

Plays for Young Audiences

A PARTNERSHIP OF SEATTLE CHILDREN'S THEATRE AND CHILDREN'S THEATRE COMPANY - MINNEAPOLIS

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The Adventures of Mottel

Story by
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Music by
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ADVENTURES OF MOTTEL

Cast of Characters

MOTTEL, a boy from Kasrilevke.....	Karl Olson
MAMA, Mottel' s mother.....	Barbara Davidson
ELI, Mottel’s older brother.....	Andy Weiland
DR. MENASHE, local doctor.....	Jerry Drake
PESACH (PAPA), Mottel’s father.....	David Cabot
PESHE, Mottel's neighbor, married to Moishe.....	Randy Latimer
MOISHE, Mottel's neighbor, married to Peshe.....	Daniel Olson
MRS. MENASHE, married to Dr. Menashe.....	Angela Drahos
YOINE, Mottel's neighbor, married to Rivel, Brokhe's father.....	David Fenley
BROKHE, marries Eli.....	Jennifer Paige
RIVEL, Mottel's neighbor, married to Yoine, Brokhe's mother.....	Julie Stonebraker
ALTEH, Brokhe's younger sister.....	Courtney Smith
RABBI.....	David Cabot
BADCHEN, wedding entertainer.....	played by Pinye
PINYE, Eli's friend, married to Taibel.....	John Middleton
TAIBEL, married to Pinye.....	Johanna Kunin
CHAIMOVA, old woman at the border.....	David Fenley
BORDER GUARDS.....	Jeremy Lostetter Michael Tezla Michael Vicha
MISS ZAICHIK, emigration official at Antwerp.....	Meghan Newell
GOWFUE, child at Antwerp.....	Nora Webb Williams
MENDEL, child at Antwerp.....	RJ. Detrick
IMMIGRATION OFFICERS.....	Heather DeSisto Michael Tezla
PESHE'S CHILDREN.....	Dylan Damn, David Iverson, Katie McGinty, Andrew Staupe, Veronica Staupe, Nora Williams, Kimesha Winn
ORCHESTRA	
Violin / Trumpet.....	Bruce Allard
Clarinet.....	Brian Grivna
Keyboards.....	Alan Shorter
Stage Manager.....	Rebecca M. Houle
Assistant Stage Manager.....	Brad Richardson
Stage Management Apprentice.....	Erga Sutherland

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Act I, Prologue

Prior to Curtain Time: SHIP OFFICIAL and SAILOR board a ship and prepare for the boarding of the steerage class passengers. When the SHIP OFFICIAL decides the time has arrived, he signals for the SAILOR to allow the passengers to board. EMIGRANTS are admitted in family groups, their papers checked by the SHIP OFFICIAL against the manifest, and they are sent on to claim their portion of the deck. At one point, a CHILD seeks to board by himself. He is told to wait while the SAILOR tries to find relatives among the passengers still waiting to board. Eventually the CHILD is allowed to board. When all passengers have boarded, the SAILOR and SHIP OFFICIAL leave and the passengers wait for their journey to begin.

At Curtain Time: We hear the engines of the ship start. The gangplank being taken away, the anchor being raised and a blast from a steam whistle signaling the ship's departure. The passengers wave good-bye to people on shore as the ship begins to leave the dock.

House Lights and preset fade to Blackout. Music.

Lights rise to show the EMIGRANTS swaying to the severe roll of the ship during a storm. One WOMAN rushes upstage, succumbing to her sea sickness, as her HUSBAND follows to try to comfort and assist her.

Lights focus down on her CHILD, a look of fear in her eyes, then

crossfade to: The SAILOR entering with a large kettle of food. He fills the bowls of one family and continues on. The FATHER stops his CHILDREN from eating the rancid fare that has been provided and tosses the food over the side of the ship. Another family motions the SAILOR away, unable to accept the spoiled food. Lights fade.

Lights rise on the RABBI leading the men in Rosh Hashanah prayer. The RABBI then turns to the audience to blow the shofar, ram's horn, as lights fade to Blackout.

Lights rise on groupings of EMIGRANTS on the deck of the ship. An EMIGRANT looks out over the sea -- and her expression suddenly alters, betraying great joy and excitement. She rushes to fetch her companion and takes her to the upstage edge of the stage, pointing. Others' attention is drawn upstage as they attempt-to see what she has seen and, with expressions of immense hope, they gather at the edge of the stage. A fog clears to reveal the image of the Statue of Liberty. The EMIGRANTS wave, embrace, etc. as lights quickly fade..

Lights rise as an OFFICER quickly enters a room on Ellis Island where the EMIGRANTS are again seated, waiting, with ID. cards hanging around their neck. The echo as he speaks suggests an immense cavern.

OFFICER I: *(Reading from a clipboard.)* Luoikamovich! Tsvi-Hersh Ben Chaiyim
Luoikamovich!

OFFICER signals for the correct family to exit. The remaining EMIGRANTS wave cards at him and shout, plead, and protest in various languages. OFFICER pushes his way through the CROWD and exits as EMIGRANTS remain in a mass of humanity, prevented from following the man, and continue waving their cards above their heads. Calling they slowly disperse and exit to reveal:

Act I, Scene 1

A nine-year-old boy, MOTTEL, who stands alone in a pool of light. IMMIGRATION OFFICERS step into their own pools of light as they speak.

VOICE I: (Male) Next! You! Boy?! Next! You! (MOTTEL looks about with a puzzled expression.) Name. Your name, boy.

VOICE II: (Female.) Child? Could you give us your name, please.

MOTTEL stands, saying nothing.

VOICE I: (A pronouncement.) Probably deaf. Take him aside. Next.

VOICE II: Wait a moment. (A loud clap of hands and MOTTEL turns his head toward the sound.) Not deaf.

VOICE I: An idiot, maybe . . .

VOICE II: Not necessarily. Little boy? You needn't be frightened. What is your name? (Still no response. She repeats the question in French.)
Petit garcon? Comment vous appelez-vous?

No response from MOTTEL.

VOICE I: (Impatient, repeating.) Petit garcon? Comment vous appelez-vous?

VOICE II: (In Italian.) Come si chiama?

VOICE I: (In Spanish.) Su nombre, por favor?

VOICE II: (In Russian.) Kahk vahs zahvoot?

MOTTEL: Mottel.

VOICE I: Ah - - Russian, is he?

MOTTEL: (In Yiddish.) Avuh iz mein Mamih? (Where is my Mama?)

VOICE I: Not Russian.

VOICE II: Yiddish. (In Yiddish.) Du bist a Yid? (You are a Jew?)

MOTTEL: (In Yiddish.) Yeh. Ich bin a Yid. (Yes. I am a Jew.)

VOICE I: Another Jew. His parents?

VOICE II: Host du a mishpachich? (You have a family?)

MOTTEL: (A vigorous nod.) Aw, yeh! Mamih! (Oh, yes! Mama!)

VOICE II: He has a mother.

A pool of light rises on MAMA.

MAMA: (Her eyes search the darkness.) Mottel? Mottel!

MOTTEL: Und Eli. Mein bruder. (And Eli. My brother.)

ELI: (A pool of light. Also calling.) Mottel!

VOICE II: A brother too.

VOICE I: And where does he come from?

VOICE II: Dein hame? (Your home?)

MOTTEL: Kasrilevke. Kasrilevke . . .

The pools of light - - the one on MOTTEL and the others on MAMA and ELI - - spill into general lighting for the next scene as various TOWNSPEOPLE appear to set the scene of the shtetl.

Act I, Scene 2

DR. MENASHE: Kasrilevke: a little nothing of a village. Or in Yiddish: a little nothing of a shtetl.

MOISHE: Kasrilevke

PESHE: A poor little shtetl - no bigger than a peanut.

MRS. MENASHE: Little hovels leaning side against side . . .

TAIBEL: . . . packed as close together as herring in a barrel.

PINYE: Kasrilevke -- from the word: kasriel - meaning poor but proud people. "Our burdens heavy we have many, and our backs are bent and sore. But in humor we are wealthy, and with trust in God we're never poor."

MAMA: Mottel!

YOINE: Poor?! Just let a Jew try to make a living in such a place. Someone once said to the great millionaire Rothschild, "You want to live forever! Then move to Kasrilevke -- no rich man has ever died there."

ELI: Mottel!

RABBI: You want to hear something? God is very happy in Kasrilevke. So many good people with so many good prayers. But for God to answer them all? What, we should expect from Him miracles?

DR. MENASHE: As doctor to our village, I see miracles all the time. Why, it's no small miracle we stay alive . . . here . . . in Kasrilevke.

PESHE: Kasrilevke. A poor little shtetl - no bigger than a pea.

MAMA: Mottel!

ELI: *(After VILLAGERS exit.)* Mottel? Mottel! *(He strides over to MOTTEL and whacks the back of his neck.)* Daydreaming? Enough, already!

MAMA: *(Rushing over to protect MOTTEL.)* Eli!

ELI: Maybe you know a better way to get his attention?

MAMA: *(Stroking MOTTEL'S head.)*What - am I Eve? Is it Cain and Abel I've raised for sons? God forbid your poor Papa should see his firstborn raise his hand against the younger.

ELI: Papa's too sick to see anything.

MAMA: Then what of me? I don't have eyes? Always fighting - it kills me to see it. Murderers! Where did I get such murderers for children?

ELI: You're saying he should be allowed to run wild like a little goat all the day?

MAMA: The Talmud tells us: if you must strike a child, use a string.

MOTTEL: It's all right, Mama; my stomach hurts more than my head.

MAMA: Yes, Motteleh. You're hungry. I know.

ELI: Well then, suppose you go get us some food?

MOTTEL: Food!

ELI: You've got ears! You heard me

MAMA: Eli! How cruel can you be, to tease him so? You know we haven't got a kopeck to our name.

ELI: Then we'll just have to sell something, won't we?

MAMA: There's nothing left! Only the bed Papa sleeps upon. Beyond that we have our shmattes and our souls. Everything else we've sold.

ELI: *(Taking a silver watch from his pocket.)* There's this.

MAMA: Not your pocket watch?!

ELI: Yes, my pocket watch! *(To MOTTEL as he hands him the pocket watch.)*
Mottel - I want you should go to old man Yossel and . . .

MAMA: Eliezer Rabinovitch, stop right there! . . . that's your engagement gift . . . the dowry from your bride-to-be's father. God forbid Yoine should find out you've sold it! Our future might depend on your marriage.

ELI: That's the future; what about now? Papa needs more medicine, and if we ourselves don't get something to eat we'll soon be as bad-off as he is.

MOTTEL: Is Papa going to die?

MAMA: *(A gesture of silence.)* Shah, Motteleh! The Angel of Death may hear!

ELI: *(To MOTTEL)* Already I've struck a bargain with Yossel. Thirty roubles; not a kopeck less.

MOTTEL: *(A whoop.)* Thirty roubles?! Hoo-Ha! We'll be rich!

ELI: "Rich!" Meshugenah! Already we owe five times what this bit of silver will fetch. Go now, and be quick about it. And God help you if any soldiers catch you with the watch - or the money.

SOLDIERS appear and nail an edict to a fence. ELI takes the watch back from MOTTEL and exits.

MOISHE: *(Appearing to address the audience)* Everywhere - the Czar's soldiers: an army that delights in tormenting the Jews.

YOINE: What is it this time? Has the Czar doubled our taxes again?

VILLAGE WOMAN: More schools which our children are forbidden to attend?

TAIBEL: More villages where Jews are forbidden to live?

PINYE: *(Having read the edict.)* No - another list of occupations we're forbidden to hold

MOISHE: *(As SOLDIERS and VILLAGERS exit.)* So what else is new? The world is in the hands of fools . . .

ELI: *(Handing MOTTEL the watch again.)* Thirty roubles.

MAMA: Mottel, wait! Eli, maybe you could go instead? Let Mottel stay.

ELI: *(As MOTTEL holds forth his pocket watch.)* And if Papa needs help? What good is Mottel if. . . ?

MOTTEL: *(Marching up to ELI.)* I could help!

ELI: What? Leave my father in your hands?

MOTTEL: *(Taking the watch to give back to ELI.)* He's my Papa too! Only once give me the chance and I'd show you how I could help . . .

PAPA: *(From within, hoarsely.)* Henyeh? Henyeh -Leah? What is it?

MAMA: *(To ELI and MOTTEL.)* Hush! Your Papa's awake!

PAPA: *(After a cough.)* What's the matter?

MAMA: *(Running inside.)* Gornescht, Papa! Nothing!

ELI: *(To MOTTEL, snatching back the watch.)* Stay nearby, understand

MOTTEL: Can't I come inside?

ELI: *(Turning to leave and sell his watch.)* No! Just do as you're told and try to be quiet!

MAMA: *(After more coughs from PAPA; urgent).* Eli!

ELI: *(Turning back and going into the house.)* Coming!

MOTTEL: *(Listening to the coughing.)* Could such a sound come from my Papa? No. My Papa is the cantor. It is Papa -- and the Rabbi too, of course -- who lead us in our prayers every Shabbas. *(PAPA [a memory] sings a portion of the Sabbath service.)* Everyone used to joke: "Our cantor Pesach is magnificent, but, you know, if I had his voice I'd sing just as well." *(PAPA coughs from offstage.)* Now they don't make jokes about my Papa's voice . . . *(MOTTEL sings, acappella, the same phrase of the Sabbath service we just heard. DR. MENASHE enters.)* No delaohay nu, No deladonay nu, No delanolkay nu, No delamoshie nu.

DR. MENASHE: *(After listening a moment.)* Omeyn.

MOTTEL: Shalom aleichem, Doctor Menashe!

DR. MENASHE: Aleichem shalom. You've been blessed with your father's voice, Mottel.

MOTTEL: Papa says someday I'll be a cantor like him.

DR. MENASHE: We should all live to see the day.

MOTTEL: Will my Papa ever sing again, Doctor Menashe?

DR. MENASHE: God alone knows. Let's hope so. *(He puts his hand on MOTTEL'S shoulder.)* Now, before I see him, can you guess what I might have in my bag today?

MOTTEL: Medicine?

DR. MENASHE: Of course, medicine. Which reminds me... *(He pulls out a handkerchief [which we will later learn contains a blue Stone] and puts it into his coatpocket.)* But besides medicine, Mottel; what else has the old doctor got, do you think?

MOTTEL: I don't know. Doctor things.

DR. MENASHE: Here. *(He pulls out a peach.)*

MOTTEL: *(With awe.)* A peach?

DR. MENASHE: First of the season.

MOTTEL: For me?

DR. MENASHE: *(Handing it to the boy.)* Who else? Eat it up now, quick as you can, for God help us both my wife should pass by and see you with it. Such a witch, that wife of mine! The greediest, stingiest woman in all Kasrilevke - no, in all of Russia You know, she keeps track of each and every cherry, apple, plum, and apricot in our garden? So - what do I do? I steal -- from my own garden. Serves her right, the wicked sinner, that's what I say.

MOTTEL: Don't you like Mrs. Doctor?

DR. MENASHE: Let me tell you something, Motteleh. Marriage, it's like violin. When the beautiful music is over the strings are still attached. Ah, never mind - just you gobble up the peach and enjoy. And now I'll go inside and see how your Papa is today.

MOTTEL: Thank you, Doctor Menashe.

DR. MENASHE: *(Exiting into the house.)* You're welcome. If I could, Motteleh - I'd steal for you the whole tree.

MOTTEL: In all my life I've eaten only one single peach. I was little then - not even five years old. Papa wasn't sick and we had food to eat every day. And we still had all our things. Papa came home from the synagogue and called to Eli and me. In his back pocket, where he keeps his handkerchief, there were two peaches: one for my brother and one for me. (*MOTTEL regards the peach in his hand.*) We can eat this for supper, and then . . . then I can plant the seed. Oh, blessed be the fruit of the tree! (*MOTTEL runs offstage*)

DR. MENASHE: (*To MAMA.*) His cough has grown worse? (*MAMA nods.*) Has he been able to rest? Sleeping well?

MAMA: (*Weeping.*) Sleep? Three and twenty years we've been together . . . such good years, thank God! And our sons . . . two fine boys. But how is he to sleep, wondering what's to become of them?

DR. MENASHE: You must try not to worry, Henyeh-Leah. And you must try not to cry. I worry about your eyes-

MAMA: My eyes? It's our empty stomachs.

DR. MENASHE: No. Your eyes. Mind you, I'm no big shot city doctor, but I'm wondering maybe you have yourself a mild case of trachoma.

MAMA: God help me, all this and now I've got trachoma? (*Beat.*) What' s trachoma?

DR. MENASHE: Never mind. But here-- (*Hands her the handkerchief from his pocket. She almost blows her nose into it.*) Give a look. So I'm giving you this medicine. It's called copper sulphate.

MAMA: (*Unwrapping handkerchief.*) It looks like a stone. What –
Dr. Menashe, you want I should swallow this?

DR. MENASHE: No. Gently rub it on your eyes, once, twice a day. And like I said, enough already with the tears - they won't help trachoma and they won't help your husband Pesach, or Eli...

MAMA: Oh, for Eli, I have no worries, kenohorah: engaged to the rich baker's daughter, he'll never starve, he'll be able to spend his days in the synagogue studying Torah... But Mottel . . .

PAPA coughs violently from inside and calls for MOTTEL.

ELI: Mottel! (*Rushing out.*) Mottel? Where's Mottel? Papa wants him. (*As PAPA coughs and DR. MENASHE and MAMA rush in to make him comfortable, ELI rushes from the house and calls for MOTTEL.*) Mottel?! Mottel, come quick! (*MOTTEL appears with dirt all over his hands and shirt.*) Just look at you! Schmutzik! Filthy as a pig! What have you been up to? (*MOTTEL is about to explain. ELI shoves him inside the house.*) Never mind. Papa wants you. But you mustn't tire him, understand? None of your silly stories - just stand and say "Thank God", do you hear?

PAPA: (*As MOTTEL approaches the bed.*) Mottel? Is that you, my son?

MOTTEL: Yes, Papa. (*With a glance at ELI, he hastily adds*) Thank God.

PAPA: (*A slight chuckle.*) Yes, thank God! (*His chuckle becomes a horrible cough.*)

MAMA: (*Terribly concerned.*) Doctor. . . ?

PAPA: Your hand, Motteleh.

MOTTEL: But it's dirty.

PAPA: You think a little dirt is going to hurt me? Come. (*Taking MOTTEL'S hand.*) And how did my boy get so dirty?

MOTTEL: Making a hole.

PAPA: Digging your papa's grave, were you?

MAMA bursts in to tears.

MOTTEL: I was trying to plant a peach tree.

PAPA: So you're going to grow up to be a farmer, are you?

MOTTEL: No. I'm going to be cantor . . . like you, Papa.

PAPA: Show me then. Show me what kind of cantor you will be. Sing for me something, Motteleh.

MOTTEL: What, Papa?

PAPA: You know Kaddish?

MAMA: *(Weeping into her apron.)* Oh, dear God . . .

PAPA: I taught you that? --

MOTTEL: Yes.

PAPA: Then sing it for me, my son. Sing Kaddish for your papa.

MOTTEL & PAPA: Yisgaddal v'yiskaddash shmey rabboh . . .

(PAPA coughs violently, then falls silent; his head dropping back onto the pillow. With a cry of anguish, MAMA runs to her husband's side; ELI following. DR. MENASHE takes MOTTEL out of the mom and the boy resumes singing Kaddish as MOURNERS and RABBI enter for funeral and join him in the chant.)

MOTTEL: Yisgaddal v'yiskaddash shrney rabboh,
B'olmoh dee v'roh chir-usey
Vyamlich malchusey
B'cha-yeychon uvyo-meychon
Uvcha-yey d'chol beys yisro-eyl
Ba-agoloh uvizman koreev
Vimru omeyn.

MOTTEL, MAMA, ELI, RABBI, MOURNERS: Y'hey shrney rabboh m'vorach

L'olam ul'olrney olmayoh.

Yisborach v'yishtabbach

V'yispo-a. v'yisromam

V' yisnassey v' yis-haddar

V'yis-alleh v'yis-hallal

Shmey d'kudshoh . . .

(MAMA, ELI, and MOTTEL tear their garments.)

. . . b'reech hu

L'eyloh m .ko l birchosoh v'shirosoh

Tush-b'chosoh v'nechemosoh

Da'arniron b'olmo

Vimru omeyn.

(MAMA, ELI, MOURNERS sprinkle dirt on the grave.)

Y'hey shlomo rabboh min sh'mahyoh v'chayeem

MOTTEL,SOME MOURNERS: Oleynu v'al kol yisroel v'irnru omen

MOTTEL: Oseh shalom bimromov hu yaaseh shalom

Oleynu v'al kol yisroel v'imru omen ..

MOURNERS and RABBI slowly exit.

MOTTEL: *(After sprinkling a handful of dirt.)* The Kaddish doesn't say anything about death. Instead it talks about hope and goodness. Because no matter what happens in life, you ought to look for what is good about it. Only then can you truly live.