

We're Not Ready
Open Space Summer 2011

Kathy Smith
April 15, 2011

Character List

Producer – The OSA Summer Playwrights Festival “producer”; will orchestrate the audience participation elements of the show

Director – Frantic “director” of a show; he’s lost track of time

Actress – high maintenance “actress”; she can’t possibly be ready to perform on short notice

Stage Manager – she’s calm, as always, but refuses to begin the show without all props in order

Dragon – puppet; dragon has escaped and must be calmed down before it breathes fire on the audience

Audience Volunteers – we need their help to calm the dragon

Zoo Keeper – The Reisterstown Zoo (!) has had an escape; the zookeeper is here to round up the animals

Escaped Zoo animals – puppets; oh no – the animals are loose in the yard & audience!

Knights of the Round Table – these knights have spent too much time at the Round Table Pub instead of defending the castle

Evil Fairies – audience volunteers; these fairies are up to no good; they are trying to take over the castle

Moms and Dads – audience volunteers; it will take some strong Mom and Dad voices to make these fairies behave

Props

dragon and other animal puppets

clipboard

birdcage and peacock feathers

moon on a stick

wooden cut out of tower

pub sign: Ye Olde Round Table

swords

beer steins

Setting and Time: The Open Space stage, in disarray. Show can be set as first performance of the night or first after intermission. Note that two opening lines are given, depending on placement of this piece. Producer enters and looks around, begins to straighten the stage.

Scene 1: The Dragon

(If this is the opening piece)

PRODUCER

(picking up a chair) This doesn't belong here. (noticing audience) Oh. Oh. You're...here. Already. (Looks at watch). I didn't think it was...time yet. I mean...Hi! Hello! Welcome to Open Space Theatre's Summer production! We're so glad that you're here. Really. We are. (glancing at watch and backstage)

(If this is used after intermission)

PRODUCER

(picking up a chair) This doesn't belong here. (noticing audience) Oh. Oh. You're...back. Already. (looks at watch) I didn't think intermission was over already. I mean...welcome back! (Glancing over shoulder, back stage, and at watch). We'll be ready to start any moment...let me just check something....

DIRECTOR (enters yelling)

Have you seen the state of the stage left stairs! How many times have I told you I cannot possibly work in these circumstances! The placement of the banister completely undoes the feng shui I had established to help my actors catch the ennui needed for this piece...(trails off as he/she notices the audience). What are *they* doing here????

PRODUCER

(Whispers) Apparently our backstage clock is behind by an hour; we're just going to have to go with it. (To audience) Folks – let me introduce one of our very fine directors

DIRECTOR

Go with it? Go with it? I absolutely cannot –

PRODUCER

The children – there are children present, remember....

DIRECTOR

Oh, yes, hello boys and girls, teens, uh, patrons of the arts of all ages, thank you for joining us for another OSA production for our show....our show...

PRODUCER

Our show entitled....

(Producer and director exchange glances)

DIRECTOR

Entitled... (aside) what props do we have backstage?

PRODUCER

Entitled...the...Scary

DIRECTOR

Ferocious...

PRODUCER

The Scary, ferocious...

(Stage manager walks across stage carrying the dragon head)

DIRECTOR AND PRODUCER

The scary ferocious dragon!

Stage Manager stops, looks at them, looks at audience; shakes head, mouthing the word

“No...”

PRODUCER

(Nodding) Yes! The Scary, Ferocious Dragon! This is a very special play. Do you know why it's special? It's special because we need your help! That's right, you, the audience!

(Director and stage manager are having a whispered argument during the producer's line)

PRODUCER

Just give us, umm, one moment to set up. (Motions to director and stage manager to help; they exit). Okay, the story of the Ferocious, Scary – I mean, the Scary, ferocious dragon! (Looks over shoulder) I said, DRAGON!

(Enter actors wearing dragon head/fabric body, clearly unsure where to be)

PRODUCER

In days long ago, it was known far and wide throughout the town of Reisterstown that there lived in the hills a scary, ferocious dragon. Periodically, the dragon would appear and scare the townspeople, coming near their homes and threatening to breathe fire on them.

(Dragon moves around stage, roaring)

PRODUCER

Now it's your turn – what we need here are some villagers. Would anyone like to be a villager? (producer chooses 3-5 volunteers). Thanks, folks – don't worry, we'll have other chances to volunteer...

(Dragon moves threateningly around stage, chasing villagers)

PRODUCER

Fortunately, the villagers learned the secret of how to keep the dragon from breathing fire and burning the town. The secret to calming the scary ferocious dragon was this (producer thinks for a minute)...was...the secret was – to make the dragon LAUGH! If the dragon was laughing, it couldn't breathe fire. Okay, villagers, let's make this dragon laugh! Who would like to try first?

(Producer then has several volunteers, alone or in pairs, try various silly faces, actions or dances to get the dragon to laugh. On each attempt, the dragon should get closer to a full out laughing motion, until on the third attempt, it is overcome with laughter).

PRODUCER

Disgusted that it couldn't breathe fire, the dragon went away to its lair in the hills, and was never seen in Reisterstown again! (Dragon slinks away). Great job, volunteers! Give yourselves a round of applause! (sends volunteers back to their seats). Now let me just check if we're ready yet for the real show – I mean the next part of the show. (Calling backstage) Are we ready yet?

Scene Two: Lions and tigers and bears, oh my

(Actress enters)

ACTRESS

Ready? Did you say ready? I cannot possibly go on stage yet. I need to complete my half hour yoga and calm breathing routine before I can go on.

PRODUCER

Shouldn't you have done that earlier in the day? We have an audience here now.

ACTRESS

(Noticing audience) Oh! Oh, my fans! So sweet of you to be here early to see me before the show.

PRODUCER

Actually, they aren't early – our backstage clocks are wrong; maybe they were never "sprung" forward. (Actress gives him a "you're crazy" look). Oh it doesn't matter, look can you just get ready quickly?

ACTRESS

Quickly? I would never do that. I haven't done my cleansing facial scrub –

(Zookeeper rushes onstage, carrying birdcage that is trailing peacock feathers)

ACTRESS

OH – you don't look like one of my usual fans, but please, stay, over there if you want my autograph.

ZOOKEEPER

What? Fan? Oh my. Oh no. Oh dear.

PRODUCER

Can I help you?

ZOOKEEPER

The animals. My animals. Umm...you haven't seen any animals around here have you?

PRODUCER

Well, there's the dog next door. And the squirrel that lives backstage in the tree.

ACTRESS

And of course the ants under the stage...(Shudders)

ZOOKEEPER

(Laughing hysterically) Ants? Squirrels? No, I don't think you understand. I mean ZOO animals. Lions. Tigers. Bears. Oh my.

ACTRESS

Lions and tigers? This is definitely not in my contract. (She exits)

PRODUCER

Bears? (muttering) Great. This is all we need. Ferocious, audience eating, escaped zoo animals. (Sighs) Umm, audience, have you seen any, fuzzy, cute, zoo animals?

ZOOKEEPER

Fuzzy? Cute? My friend these are dangerous –

(producer claps a hand over zookeeper's mouth)

PRODUCER

Audience?

(Zoo puppets begin to pop up in the audience; audience yells, "here, over here!" producer tries to direct zookeeper toward animals; zookeeper mishears and heads in wrong directions; mayhem ensues for 3-4 minutes as zookeeper and animals chase each other around the yard)

PRODUCER

Stop! Zookeeper! There must be some other way to catch these animals!

ZOOKEEPER

Impossible! These are wild animals! There are tranquilizer darts, but with this many people...

PRODUCER

There must be another way. Think, man! (Or - woman!)

ZOOKEEPER

Well, if it were nighttime, they might get tired.

PRODUCER

That's it! Stage manager!

(Stage manager enters; producer whispers to her; she leaves and reenters with moon on a stick; meanwhile zookeeper and animals have resumed the chase).

PRODUCER

Okay, audience, it's time for you to help us again. You heard the zookeeper: if the animals think it's late at night, they might get sleepy and then the zookeeper could lead them away. So here's what we're going to do. I'll be the moon, and you all have to help the animals think it is very late. So everyone get as quiet as you can and pretend that you are very tired and falling asleep.

(As audience gets “sleepier,” with encouragement from zookeeper and producer, animals begin to get sleepy as well).

ZOOKEEPER

(Loudly) It’s working!

PRODUCER

Shhh!

ZOOKEEPER

Oh, sorry. (softly) It’s working! I’ll just sing their favorite lullaby and lead them back to the zoo. (begins to sing) In the jungle, the mighty jungle, the lion sleeps tonight.

(speaking) Come along, my lovelies – off to our beddy-byes.

(Animals sleepily follow the zookeeper up toward the house; zookeeper continues singing softly as they exit).

PRODUCER

(Lowering moon). Whew! That was a close one! Great job, audience! Now it’s time to wake up and see if we can get on with the show.

Scene Three: Knights and Fairies

(Stage manager enters with clipboard)

PRODUCER

We *can* get on with the show now, right?

STAGE MANAGER

Yup. As soon as we address these few items. There are ten props we need to locate, and the condition of the costumes is deplorable – there are at least 15 items that were not on the proper hangers.

PRODUCER

Enough! Just give me whatever props you DO have ready, and get back there and fix the rest of that list! (turning to audience) Hurray, friends, it looks like you’ll have another chance to help with the show. Now presenting....presenting...

(Stage manager places round table, swords and beer steins onstage)

PRODUCER

Presenting The Knights of the Round Table (Stage manager places sign on stage). Now we just need some knights...

(yells backstage; 3-4 actors in various states of preparedness for other roles, wearing disparate costumes, appear onstage- one could be the actress from scene two, who complains throughout. Producer places them stage left around the table with swords and beer steins).

PRODUCER

Once upon a time, there were some Knights who spent too much time at the round table. Ye Olde Round Table Pub, that is – talking, having, umm, refreshments, and becoming very – happy.

(Actors catch on and mime drunkenness).

PRODUCER

So...carefree that they forgot about guarding the castle. When suddenly – this is where you come in audience! We need some volunteers!

PRODUCER

When suddenly, the castle came under attack from...(stage manager places fairy wings, wands etc. on stage) from the evil fairies! (producer outfits volunteers) Okay, evil fairies, throw some spells at the castle – oh, we need a castle! (Stage manager puts tower cutout on stage). The castle was close to collapse under the vicious fairy attack (Stage manager reaches a hand onstage and shakes the tower) but the knights were so “happy” they were oblivious to the danger! Whatever would the queen do?

ACTRESS

(Jumping up and dropping sword) Did you say queen? That’s my role, obviously! Oh – whatever shall I do? My castle is under attack and my knights are no help!

PRODUCER

What do you think audience? What should the queen do?

(Audience shouts out ideas; actress rejects all of them)

PRODUCER

(Becoming desperate) Do you know why fairies turn evil? It’s because they’ve lost their mommies and daddies, and they have no one to tell them how to behave! We need to get these fairies some moms and dads who will tell them to behave. Who thinks they have a good mom or dad voice? (Takes several more audience volunteers) Now say in your best mom or dad voice: ‘behave fairies! go home and stop attacking the castle!’

(Volunteers take turns trying to yell at the fairies in their best mommy and daddy voices; producer encourages audience to applaud when the voices are correct.

Meanwhile, knights have fallen asleep/into stupor.)

PRODUCER

Wow! Those were some great voices! Well, the fairies heard those mommy and daddy voices and realized how badly they had been behaving. They put down their wands and went home (removes fairies’ costumes and ushers them offstage right). The queen was saved!

ACTRESS

Like, thank you sooo much, parental units, for saving me when my knights were useless (moves stage left to knights and kicks several of them; knights wake up).

PRODUCER

I think these knights need some moms and dads to make them behave. Shall we tell them? Everyone?

(Encourages volunteers and audience to shout, 'Behave knights, and go home!' Knights shamefacedly pick up swords and exit stage left).

PRODUCER

Great job everyone! Let's have a hand for our fairies and for our moms and dads).

DIRECTOR

(Entering during applause) The show must go on! That is to say, we are ready at last!

PRODUCER

Wonderful! Thank you all so much for all your help! Now relax, sit back, and let's make the actors do some work while you enjoy the show!

(Exits)