The Pied Piper of Hamelin

Story By
Robert Browning

By
Thomas W. Olson

The Pied Piper of Hamelin was originally produced by the Children’s Theatre Company in the 1977-78 season.

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Cast of Characters

Men:
Mayor
Edmund
Gerhardt
Randolph
Priest
Jacob
Benjamin, Henrik, Joseph, Samuel, etc.
Ratcatcher
Pied Piper

Women:
Jessica
Greta
Ruth, Naomi, Elizabeth, etc.

Children:
Adam
Emily
Jonathon, etc.

Sequence of Scenes

Act One

Scene One Townsquare
Scene Two Mayor’s Home
Scene Three Townsquare
Scene Four Forest Clearing
Scene Five Council Chamber
Scene Six Townsquare
Scene Seven Mayor’s Home
Scene Eight Townsquare

Act Two

Scene One Townsquare
Scene Two Church
Scene Three Forest Clearing
Scene Four Townsquare

Music Selections

"Yet Life Goes On"
"The Rats"
"In Simple Song"
"An Awkward Situation"
"Lullaby"
"Make A Celebration"
"Finale"

The action occurs on July 21 and 22, 1376 A.D. in the town of Hamelin.
Production Note
In the original staging of THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN by The Children’s Theatre Company and School of Minneapolis, approximately three dozen live rats were used in the play. White "laboratory" rats were purchased, their fur tinted to resemble common brown rats, and used exclusively throughout Act One until the rat exodus in Scene Eight. Live rats were held in the actors' hands, allowed to scurry about on "controlled" surfaces, etc.; in particular, the escape from the cage in Scene Three was accomplished through weeks of intensive training: by following a tapping stick (US of the wall) the rat would run to the cage, stand up against it (the door opened by a latch controlled from US and behind) and then run off again, followed by the other two, where a reward of food awaited. By using live rats whenever possible, the audience -5 tricked into believing that real rats were also being used in the mass exodus.
Act One, Scene one

Preset fades to Blackout. Act Curtain out. In the darkness, the wind sighs loudly and the call of a pipe is heard in the distance. A flash of lightning reveals the townsquare of Hamelin: a well, CS; a bridge from SL to SR; medieval wood and plaster buildings SR and SL, a small church US of bridge, a backdrop - painted landscape with fields, mountains, forest, and the river. Thunder. An early morning storm. The lightning reveals two or three townspeople rushing across the stage, and scurrying rats moving across the floor and along the wall at the edge of the river. Thunder fades and the wind rises up again with the light of dawn. Music. ADAM - the crippled son of the MAYOR - appears in the empty square. He moves with the aid of a crutch; he is lame in one leg. He carries a wooden bucket in his free hand and hobbles to the well. A rooster crows as ADAM begins to draw water and TOWNSPEOPLE slowly enter the townsquare and sing a bittersweet song.

WOMAN: I LIVE IN HOPE TO SEE THE DAY WHEN I MIGHT GREET THIS DAWN SO FAIR AS ONCE BEFORE, WHEN SONGS OF JOY WERE DAILY HEARD IN HAMELIN SQUARE

MEN: NO BITTER TEARS THEN FILLED OUR EYES NO EVENING SOUND OF NIGHTMARE CRIES

WOMEN & MEN: NO MAN AND WIFE THEN HEAVED GREAT SIGHS OR SPENT EACH NIGHT IN ENDLESS PRAYER BUT NOW WE WAKEN FROM OUR BEDS TO FACE ANOTHER DAY WITH DREAD FOR PLAGUE HAS FALLEN 'ROUND OUR HEADS AND MORNING BREAKS WITH DARK DESPAIR YET LIFE GOES ON AND ON IT GOES THE SUN APPEARS, THE ROOSTER CROWS
OUR GENTLE RIVER, STILL IT FLOWS
THE MOUNTAIN BREEZE FOREVER BLOWS
THE RATS REMAIN, THEIR NUMBER GROWS
DESPITE OUR PAIN, DESPITE OUR WOES
YES LIFE GOES ON AND ON IT GOES
DESPITE OUR PAIN, DESPITE OUR WOES . . .

The song ends abruptly with a woman’s scream offstage. ADAM, startled, drops his bucket of water and TOWNSPEOPLE turn to look as RUTH - hysterical and sobbing, rushes into the square, followed by her husband.

RUTH: No . . . no . . . I can’t bear it any longer . . . no . . .

BENJAMIN: Ruth! Ruth - come back to home, now . . . please . . . wife . . .

RUTH: They were in our bedroom! Dozens of them! It was horrible . . . horrible . . .

BENJAMIN: (Attempting to soothe her, and a bit embarrassed.) Now, nm . . . you were dreaming, that’s all. A nightmare. Come . . . to home now, Ruth . . .

RUTH: (Pulling herself away.) I’ll do no such thing! "A nightmare," you say?! Husband - a dream does not crawl upon your pillow and nest in your hair!

BENJAMIN: (Nervous now.) Really . . . you must have imagined . . .

RUTH: On the pillow, I tell you! In our bed! God only knows how many others we slept with last night . . . (She falls to her knees in exhaustion and tears.) Oh, I’m so frightened . . . can’t you do something? Benjamin, please . . . (BENJAMIN takes her by the hands and helps her up and leads her offstage. Women step DS and converse.) I tell you, another night and I’ll go mad. I barely got an hour’s sleep.
JOSEPH: Neither did we. Incredible, the sound they can make. mawing and shrieking all night long . . .
HENRIK: Scraping and squeaking - unbearable noise . . .
JOSEPH: By the sound of their nibbling, it's a under my house still stands . . .

A man, wife, and twin daughters enter.
SAMUEL: (Agitated, taking one twin by the hand.) You do as you like, I'm leaving!
NAOMI: But Hamlin is our home! (Twin on NAOMI’s hand pulls back at her sister; a tug of war throughout their parents’ conversation.)
SAMUEL: I’m leaving.
NAOMI: We can’t just up and move away.
SAMUEL: You do as you like.
NAOMI: There must be something we can do . . .
SAMUEL: Two weeks! In just two weeks’ time they've destroyed over fifteen years of my hard labor. No, no . . . I’ll not stay . . .
NAOMI: We can’t . . .

A MOTHER and SON, who holds a rat by the tail.
MOTHER: I can’t believe it!
SON: But, Ma - I wasn’t going to keep it . . .
MOTHER: The idea!
SON: I was only playing . . .
MOTHER: If I ever catch you "playing" with one of them again, your father’ll spank you so hard you won’t be able to sit for a week!
SON: But . . .
MOTHER: Is that clear?!
All of the TOWNSPEOPLE chatter and shake their heads.

TOWNSPEOPLE: The filth! The smell! The beady little eyes! The teeth! Disgusting! Disease! Tails! Destruction!

The Town Councilmen: RANDOLPH, EDMUND, and GERHARDT enter and attempt to cross the square without being noticed. JOSEPH steps in their path, followed by the other people in the square.

JOSEPH: (Sarcastic.) Well, well, well! Good morning, O Great Councilmen of Hamelin! (A deep bow; COUNCILMEN smile weakly and nod.) And where is your friend the Mayor?

EDMUND: I believe he's still at home. Do you wish to speak with him?

HENRIK: Ha! Do we!

EDMUND: Would you like to make an appointment? He's quite busy these days, but I'm sure we could fit you in sometime . . .

JOSEPH: (Cutting him off,) Oh, please, don't trouble yourselves. I'm sure we'll run into him sometime soon.

The TOWNSMEN share a threatening laugh and sneer. RANDOLPH and GERHARDT pull EDMUND aside and whisper to one another.

RANDOLPH: Edmund, Gerhardt - listen to me. It's getting worse each day: the way they talk. I don't like it. I don't like it one bit.

GERHARDT: Neither do I. There's something wrong, Randolph - terribly wrong.

EDMUND: Well, of course there is - there are rats all over Hamelin!

GERHARDT: Edmund! We're not talking about the rats. There's more to it than that. I can't explain it, but - well, the storm last night . . . this heat . . .

RANDOLPH: That's true.

EDMUND: Yes - and the wind, how strange it blows . . . very strange . . .
GERHARDT: Something’s going to happen today. I can feel it in my bones.

RANDOLPH: Indeed.

EDMUND: I’m worried.

RANDOLPH: You’re always worried.

GERHARDT: (Suddenly.) Look! There he is!

EDMUND: (Startled, hiding behind RANDOLPH.) Who?!

GERHARDT & RANDOLPH: The Ratcatcher.

RATCATHER enters, with his paraphernalia: cages, twine, bag of bait, etc.


RATCATHER: Morning, Councilman.

GERHARDT: How are you doing?

RATCATHER: Feel just fine, thank you; and yourself?

GERHARDT: Not too ba... (Stops himself and gives RATCATHER- a little shove.) Fool! I didn't mean "How are you," I meant "How are you doing with your work!"

RANDOLPH: The rats!

EDMUND: Have you caught any?

RATCATHER: No. Not yet.

Cries and commotion from offstage.

RANDOLPH: Now what?

EDMUND: More trouble!

GERHARDT: Come along!

The COUNCILMEN scurry off as JACOB, carrying his little daughter EMILY, runs into the square followed by his wife GRETA. TOWNSPEOPLE gather around.

JACOB: Water! Quickly! We need water!

ADAM: (Stepping forward with his bucket.) I have some right here.
JACOB sets EMILY down beside ADAM and GRETA takes her apron and dips the end of it into the bucket, applying water to EMILY’s arm.

GRETA: Thank you, Adam!

JACOB runs offstage as a WOMAN questions GRETA.

WOMAN: Greta! What is it?

GRETA turns US and TOWNSPEOPLE crowd around her. Freeze. Adam kneels down beside EMILY.

EMILY: Morning, Adam.

ADAM: Emily! What happened to you?

EMILY: Got bit.

ADAM: What?!

EMILY: Got bit by a rat.

ADAM: How?

EMILY: Don’t know. Just woke up and rolled over on it, I guess. Didn’t know it was there. Was it surprised! Mad, too. That’s probably why it bit me.

ADAM: Does it hurt?

EMILY: Not really.

JACOB reappears as the TOWNSPEOPLE burst into gossip and head wagging.

JACOB: Greta . . . hurry . . . the doctor will see her now . . .

EMILY: (To ADAM, as GRETA picks her up. ) Gotta go. See you later.

GRETA fusses over EMILY as CROWD follows JACOB and GRETA, mumbling threats against the MAYOR, COUNCILMEN, ETC. ADAM waves goodbye to his little friend as the stage clears and the lights fade.)