

The Velveteen Rabbit

A musical adaptation of the classic story
by Margery Williams

**Book and Lyrics by
George Gray**

**Music by
Chris Talbert**

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STORY OF THE PLAY

The Velveteen Rabbit is Margery Williams' endearing tale of love between a boy and his favorite toy. At first the Rabbit is new and lonely in the toy chest, where the other toys deride his inability to "do" anything. The Skin Horse, however, teaches him "It isn't what you do, it's who you are," and sings to him about becoming Real. Sure enough, in time, the Boy begins to love the Rabbit and when one night he says to Nana, "He's not a toy!" the dream comes true. Even an encounter with two live rabbits doesn't daunt his faith.

When the Boy gets scarlet fever, the Rabbit's constant vigil helps save him. The doctor, however, orders that everything the Boy has touched, including toys, must be burned.

Just as it seems all hope is lost, the Nursery Magic Fairy appears and makes the Rabbit really Real. The focus on spring, love, devotion, sacrifice, and regeneration (not to mention the rabbit) make this an ideal musical for any time of the year, especially for families with children. Touring is possible with innovative design. About an hour.

ORIGINAL PERFORMANCE

*"The Velveteen Rabbit" was originally presented by
The Children's Theatre of Charlotte, NC, in the Spring of 1992.*

SMALL CAST OPTION

Directors may use as few as seven accomplished and versatile actors by streamlining the toy chest scene (revised material included at the end of the playbook) and double-casting as follows:

VELVETEEN RABBIT

BOY

NANA / JACKIE BOX

SKIN HORSE / DOCTOR

MACK / HOPPY / GARDENER

TOP / FAIRY

BOAT / FLO

CHARACTERS

(Approximately 5 m, 5 w, 12 or more flexible.
Extras if desired. See doubling options previous page.)

Male Roles

BOY: Typically about 6 years old.

SKIN HORSE: A Real old toy.

MACK THE MECHANICAL MAN: A new toy, with batteries and moving parts.

DOCTOR

GARDENER

Female Roles

NANA: The Boy's old, crotchety, sentimental nursemaid.

VELVETEEN RABBIT: A toy that becomes Real.

SPINNING TOP: An old toy that moves in circles.

JACKIE BOX: An old, worn-out jack-in-the-box.

FAIRY

Flexible Roles

HOPPY: A Real Rabbit.

FLO: Another.

BABY RABBITS: Optional, played by very young children.

The following toys may be eliminated - or others added - depending on the talent pool.

A CLOWN

A TOY DRUMMER

A RUBBER DUCK

A TEDDY BEAR

A BOUNCING BALL

A ROCKET SHIP

A DUMP TRUCK

SIX EDUCATIONAL BLOCKS

Additional Casting Notes

Ideally, the BOY will be played by a child (6-9 years), NANA, DOCTOR, GARDENER, and FAIRY by adults or older teens. RABBIT works best as a young woman (teens-through 20s) SKIN HORSE as a grandfather figure (18-60). Of the other toys, JACKIE (like a wild female comedian) MACK (like C3PO), BOAT (like Gilligan's Captain), and TOP (like a ballerina) are essential, and require the most skill; the rest, if used, should all be youngsters (8-14). BLOCKS, should be of similar age and gender. HOPPY and FLO must sing and dance, and can't be too young for romance.

See additional production notes at end of script.

SCENES and MUSICAL NUMBERS

SCENE 1 - The living room on Christmas morning.
THE TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS (Orchestra)

SCENE 2 - The Boy's room that night, in moonlight; then immediately, inside the toy chest.
TOY SONG (What Do You Do?) (Toys)
REAL (Skin Horse, Rabbit)

SCENE 3 - The Boy's room at bedtime, several months later.

SCENE 4 - The same, one spring morning; into the garden, through the day to night; then back to the room.
PLAY SONG (Rabbit-Oh-Me) (Boy)

SCENE 5 - The garden, one summer day; into the woods, late afternoon.
PLAY SONG DUET (Boy, Rabbit)
REAL RABBIT RAG (Hoppy & Flo)

SCENE 6 - The Boy's room, weeks later, for several long days and nights.
LOVE SONG (Can You Tell Me?) (Rabbit)

SCENE 7 - The trash pile near the garden, at night; into the wood and finale.

FINALE ULTIMO - The garden, the following spring.
REAL RABBIT RAG REPRISE (Company)

THE VELVETEEN RABBIT

SCENE 1

(LIGHTS: Tight spot reveals the toy rabbit in a stocking hanging from mantle.)

MUSIC – THE TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS

VOICE: There was once a Velveteen Rabbit, and in the beginning he was really splendid. He was fat and bunched, as a rabbit should be; his coat was spotted brown and white, he had Real thread whiskers, and his ears were lined with pink sateen. On Christmas morning, when he sat wedged in the top of the Boy's stocking, with a sprig of holly between his paws, the effect was charming...

(LIGHTS: Spot opens to include mantle, presents, tree. Music ends.)

BOY: *(Enters running, stops short in awe.)* Oh my gosh!

WOMAN: *(Offstage, amplified.)* What do you see?

BOY: It's a bunny rabbit! Is it for me?

WOMAN: All for you.

BOY: He's beautiful! My own little bunny! Wheee! *(Takes RABBIT, hugs, plays, tosses in air.)* Gee, this is my very favorite present ever!

MAN: *(Offstage, amplified.)* What about that one?

BOY: *(Sees package.)* Is this mine too?

MAN: I think so. See what it is.

BOY: *(Unwraps MACK the Mechanical Man.)* Hot dog! Look at this! It's a robot!

MAN: He does all sorts of mechanical things.

BOY: Does he walk?

MAN: Walks and talks and flashes lights.

BOY: Neato!

(BOY walks MACK, flashes LIGHTS, punches voice button.)

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MACK: *(Voice on tape from inside toy.)* Hello, I'm Mack, the Mechanical Man!

BOY: Gee, thanks, Unkie Will! It's just what I've always wanted! *(Spies another package.)* What's in there?

WOMAN: Open it and see.

BOY: *(Unwraps model boat.)* Oh my gosh! A boat! Can I have it in the tub?

WOMAN: Of course. And you can take it to the beach this summer!

BOY: Ship ahoy! All hands on deck! Brrmm-brrrrmmm!

MUSIC – THE TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS #2

(LIGHTS: Open to define room.)

VOICE: *(As BOY continues to unwrap toys.)* And so it went that happy Christmas morning. There was a music box, and a silly clown, and a tool set, and picture books, and oh! So many things! And each one better than the one before, until, in the excitement, the Velveteen Rabbit was forgotten...

(BOY plays with toys, improvising dialogue.)

NANA: *(Her voice.)* Come along now, Christmas Boy. It's time for bed.

(BOY yawns, rises, drags himself off to bed. MUSIC ends. NANA enters, stops short.)

VOICE: There was a person named Nana who ruled the nursery.

NANA: Look at this mess! How one little boy can create such havoc is beyond me. *(SHE picks up wrappings.)* All I ever do is tidy up. Tidy, tidy, tidy up. It's more than a body ought to bear. *(Stuffs wrappings into waste basket; catches her back)* Oh, my aching back! *(Spies chair, checks to make sure she's alone, goes to it and sits.)* Ahh.

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(As NANA relaxes; she sees RABBIT on floor.)

NANA: Well? What are you looking at? *(No answer.)* Just because you're all fresh and new and I'm beat to the bone ... *(Pointing.)* You know I got this way picking up toys like you, thank you very much ... *(Ominous.)* And just you wait. After a few months of that boy dragging you all around the floor, you won't look so great yourself. Believe me, I know. *(Leaning to see.)* You've already got a smudge on you. *(Rises, picks up RABBIT, rubs face.)* Next thing you know you'll be all shabby and worn ... *(Placing RABBIT on mantle.)* Here. You sit on the mantle while I tidy up this mess. *(Turns to survey room.)* Toys, toys, toys. As if he didn't have a toy chest full already.

(NANA moves to toy boat, bends to pick it up. Feels RABBIT watching, looks back. Quizzical. Take to audience. Shrugs it off. Crosses left to get another toy. Rabbit turns to watch. Nana bends, feels eyes, turns. Double take.)

NANA: All right, you. *(Crosses to grab RABBIT.)* Let's just get a few things straight around here. Number one ... *(Incredulous. Take to audience.)* What am I doing? I'm talking to a toy. *(Returns RABBIT to mantle, back to audience.)* That ought to keep you from being so nosy. *(To audience.)* I'll tell you what, it's a good thing Christmas comes but once a year! *(Picking up remaining toys.)* Now who else have we got here?

(RABBIT slowly turns to watch her over his shoulder.)

NANA: A dinosaur, a picture book, a little duckie ... *(Squeezes, duck SQUEAKS.)* There better be enough room for all of you in the toy chest, or Nana may just have to clean house.

(SHE reaches for MACK, accidentally triggering his voice.)

End of Freeview

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