

# Thumbelina

*Adapted by Wade Bradford*

*From the story by Hans Christian Andersen*

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**STORY OF THE PLAY**

In this adaptation of Hans Christian Andersen's beloved tale, all of the town's children gather round a traveling storyteller to hear the story of a wayward little fairy girl.

When an old woman wishes on a magic flower, her heart's desire for a child of her own literally blossoms before her eyes. Her little girl, only a few inches high, is named Thumbelina, and although the friendly child is very helpful around the house, and very kind to the nearby forest creatures, she just doesn't feel like she fits in. A gossipy Frog Lady convinces Thumbelina that she should journey across the meadow and find her "real" family.

And so, the girl's quest begins. Aided by a surly, one-eyed mouse named Uncle Jack, Thumbelina goes on the adventure of a lifetime, encountering a jealous mole, a mischievous goblin, a snobby pixie, and a sinister spider. Yet, with each obstacle, Thumbelina finds a cheerful solution, and makes many friends along the way.

By the time she finds an entire clan of people her size, she realizes where her heart truly belongs: back at home, with the mother who gave her life with a magical wish.

Performance time about an hour.

**Premiere Performance**

"Thumbelina" was originally performed by the Canyon Theatre Guild, Newhall, CA, in November, 2007. The original cast included: Fiona Perry; Kari Frazer; Alexis Gotham; Madison Shaw; Ally McKibbon; Tessa Delger; Mackenzie Bradford; Amanda Rodriguez; Danielle Kemper; Rosalina Emance; Tiersa Killian; Rylee Shaw; Kyli Gotham; Jane Weinrich; Karlie Kemper; Conner Raskin; Chaz Elliott; Carter Elliot; Cade Flebbe; Dylan Perry; Samantha Raskin; Samantha McKibbon; Emily Bradford; and Elise Killian.

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**CAST OF CHARACTERS**

*(5 m, 8 w, 4 flexible, extras including children from audience)*

STORYTELLER: A friendly young man – who bears an uncanny resemblance to Hans Christian Andersen.

LITTLE BIRD: Helps narrate the story, friend to Thumbelina.

WOMAN: Healer of animals. Thumbelina's mother.

THUMBELINA: An extremely tiny but wonderful little girl.

MRS. HEDGEHOG: Housekeeper and later, wife to Mole.

MOUSE 1: *(Flexible)* Good friend to Thumbelina.

MOUSE 2: *(Flexible)* Another good friend.

UNCLE JACK: Grizzled old mouse, but kind at heart.

MOTH: *(Flexible)* Loves the light.

DUCHESS: Imperious tiny creature.

THOMAS: Lazy grandson for the Duchess.

FRA-LULA FROG: Looking for a wife for her brother.

FROG JR.: Her brother, Beauregard.

GOBLIN: *(Flexible)* Hungry and hunting for bugs.

SPIDER MOM: Has hungry babies; teams up with Goblin.

PIXIE: A valley girl; like, duh, wants to sell jewelry.

MR. MOLE: Nearsighted, wants to get married.

Smaller, Flexible Roles: (Doubling possible)

CHILDREN: Listen to the story. *(May be from audience)*

PIXIES #2, #3, #4: Happy creatures living in the meadow.

HEDGEHOG KIDS: *(Several)*

BABY SPIDERS: *(Several)*

FLOWERS: *(May be children from audience)*

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**SETTING**

To perform this play, divide your stage into two distinct playing areas. One side, which may be raised a few feet, is the normal world of Thumbelina's mother where the scenery and props are regular size. The area may represent her bright, cheery kitchen which contains a table and chair and shelves for healing herb and potions.

The other side of the stage is the garden and forest, but from Thumbelina's point of view where everything is larger than normal. Scenery and props, such as a rake and outdoor lantern, are over-sized to give the visual impression the characters and animals there are much smaller than humans.

**SFX**

Happy opening music	Man whistling
Bird chirping	Magical music
Adventure music	Chilly wind blowing
Countdown	Pixie dance music
Something hitting a spittoon	Bones cracking
Rumbling of huge footsteps	Romantic music

See PROPS list at end of script.

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*(AT RISE: Light, playful instrumental MUSIC plays. CHILDREN skip and frolic onto the stage. Some jump rope. Some plays with dolls. Others play pat-a-cake. The attire of the children should be timeless, nothing contemporary or tied to a particular decade. After a few moments, a melodious WHISTLING is heard. All of the children stop what they are doing and lift up their heads, delighted by the familiar sound.)*

CHILDREN: *(Ad lib.)* The storyteller is here! He's here! He's come back to town.

*(The STORYTELLER enters. He is the one whistling the tune. Note: The whistling could be a sound effect, if necessary.)*

CHILDREN: Tell us a story! Tell us a story!

*(The STORYTELLER sits down on a box, stage left. The CHILDREN gather and sit around him. He takes out a piece of paper and some scissors. He begins to make something.)*

STORYTELLER: Such anxious children. Don't you even have time to say hello?

CHILDREN: Hello!

STORYTELLER: Hello there. So, you want to hear a story? And what kind of tale would you like me to tell?

CHILD #1: Something with mermaids!

CHILD #2: And little match girls!

CHILD #3: And magic shoes!

STORYTELLER: *(Still cutting the paper.)* Hmm. It seems I've told all those stories before. Perhaps you'd like to hear something new. Something ... *(HE unfolds the paper revealing several paper dolls strung together.)* ... about a very small little girl ... *(Removes a single doll, presents it to one of the children.)* ... named Thumbelina.

CHILDREN: Oooh!

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STORYTELLER: It just so happens that I recently discovered a very small book about this very small person. *(HE takes out a teeny-tiny little book and opens it up. He squints at the pages with very small print.)* Hmm. I need my magnifying glass. It's in my bag over —

CHILD #1 and #2: We'll go get it! *(THEY dash off.)*

STORYTELLER: Why, thank you.

*(CHILD #1 returns with a magnifying glass.)*

CHILD #3: Why would someone make a book so tiny?

STORYTELLER: Well, not all books are written by big people like us. You believe in fairies, don't you? This was probably published by a pixie. *(Hands back magnifying glass after trying it out.)* I'm afraid this won't do. Bring out the big one.

*(CHILD #2 enters carrying a three-foot-tall prop of a magnifying glass.)*

STORYTELLER: *(HE uses it to stare at the book.)* Ah, yes. Now I can see the writing perfectly. There's only one problem. I can't read this.

CHILDREN: Why not?

STORYTELLER: It's written in Bird language. Hmm. Let's see if we can find a translator.

*(HE whistles. Offstage, a BIRD WHISTLES a reply. Then the BIRD enters flapping her wings, flittering across the stage.)*

STORYTELLER: *(Cont.)* Hello, little sparrow. *(The BIRD chirps again.)* Could you help me read this story? *(The BIRD chirps, rather embarrassed.)* Now, don't be shy. You simply translate, then, whisper in my ear what the words mean. Would you please?

*(The BIRD thinks for a moment, then nods her head in agreement. The bird looks at the pages, then whispers in the STORYTELLER'S ear.)*

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STORYTELLER: What's that? There once was a woman who lived all alone in a cabin in the woods. Go on... *(The BIRD whispers again.)* Ah, she was drawn to nature and to animals. She was a healer, and every morning creatures from all around the forest would line up to visit their local doctor ...

*(As the STORYTELLER continues to narrate, the story begins to take place downstage. A line of animals enter: MRS. HEDGEHOG, three MICE (one with an eye patch), and a MOTH.)*

WOMAN: Good morning, Mrs. Hedgehog. What's troubling you?

HEDGEHOG: I have a stomachache.

WOMAN: Oh, what have you been eating?

HEDGEHOG: Just worms.

WOMAN: What kind of worms?

HEDGEHOG: The kind with about 100 legs.

WOMAN: Oh dear, those are centipedes. Chew on these tea leaves. You should feel better by this afternoon.

HEDGEHOG: Thank you! *(Hiccups and exits.)*

*(The two MICE step forward. The grizzled MOUSE with the eye-patch lingers behind them.)*

MOUSE #1: *(Lifting up MOUSE #2's bent tail.)* Sammy's tail is bent again.

WOMAN: I'll get the pliers. But Sammy, you have to stop getting caught in the farmer's mousetrap.

MOUSE #2: *(Sammy Mouse)* I would if he'd stop putting cheese on it.

WOMAN: *(Fixes the mouse's tail.)* That should do it. And what about your uncle? Oh dear, did you lose an eye?

UNCLE JACK: Aw, it'll grow back.

*(The MICE exit as the MOTH dashes forward, very upset.)*

MOTH: Doctor! Something terrible has happened!

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