

PLAYS FOR YOUNG AUDIENCES

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Hansel and Gretel

By
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Hansel and Gretel was first presented by Northampton Theatre Royal, UK, in 2004.

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CAST:

The show is written to be performed by six actors:

ALBERT

HANSEL

GRETEL

MRS WICKER / WITCH

CORKSCREW / GRATER / RORY / HUMBUG

SPONGE / JEZEBEL / STRAWBERRY TART

One

Albert arrives on stage. He wears a chef's hat and apron. He has a cart that is equipped for the purposes of cooking. His collection of utensils includes a corkscrew, a sponge and a cheese grater.

Albert Hello!

[Hello!]

Oh, you can do better than that! Hello!

[Hello!!]

No, no, no, you sound all sad and rubbish. Hello!

[Hello!!!]

That's more like it! Oh, and what a beautiful audience we have here. He's beautiful. She's beautiful. You're beautiful, Sir. You're beautiful, Madam. She's very beautiful. She's... oh no, it's hideous, horrible, my eyes, my eyes...! Oh, I'm joking, Mother!

My name is Albert and I live here in this cottage on the edge of the forest. From my clothes you might think I'm a cook, but actually, my job here... Well, I'll give you a clue...

Albert mimes chopping down a tree and shouts "timber".

[Woodcutter!]

That's it, I'm a hairdresser. Only joking, I'm a woodcutter. But, I'll let you into a secret, I hate being a woodcutter. I hate it. Chopping down trees in the cold and wet, all on my own, hauling bits of log about, it's miserable. A bit of sympathy, please.

[Ahhhhh.]

Hey, I'll tell you what I do like though. Christmas! Who else likes Christmas?

[Yeah! Me! Me!!]

What do you like about Christmas?

[Presents! Crackers! The religious aspect! Food!]

Presents, yes. Crackers, yes. Food! Yes! I love food and I love cooking, especially at Christmas because at Christmas you can spend all day stuffing your face and no-one can tell you off. And today, because it's Christmas, I'm going to cook my world-famous fish pie!

[Urrh.]

Give it a chance. Now, for fish pie you must have a fish.

Albert produces a big fish.

This fish is a trout and I call him Trevor. What's that you say, Trevor? Trevor doesn't want to go in my pie. Shall I put Trevor in the pie?

[Yes! No!]

Well, tell you what, Trevor, as it's Christmas...

Albert bashes Trevor's head on the cart several times.

Battered fish! Trevor will now let you do pretty much whatever you like to him. I'm going to tenderise him.

Albert starts hitting Trevor with a mallet.

When you're tenderising a fish, be very careful not to get your fingers in the w /

Albert hits his hand with the mallet. He is in great pain.

Oh, for... crying out loud...!

Albert puts Trevor in his cooking pot.

Next, we chop an onion.

Albert takes an onion from under his hat, chops it in half and immediately bursts into tears. He bursts out of tears and puts the onion in the pot.

And then we add flour, salt and pepper.

Albert adds flour, salt and pepper. The pepper makes him sneeze into the pie. He peers into the snotty pie. After a moment's dilemma, he stirs the pie and continues...

Mix these ingredients thoroughly /

Albert's corkscrew comes to life, waving his arms. He is French.

Corkscrew Oh, non!

Albert So the fishy flavours really come to the fore /

Corkscrew Ooh la la!

Albert After twenty minutes /

Corkscrew 'Allo!

Albert Ignore him.

Corkscrew It is me, your corkscrew friend!

Albert What is it?

Corkscrew Monsieur. There is snot in your pie.

Albert No there isn't.

Corkscrew Oh, Monsieur, you should be ashamed.

Albert Well, no-one would have noticed if it wasn't for you.

Corkscrew You do not even introduce me to your friends.

Albert This is corkscrew. Now put a cork in it.

Albert throws a tea towel over corkscrew.

Corkscrew Oh, non! I am blind, you have stolen my eyes, you are the cruellest of men!

Albert All right, you can come out if you promise to be quiet.

Corkscrew Monsieur, a Frenchman's word is his bond.

Albert removes the tea towel.

Albert The pie goes in the oven at gas mark /

Corkscrew (*Waving arms.*) Snotty pie, snotty pie, snotty pie!

Albert All right, I won't bake the snotty pie! As luck would have it, here's one I prepared earlier.

Albert takes a big, beautiful, golden pie from an oven built into the cart.

Hansel! Gretel! It's time for dinner!

SONG BEGINS.

The house is revealed. It is a funny, wonky kind of place. Gretel enters. She wears a scarf.

Ah, it's my lovely daughter Gretel. Isn't she beautiful?

Gretel *(Embarrassed.)* Dad.

Albert The brains of the whole operation.

Gretel Somebody's got to be.

Albert Brighter than a million tacks and sharper than a hedgehog, she is. But deep down, a big old softy.

Albert kisses Gretel. She sings...

Gretel We live in a house on the edge of the forest
Right up near the blooming sky.
There's an old pillar box and a little bus stop
And a couple of shops nearby.
I'm as sharp as a tack, I can add, subtract,
Divide and multiply.
And I! Would! Like! Some! Pie!

Albert And here comes my boy Hansel.

Hansel does not appear. SONG PETERS OUT.

He's a bit shy. Keep playing, band. Come on, Hansel.

SONG RESUMES. *Hansel comes on shyly and waves. He wears a hat.*

Hansel! He's a good boy. Big appetite like his Dad. Not very bright but a heart of gold, my Hansel. Go on, son, tell the people about our life.

Hansel opens his mouth to sing but is too shy.

All right, me and Gretel will help you, how about that?

All We live in a house on the edge of the forest
Right up near the blooming sky.
There's comfy beds and a big food cupboard
And a roof that keeps us dry.

Albert He's a little bit thick,

Gretel And a little bit greedy,

Hansel But basically a pretty nice guy.

All And I! Would! Like! Some! Pie!

They jig about, bashing bits of cutlery together to great percussive effect.

Cutlery, cutlery, cutlery, cutlery, cutlery, cutlery, cutlery!
Cutlery, cutlery, cutlery, cutlery, cutlery, cutlery, cutlery!
Cutlery, cutlery, cutlery, cutlery, cutlery, cutlery, cutlery!
Cutlery, cutlery, cutlery, cutlery, cutlery, cutlery, cutlery!

We live in a house on the edge of the forest
Right up near the blooming sky.
There's a clock on the wall that's upside down
And we really don't know why.
The door's never locked so please knock us up
If you're ever passing by.
But now! Let's! Have! Some! Pie!
Now let's have some pie!

SONG ENDS.

Mrs Wicker comes in. She is very ugly. She has three warts on her left cheek and a gargantuan rump. Her manner is crude and lacking in charm.

Wicker The toilet is still blocked.

Albert Ah, it's my beautiful wife.

Wicker I just did one and it wouldn't go down.

Albert Isn't she charming?

Wicker What are you lot singing about?

Albert How are you, my special one?

Albert tries to kiss Wicker. She punches him.

Wicker Never mind all that, what have you got?

Albert Got, my love?

Wicker Yes, you're supposed to be a woodcutter. How much wood have you got?

Albert Oh! Well...

Groaning with effort, Albert appears to be heaving a huge haul of wood into view. It eventually becomes clear that he has only one very small stick to show for his efforts.

Wicker Pathetic!

Gretel It's not his fault.

Wicker Who asked you?

Albert It's difficult to find.

Wicker Difficult to find?! We live on the edge of the forest, you lazy, idle, steaming nitwit. There's trees as far as the eye can see. Even that slack-brained son of yours would do better than you.

Hansel Dad doesn't have a son.

Wicker (*Wallop*) You, you idiot. How did someone as beautiful and charming as me end up with a bunch of lazy no-hopers like you lot?

Albert We're sorry, dear.

Gretel No we're not.

Wicker What's for dinner?

Albert A-ha! I made your favourite. Fish pie.

Wicker (*Salivates*.) Ooh, fish pie, look at that. Lovely, golden, buttery crust, have a smell of that, everyone.

Everyone, including the band, sniff the fish pie. It smells good.

And that's all your getting!

Gretel But we're hungry.

Wicker Yes, well, you should have thought of that before you started giving me lip, shouldn't you? Here's a bag of my toenail clippings. You two can go outside and put them in order of yellowness.

Wicker throws the bag of toenails at Gretel.

Gretel Oh, they stink!

Wicker By the three warts on my left cheek, if I hear one more single word out of you it'll be straight to bed without any supper.

Gretel But /

Wicker Right, that's it! Out!

Hansel and Gretel trudge off.

Albert I'm sure they didn't mean to upset you /

Wicker And you can go too while we're at it. Miserable pathetic excuse for a man. You should be sticking up for me, not them.

Albert But they were only /

Wicker In your bed!

Albert Yes, dear.

Albert goes.

Wicker (To band.) You lot, go and practice your scales.

The band goes. Wicker talks to the pie.

Oh yes, Mister Pie. It's tummy time for you.

Scene ends.

Two

Hansel and Gretel are outside the house. It is cold. They have a special toenail album into which they will stick the toenails.

Gretel I hate her.

Hansel Who?

Gretel Our horrible stepmother, who do you think?

Hansel Oh. Her.

Gretel She's such an old witch. This is disgusting. *(She opens the bag of toenails.)* Oh, her toenails smell like rotten fish, they're even worse than her farts!

Hansel takes a toenail and sniffs at it.

Hansel Mmmm.

Gretel Hansel?
Hansel They smell good.
Gretel Hansel, don't be disgusting.

Gretel takes the toenail away from Hansel. As she speaks, he takes another toenail and licks it...

This is definitely my least favourite chore. How do they grow so long? *(She sees what Hansel is doing.)* Don't do that, it's covered in germs!

Hansel But I'm hungry.
Gretel But that's just grim.
Hansel All right.

Pause. Hansel eats the toenail.

Gretel Hansel!
Hansel Mmm, tastes like chicken.
Gretel But it's not good for you! *(Pause.)* Mmmm, chicken. I'm so hungry. I'd eat my own socks if it wasn't so cold. And she's in there with that whole massive pie. I bet she's already eaten it. I bet she's sleeping it off, snoring like the big fat pig that she is. Either that or she's talking to that creepy little pet of hers, Spectre. And she's got a big jar of toffees, I'd do anything for a toffee. A big, creamy, yummy toffee. Hey, Hansel, are you thinking what I'm thinking?
Hansel I'm not thinking anything.
Gretel What say we sneak upstairs and grab a few toffees?
Hansel Toffees?
Gretel Got to be tastier than toenails.
Hansel Tastier than toenails?!
Gretel Yeah, come on.
Hansel But what if she catches us, Glenda?
Gretel My name's Gretel.

Hansel Is it?

Gretel Yes. And anyway, we won't get caught, she'll be asleep.

Hansel Sounds a bit dangerous to me.

Gretel Well, go to bed then, I'll bring you a toffee in a minute.

Scene ends.

Three

Mrs Wicker sits in her chair licking the pie dish clean.

Wicker Delicious! I'll say one for thing for that husband of mine. He may be a rubbish woodcutter and brainless berk but he sure does make a mean fish pie.

Mrs Wicker summons Spectre, her horrible accomplice, a weird creature that exists as a shadow on the wall.

Spector. Oh, Spector.

Spectre Hello, Mummy.

Wicker Do you love your Mummy, Spector?

Spectre I love my Mummy very much.

Wicker Ahhh, would you like some fish pie?

Spectre Yes please, Mummy.

Mrs Wicker feeds Spectre some fish pie.

Wicker This is going to be a wonderful Christmas, Spector.

Spectre Is it, Mummy?

Wicker Yes it is. For Mummy has a plan to get rid of that dense little dir-brain Hansel and his smartie-pants sister for good.

Spectre Clever, Mummy.

Wicker I've got that idiot dad of theirs eating out of my hand, he completely trusts me.

Gretel, on her toffee mission, overhears the following:

I'll tell him that I'm taking Hansel and Gretel for a nice wintry walk, for some quality time with their darling Stepmummy.

Spectre Wintry walk!

Wicker Then I'll lead them deep...

Spectre Deep...

Wicker Deep...

Spectre Deep...

Wicker Deep into the forest till they're completely lost. Then Mummy can give them the slip. And you know what happens to little children when they get lost in the forest.

Wicker and Spectre laugh.

Gretel *(Whispers to herself.)* The sneaky old witch!

Spectre Mummy! Mummy! I heard a noise!

Wicker Who's that?! Who's there?!

Wicker looks but Gretel is gone. Wicker rubs her stomach.

No. Must have been my inner workings.

Scene ends.

Four

Hansel and Gretel's bedroom. Hansel is asleep.

Gretel Hansel!

Hansel Uuurrh.

Gretel Hansel, wake up! Hansel!

Hansel It's a marzipan giraffe! It's chasing me!

Gretel It's all right, it's just a dream.

Hansel *(Awake.)* Oh.

Gretel Hansel, you'll never believe what I just heard. She's going to abandon us in the forest.

Hansel Who is?

Gretel Our horrible stepmother. I heard her talking to Spectre, she's going to take us for a walk in the forest then give us the slip.

Hansel But... But... That's terrible.

Gretel I know.

Hansel What are we going to do, Gladys?!

Gretel Gretel.

Hansel I don't want to live in the forest! There's spiders the size of guinea pigs!

Gretel It's all right. What we'll do, we'll go with her into the forest but we won't let her out of our sight, okay? Not for the teeniest of tiny moments.

Hansel But, Graham, what if she gets away.

Gretel Gretel.

Hansel There's guinea pigs the size of dogs, I've seen them.

Gretel No, you haven't. But you're right, we should have a back-up plan. Let me think.

Gretel thinks. She has an idea.

Got it. She's taking us into the forest, right?

Hansel Yes.

Gretel And people get lost in the forest because there's no paths or signs, right?

Hansel Indeed.

Gretel So, what we do is make a path.

Hansel How though?

Gretel Pebbles. As we walk through the forest you leave a trail of white pebbles on the ground. If she gives us the slip we just have to follow the pebbles back home.

Six

Albert is at his cooking cart. He has a mixing bowl and ingredients for a Christmas cake. Hansel's hat and Gretel's scarf hang from the cart.

Albert Hello! [Hello!] Hello! [Hello!] Not much of a catchphrase but it's all I've got. Well, it's a beautiful Christmas Eve and my children are going for a picnic in the forest with my beautiful wife. Lovely! This will give them all a chance to get to know and love each other. One big happy family!

Hansel and Gretel appear in their winter coats.

Oh, there you are! My beautiful children!

Gretel Dad, I really need to talk to you.

Albert Off you go, my dears.

Gretel But /

Albert Don't worry. I'll be fine. Off you go.

Gretel But /

Wicker (Off.) Come along, children.

Gretel Bye then, Dad.

Albert (*Kissing her.*) Goodbye, my Gretel.

Hansel Bye, Uncle Malcolm.

Albert Goodbye, my special man. Be good now, won't you?

Hansel and Gretel are gone.

This gives me a chance to make my world famous Christmas cake. Let me see...

He puts ingredients into a mixing bowl.

Flour, sugar, butter, dried fruit and earwax.

[Uuuuurrrrh.]

What's the matter, you don't like dried fruit? I love a juicy sultana, me.

[Earwax!]

You don't like sugar? Can't have a cake without sugar!

[Earwax!!]

Oh, earwax! As you like.

Albert puts the earwax back in his ear.

Now, the most important ingredient of all is a good old splosh of brandy.

Albert pours brandy into the bowl, spilling some.

Oh bother, I've spilt some, where's that sponge?

Albert looks for Sponge. Sponge wakes up. She is from the West Country.

Sponge Morning, Mister Albert Sir.

Albert Sponge! Can you help me out? I've spilt some brandy.

Sponge Be a pleasure, Mister Albert Sir. I'd do anything you ask.

Albert You get to it then, and I'll get on with the cake.

Sponge soaks up the brandy.

Add cinnamon, lemon rind and a little grated nutmeg /

Sponge (Belch.)

Albert Sponge?

Sponge Pardon Mister (Hiccup).

Albert Are you all right, Sponge?

Sponge (Hiccup)

Albert Are you drunk, Sponge?

Sponge I love you, Mister Albert Sir.

Albert And I love you, Spongy, old pal.

Sponge No, no, I really love you, Mister Albert Sir.

Albert And I really love all the work you do round the kitchen.

Sponge What say we go and take a long, hot bath together?

Albert No /

Sponge Work up a really good lather!

Albert No, Sponge! This is a family show.

Pause.

Sponge *(Cries.)* You hate me!

Albert No, I don't. Come on, you old soak, let's have a bit of a sing-song, shall we? Cheer you up.

Albert sings, using bits of food from the cart to illustrate the songs. Sponge and Corkscrew join in with the singing.

Albert I saw three chips come sailing by
On Christmas Day
On Christmas Day
I saw three chips come sailing by
At twenty to two in the morning.
Good King Wenceslas looked out
On the cabbage garden
Bumped into a Brussels sprout
And said I beg your pardon.
Glo-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-ria
Jesus played for Chelsea.
Away in a manger
Don't eat biscuits in bed
Or the crumbs will get stuck
In your bum and your head.
Jingle bells, jingle bells, jingle all the way,
Sometimes I take off all my clothes
And jump around this way, hey!

Albert dances off stage.

Scene ends.

Seven

Hansel, Gretel and Mrs Wicker walk through the forest. As they go, Hansel leaves his trail.

SONG BEGINS.

Gretel sings; Hansel and Mrs Wicker's lines are spoken.

Wicker Right then, you two, it's a fair old walk, so let's just keep those little legs moving and those little mouths shut, shall we?

Gretel I remember a time when Hansel and me
Would sit at the foot of a sycamore tree
And mum would appear with a big pot of tea
And a bun.

Wicker Come on, Gretel.

Gretel I remember a time before she butted in
With her poisonous breath and her wart-ridden skin.
My face was the home to a permanent grin.
Life was fun.

Wicker Pick those feet up.

Gretel O why Dad, o why did you marry the pig?
O why did mum choke on that thingamyjig?
O why dad, o why dad, o why dad, o why dad, o why?
I hope we don't die.

Wicker Only twelve miles to go!

Gretel I remember a time when me and my brother
Would run through the fields and chase one another.
The sun would shine down like a fairy godmother.
That's right.

Wicker Hurry along, Hansel.

Gretel But now I look forward to nothing, I've got
To find my way out of this devious plot
With only my brother to help, and he's not
Very bright.

Hansel Coming.

Gretel O why Dad, o why did you marry the cow?
Things were okay, they're unbearable now.
O why dad, o why dad, o why dad, o why dad, o why?

O why Dad, o why did you marry the pig?
O why did mum choke on that thingamyjig?
O why dad, o why dad, o why dad, o why dad, o why?
I hope we don't die.

SONG ENDS.