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The Wizard of Oz

by L. FRANK BAUM

adapted for Readers Theatre

by MELVIN R. WHITE



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CAST OF CHARACTERS

STORYTELLER — An effective narrator, man or woman.

WITCH OF THE NORTH — A sweet-voiced little old woman, friendly and kind, her “face covered with wrinkles, hair nearly white, walked rather stiffly.”

THREE MUNCHKINS — Old men, eager and excitable, “oddly dressed.”

DOROTHY — A child; a little girl, fun-loving, playful; dressed in a checked gingham dress, pink sunbonnet, old shoes — and silver slippers.

VOICE — Deep and mysterious.

SCARECROW — A skinny man with a huskily different voice, “a queer painted face with eyes, nose, and mouth painted on.”

FARMER — A middle-aged man, rural type with a rough exterior.

SECOND FARMER — The same as above, but may be a younger man.

OLD CROW — Dressed in black; has an unpleasant “cawing” voice.

TIN WOODMAN — A tall and thin man, any age, but probably 25 to 35, “made entirely of tin, arms and legs jointed upon his body.”

COWARDLY LION — A big man, but emotional; has a deep, growly voice, capable of roaring loudly.

WOMAN — A farmer’s wife.

MAN — A farmer.

GUARDIAN OF THE GATES — A little man, military type, brusque and business-like; may be in a green uniform.

SOLDIER — Military type, a leader; may be in a green uniform.

VOICE OF OZ 1 — Man, strong-voiced, bass or baritone, but not an “awful” voice.

VOICE OF OZ 2 — Woman, sweet-voiced, a “lovely lady.”

VOICE OF OZ 3 — Voice of a terrible beast, frightening loud.

VOICE OF OZ 4 — A low, quiet voice.

OZ — The same person as **VOICE OF OZ 1**. If this man can change his voice, he should read all four of the Oz voices. May be a small man, even a dwarf or midget.

WICKED WITCH OF WEST — A hag, very unpleasant and cruel; wears a gold cap; “had but one eye.”

MR. JOKER — An acrobat and clown.

GLINDA THE GOOD — A young and beautiful queen with long hair; wears a long white dress.

AUNT EM — A warm and loving, middle-aged farmer’s wife, “thin and gaunt.”

PRODUCTION NOTES

Suggested stage arrangements include:

1. Two platforms, six to eight inches high, large enough to accommodate two stools, one Down Right and one Down Left.
2. One platform, twelve inches high, Up Center with a throne-like chair on it. This chair may be covered with a green or brown blanket until needed, thus permitting the area to be used in other scenes.
3. Screens, drapes, or flats behind each of these three platforms.
4. Two short benches in front of and slightly to the center of the Down Right and Down Left platforms.

Successive scenes should be played in different areas in order to facilitate the flow and the entrances and exits of characters. For example, Dorothy’s opening scene may be set Down Center, with the interlude with the Witch of the North and the Three Munchkins played on and about the Down Right platform, these characters thus entering and leaving from Stage Right. The Scarecrow may be placed on the Up Center platform, with the Farmer and Second Farmer entering from Down Left and playing their scene in that area, focusing on the spot on the Up Center platform where the Scarecrow was before Dorothy rescued him. Thus the story flows from scene to scene, aided by the highly important Storyteller, with readers entering and exiting, sitting on stools or benches and standing on platforms throughout the performance. The size of the cast suggests that the actors remain backstage, out-of-sight, until they are needed on stage, and return backstage when not included in a scene. Too, some players may undertake more than one role, thus cutting the number of actors needed. Exceptions are the Storyteller, Tin Woodman, Cowardly Lion, Dorothy and the Scarecrow; these remain onstage at all times, and should portray no other roles.

The Wizard of Oz is more effective if costumed, although it is not necessary to do so. The best source for costume designs is the original book, *The New Wizard of Oz*, by L. Frank Baum, The Bobbs Merrill Company, 1899; the drawings scattered throughout the book are delightful — and have been copied and imitated throughout the years in later editions and in hundreds of productions of plays based on the story. Whether costumes are provided or not, silver slippers for Dorothy, a golden cap for the Wicked Witch of the West and dark green glasses for each of the travelers is necessary.

It is suggested in the script that all action and all use of properties be pantomimed. However, if real ones are used, included are an oil can, an axe, and a pail of water. Huge imaginary keys are inserted into huge keyholes in tremendous entry gates which are then pushed open for the travelers to pass through, all pantomimed with precision, imagination and perfection.

1 *(As the play opens, the STORYTELLER enters, takes a Down*
2 *Center position, and talks with the audience. Shortly, DOROTHY*
3 *enters, either from Offstage or from behind one of the screens,*
4 *joining him Down Center.)*

5 **STORYTELLER:** Once upon a time, way back in 1899, Frank
6 Baum wrote what he called a modernized fairy tale. He
7 called it, “The New Wizard of Oz.” It’s the story of a little
8 girl, Dorothy.

9 **DOROTHY:** Hello. I’m Dorothy, and I live in Kansas with my
10 Uncle Henry, a farmer, and his wife, Aunt Em, in a very
11 small house. In fact, our house is so very small it doesn’t
12 even have an attic or a basement — but because there
13 are bad storms in Kansas, cyclones they are called, my
14 Uncle made a door in the floor and dug a small hole under
15 the house.

16 **STORYTELLER:** It’s called a cyclone cellar, and when a
17 storm is coming, they open up the trapdoor and take
18 refuge under the house.

19 **DOROTHY:** *(In pantomime pointing out her dog)* This is my dog,
20 Toto. Doesn’t he have long, silky black hair — the
21 blackest eyes you ever saw — and the funniest little nose?
22 I don’t have any brothers or sisters, so Toto and I play
23 together, all day long — except, of course when I have to
24 do my chores, have to help Aunt Em. *(Turns her back to the*
25 *audience and freezes.)*

26 **STORYTELLER:** Today Toto and Dorothy are not playing, as
27 the sky is gray, grayer than usual. Uncle Henry, fearing
28 a bad storm, has gone to the barn to look after the cows
29 and horses, and Aunt Em, expecting Dorothy to follow
30 her, has already climbed down through the trapdoor to
31 the cyclone cellar. But Toto, frightened, had hidden
32 under the bed, and Dorothy crawled under it to catch
33 him. *(DOROTHY gets down and crawls. Then, as the*
34 *STORYTELLER tells the story, she is tossed around a bit, later*
35 *falls asleep and then is awakened to look around and react to the*

1 *beauty around her.*)

2 **Before she managed to get to the trapdoor, the storm**
3 **hit, and the little house was picked up from the ground**
4 **and whirled through the air, around and around. Hour**
5 **after hour passed, and Dorothy and Toto, frightened and**
6 **worn out, fell asleep. They were awakened by a sudden**
7 **and severe bump to find themselves on the ground once**
8 **again, bright sunshine flooding the little house. Dorothy**
9 **ran to the door, opened it** (*She does in pantomime, as she*
10 *and the others do throughout the story whenever the narration*
11 *or dialogue calls for action.*), **and found herself, not in**
12 **Kansas, but in a beautiful country.** (*STORYTELLER walks*
13 *out of the scene to freeze until he is needed again.*)

14 **DOROTHY:** **Oh, Toto, look! Beautiful flowers . . . fruit trees . . .**
15 **birds such as I've never seen or even read about before —**
16 **and look! A brook! I can't believe my eyes! I must be**
17 **dreaming.** (*Seeing four people approaching her*) **Oh, I'm**
18 **afraid, Toto. See those three old men — and the old**
19 **woman, coming toward us. Aren't they queer-looking?**
20 **Oh, my!** (*Three OLD MEN and an OLD WOMAN stand to*
21 *approach, whispering among themselves. Then the OLD*
22 *WOMAN speaks.*)

23 **WITCH OF THE NORTH:** (*Hereafter called "North Witch."*) **You**
24 **are welcome, most noble Sorceress, to the land of the**
25 **Munchkins. We are so grateful to you for having killed**
26 **the Wicked Witch of the East, and for setting our people**
27 **free from bondage.**

28 **DOROTHY:** (*Puzzled*) **You are very kind; but there must be**
29 **some mistake. I've not killed anything.**

30 **NORTH WITCH:** (*Laughing*) **Your house did, anyway, and**
31 **that is the same thing. See, there are her two toes, still**
32 **sticking our from under your house.**

33 **DOROTHY:** (*Dismayed*) **Oh, dear! Oh, dear! The house must**
34 **have fallen on her. Whatever shall we do?**

35 **NORTH WITCH:** (*Calmly*) **There's nothing to be done.**

1 **DOROTHY:** But who was she?
2 **NORTH WITCH:** She was the Wicked Witch of the East, as I
3 said. She has held all the Munchkins in bondage for many
4 years, making them slave for her night and day. Now
5 they are all set free, and are grateful to you for the favor.
6 **DOROTHY:** Who are the Munchkins?
7 **NORTH WITCH:** The people who live in this land of the East,
8 where the Wicked Witch ruled.
9 **DOROTHY:** Are you a Munchkin?
10 **NORTH WITCH:** No, but I am their friend, although I live in
11 the land of the North. When they saw the Witch of the
12 East was dead, the Munchkins sent a messenger to me,
13 and I came at once. I am the Witch of the North.
14 **DOROTHY:** Oh, gracious! Are you a real witch?
15 **NORTH WITCH:** Yes, indeed. But I am a good witch, and the
16 people love me. I am not as powerful as the Wicked Witch
17 was who ruled here, or I should have set the people free
18 myself.
19 **DOROTHY:** But I thought all witches were wicked.
20 **NORTH WITCH:** Oh, no, that is a great mistake. There are
21 only four witches in all of the Land of Oz, and two of
22 them, those who live in the North and the South, are good
23 witches. I know this to be true, for I am one of them
24 myself, as I told you. Those who live in the East and the
25 West are wicked witches — but now you have killed one
26 of them, so there's only one wicked witch left in the Land
27 of Oz — the one who lives in the West.
28 **DOROTHY:** (*Thinking deeply*) But Aunt Em told me that the
29 witches were all dead — years and years ago.
30 **NORTH WITCH:** Who's Aunt Em?
31 **DOROTHY:** My aunt who lives in Kansas, where I come from.
32 **NORTH WITCH:** I do not know where Kansas is, for I have
33 not even heard that country mentioned before. Tell me,
34 is it a civilized country?
35 **DOROTHY:** Oh, yes.

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