Tortoise and the Hare, the Ants and the Grasshopper, the Lion and the Mice, and many other colorful creatures. This realm is also the home of Aesop, the friendly storyteller from Ancient Greece. The animals and two immortal Muses prepare for Aesop's surprise birthday party – he's turning ninety-eight! – until they realize that they have no music for their upcoming celebration. The problem is solved when a nervous Donkey, a vain Cat, a hopeful Rooster, and a dim-witted Dog join forces and ensure that old Aesop gets the party of a century!

Along the way, many other adventures occur as a multitude of Aesop fables collide with one another. The result is a mixture of chaos and merriment, sure to delight audiences of all ages.

Approximate running time:
90 minutes

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(1 male, 2 female)

(All animals can be played by either girls or boys)

DIANA: Muse of Song and Dance. Sincere and often serious.

BRYANA: Muse of Story and Adventure. Bouncy and bright, and sometimes sarcastic.

AESOP: An old storyteller and shepherd. He has just turned ninety-eight.

TURTLE: Slow, but sure.

RABBIT: Fast, but over-confident.

DONKEY: Optimistic and shy.

CAT: A little too fixated on herself. Likes hunting mice.

DOG: Rough, gruff, and ready for a fight.

ROOSTER: Friendly, hopeful, trusting.

GRASSHOPPER: Easy-going and lazy.

ANT QUEEN: Very regal, and very upset by laziness.

LION: Very selfish. She believes she's bigger and better than everybody else.

WOLF: Well-known as a scoundrel, but wants to change.

FOX: Also known as a scoundrel, but loves her reputation.

CROW

MICE #1, #2 AND#3

ADDITIONAL MICE

MONKEY #1 AND #2

ANTS #1 - #6

BUNNIES#1 AND #2

ZEBRA

PARROT

SHEEP #1 - #5

BANDITS #1 AND #2

PRODUCTION NOTES:

The **set** consists of a backdrop of a lush green forest. The lighting and the rest of the stage should reflect this sunny, lively environment. A small footbridge UC crosses over an imaginary stream.

The **costumes** needn't be too elaborate. Simple but clever touches will make all the difference. Furry ears, a tail, a bit of makeup, and appropriate hair designs should establish the character of each critter. The two Muses are dressed in white togas, similar to those found in Ancient Greece. Aesop also wears a white toga.

Prop requirements are minimal, but feel free to add others as needed. A full prop list appears at the end of the play.

ACT I

(AT RISE: The cast of ANIMALS walks, runs, scurries or scampers onto the stage one by one. As each animal enters, they make their own special sound, and soon a cacophony of animal sounds and rhythms takes over the stage.)

(First out is the whimsical GRASSHOPPER, hopping along, humming a tune. Soon, ANTS march onto the stage, towards the back. They are all very serious looking as they trudge along.)

(CAT crosses the stage grooming herself. She spots MICE #1 and #2. They spot her and quickly race away. Cat gives chase.)

(DOG lumbers by, happily chewing on a newly-found bone.)

(Then, the majestic LION, accompanied by an ENTOURAGE OF LACKEY ANIMAL FOLLOWERS (monkeys, zebra, giraffe, etc.), waltzes about the terrain.)

(Trailing behind them is ROOSTER, who seems reluctant to tag along. DONKEY passes by, makes eye contact with Rooster and timidly waves. Before Rooster can officially meet Donkey, one of the MONKEYS grabs Rooster and pulls him along with the group.)

(A HERD OF SHEEP stroll by. They are secretly being stalked by WOLF.)

(CROW passes by, singing a "la-la-la!" She's very out of key.)

(Eventually, ALL of the ANIMALS bounce about on the stage, and then suddenly, the SOUND of a mystical harp begins to play. The animals become silent. They bend their ears to listen to the enchanting music.)

(They all begin to whisper to each other.)

EVERYONE: *(Ad-lib.)* The Muses are here! It's them! The Muses!

(Two young women, DIANA MUSE and BRYANA MUSE, the narrators of this tale, gracefully move into the center of the stage. The ANIMALS bow down in their presence.)

DIANA: Dear little animal friends, you needn't be so formal. Carry on. Run along!

BRYANA: Scurry.

DIANA: Gallop.

BRYANA: Scamper.

DIANA: Slither. What ever it is you animals do.

BRYANA: Shoo!

(The ANIMALS finally take the hint. They hop to their feet and run off the stage, making each of their unique – and loud – animal noises.)

BRYANA: Look, Diana. We're not alone in the forest.

DIANA: *(Squinting, looking out into the audience.)* Ah, humans! So nice of you to visit this enchanted neck of the woods. Welcome one and all to mythical Ancient Greece!

BRYANA: You poor mortals. I hope they aren't lost.

DIANA: They don't look like it. See how each one of them is sitting down, fiddling with their theatrical programs. Why, it almost looks as if they're anxious to hear a story!

BRYANA: Aha, then they have come to the right place. For I am Bryana, Muse of Story and Adventure!

DIANA: And I am Diana, Muse of Dance and Song ...

BRYANA: And bad hairdos.

DIANA: *(Insulted.)* Ahem! Now, you may be asking yourselves, what is a muse?

BRYANA: Well, I know I'm amused – get it?

DIANA: *(Harsh stare.)* A "muse" gives you your spark. We're that flicker of imagination in the back of every dreamer's brain.

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BRYANA: We hang out with a lot of people ... I could name names, but I don't like to brag. Which reminds me, I was hanging out with my best friend Hercules and he –

DIANA: Anyway, I like to think our job is somewhat important. We bring writers and artists inspiration.

BRYANA: Have you heard of the poet Homer? I gave him the idea for the Trojan horse.

DIANA: The horse was my idea! You wanted it to be a Trojan cow, remember?

BRYANA: D'oh!

DIANA: In any case, we have been bringing storytellers their spark for centuries.

BRYANA: We have worked with many over the years.

DIANA: But our favorite storyteller of all would have to be ...

BRYANA: Look! Here he comes now!

(AESOP, an old man with a white beard and a toga, walks out onto the stage. He hardly pays any attention to where he is going. He is too busy trying to write upon his scroll of paper.)

AESOP: Hmm. Title, title. I need to think of a good title. How about ... "The Octopus and the Mountain Goat?" No, no. What would those two have to talk about? Or perhaps "The Monkey and the Rattlesnake." No, a bit too violent, I think. "The Duck and the Platypus"? Maybe a tad confusing ...

(As AESOP walks by the MUSES, each girl whispers into his ear.)

BRYANA: How about "The Tortoise ..."

DIANA: "... and the Hare"?

AESOP: That's it! Girls, I've just come up with a terrific title! "The Hairy Tortoise"! Hmm, perhaps it needs a little work...

BRYANA: *(Whispering to audience)* Don't worry; he'll get it right.

End of Freeview

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