

Plays for Young Audiences

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

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The Legend of Sleepy Hollow & Rip Van Winkle

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Adaptation by
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VOICEOVER
TOP OF SLEEPY HOLLOW

DERRICK

You say this Ichabod Crane was a school teacher?

RIP VAN WINKLE

Yes, Young Derrick. And a fine one too. Though some would say he had one failing.

DERRICK

What was that?

RIP VAN WINKLE

He was a very superstitious fellow. And when he wandered, quite by accident, into the region we know as Sleepy Hollow, that my friends was the beginning of his trouble.

Scene 1. Graveside service. The TOWNSFOLK gather around; PARSON DANDERS delivers the eulogy. A coffin sits next to a freshly dug grave.

PASTOR DANDERS

Whither shall we fly to dream quietly away the remnant of a troubled life? What haven can there be? I know of only one; and it is from this final resting place that we say farewell to our dearly departed schoolmaster, Deidrich Knickerbocker.

(WIDOW DALTON blows her nose noisily)

Wee not, friends, for the prudently shortened sail of our learned schoolmaster, but know that he now learns from a greater master than himself. Weep not, friends, for his end was swift.

(there is a faint wailing in the trees, which resembles a man wailing in fright as if pursued by something)

ROSCOE

What was that?

MRS. VAN TASSEL

Sshhh!

PARSON VAN TASSEL

Roscoe, have you something to say?

ROSCOE

Sorry, Parson. I thought I heard something, that's all

WIDOW DALTON

It was the whippoorwill. They nest here in the churchyard.

ROSCOE

Taht weren't no whippoorwill. The whippoorwill only comes out at night.

PARSON VAN TASSEL

The shady grove of the cemetary gives an impression that night has fallen, Roscoe. Don't be alarmed.

BROM

Yeah, Roscoe. Don't be alarmed. I'll protect you.

ROSCOE

I ain't scared. Go on, Parson. I'm sorry I ever brung it up.

PARSON VAN TASSEL

As I was saying, fear not the untimely departure of this good man, for he rests now in a posture of peace.

(the wail is heard again, this time sounding more like a scream of terror; sharp, chaotic. TOWNSFOLK huddle closer together)

MRS. VAN TASSEL

Baltus!

ROSCOE

I know that voice.

BROM BONES

So do I.

KATRINA

It's him, Mother!

MRS. VAN TASSEL

Hush, Katrina.

WIDOW DALTON

I heard it too - the same voice I heard the night he - oh my...

ROSCOE

Deidrich Knickerbocker.

(whispers throughout the group)

PARSON VAN TASSEL

(shaken)

But my dear people, Deidrich Knickerbocker is here. We are burying our school master today.

ROSCOE

Ghosts!

(another ripple through the group)

PARSON VAN TASSEL

I suggest we finish the services and put this good man to his final resting place. Now join we all in singing the hymn.

ALL

Softly and tenderly, Jesus is calling
Calling for you and for me.
See on the portals he's waiting and watching...
Come home, come home
Ye who are weary come home
Earnestly and tenderly, Jesus is calling
Calling poor sinner, come home"

(they drift off, singing softly. PARSON is the last to go. He takes one last dubious look at the coffin, then hurries to catch up with the others. Then a solo voice, entering from the back of the theater, overrides the former hymn. ICHABOD CRANE enters the stage area, singing badly off tune, and at the top of his lung. Over his shoulder he carries a pole with a handkerchief tied to the end, which contains all his worldly effects. He is a "pointy" man, from his hat to his long pointed shoes; long and skinny. He stops at the sight of the coffin, his eyes wide)

JACOB TABOT

(from inside the open grave)

Hello!

ICHABOD CRANE

(jumping back in terror)

Good gracious!

JACOB TABOT

(popping his head up)

You there. Help me out of here.

ICHABOD CRANE

What on earth are you doing?

JACOB TABOT

I likes to nap in the early afternoon. It's generally cooler a few feet down.

ICHABOD CRANE

(giving him a hand)

It's fortunate that I came along.

JACOB TABOT

Was that you wailin' down the valley?

ICHABOD CRANE

I was singing the praises of this lovely earth as I traverse its splendid domain.

JACOB TABOT

Well, it's enough to wake the dead.

(sees the coffin)

Look who's come to roost. I must have missed the services. Parson Van Tassel has the longest windpipe I've ever heard - next to yours, not that I've met you.

ICHABOD CRANE

But we haven't met, my good man.

JACOB TABOT

Jacob Tabot, grave digger. And this here's the happy customer, Deidrich Knickerbocker. School master in eternal repose.

ICHABOD CRANE

My! What an alarming coincidence! What I mean to say is - er - I am Ichabod Crane, school master and singing instructor. I have come here with the hopeful purpose of gaining employment.

JACOB TABOT

Ichabod Crane, you say?

ICHABOD CRANE

Yes.

JACOB TABOT

Your name fits you. The way your clothes hang, one might take you for a scarecrow, eloped from a cornfield.

ICHABOD CRANE

(laughing good naturedly)

Yes, or perhaps the genius of famine descending upon the earth.

JACOB TABOT

(clearly lost)

That too.

ICHABOD CRANE

Mr. Tabot, have I then reached the rural port of Tarreytown?

JACOB TABOT

Yes you have. But folks round here just call it Sleepy Hollow.

ICHABOD CRANE

And a wonderfully sequestered glen it is. I'm very pleased. I made excellent time on this journey.

JACOB TABOT

You'll be a welcome sight, I'd say. For the parents, that is. I daresay the Sleepy Hollow Boys are of another spirit.

ICHABOD CRANE

The Sleepy Hollow Boys?

JACOB TABOT

Harmless lads, most of the time. But if you ask me, I'd say they drove our friend here to an early recess. If you catch my meaning.

ICHABOD CRANE

(undaunted)

Mr. Tabot, I hold firm sway over a classroom, I assure you.

JACOB TABOT

So did he.

(indicating coffin)

Well, I'd best put him to bed before he takes it in his head to stay above ground with the others. This neighborhood is busy enough with unsettled spirits, say I.

ICHABOD CRANE

Unsettled spirits, Mr. Tabot? Are you referring to matters of the supernatural?

JACOB TABOT

Call it what you will.

ICHABOD CRANE

And you believe in such things?

JACOB TABOT

I keep my eyes and my ears open, Master Crane, and I'd advise you to do the same. Especially in this vicinity.

ICHABOD CRANE

And what, pray tell, is so remarkable about this vicinity?

JACOB TABOT

It's haunted.

ICHABOD CRANE

Haunted? By whom?

JACOB TABOT

Now mind you, fols round here son't like to talk about it. So don't say I said nothing'.

ICHABOD CRANE

Most assuredly, but curiosity is a thirst that cries out to be quenched! Tell me, Jacob, what haunts this region?

JACOB TABOT

The ghost of the Headless Horseman.

ICHABOD CRANE

Headless horseman?

JACOB TABOT

For headless he is! Got his head blowed clean off by a cannonball. Boom!

ICHABOD CRANE

Why that's the silliest thing I ever heard, Jacob Tabot. Have you seen this...creature?

JACOB TABOT

No I haven't. But there's some that has.

ICHABOD CRANE

I fear you have been unduly influenced by your trade and its environs! I must be off. Er - is this the road to town?

JACOB TABOT

That it is.

ICHABOD CRANE

Is there a more circuitous route?

JACOB TABOT

There ain't but one road, Master Crane. And you'll have occasion to come this way often.

ICHABOD CRANE

Why is that?

JACOB TABOT

The school house is around the bend.

ICHABOD CRANE

Past the graveyard?

JACOB TABOT

Past the graveyard.

ICHABOD CRANE

(obviously moved by this information)

Good day to you, Jacob.

JACOB TABOT

Good day, Master Crane.

(exits hurriedly. JACOB shakes his head slowly, watching)

Scene 2. WIDOW DALTON'S dinner table. WIDOW watches as ICHABOD eats ravenously.

WIDOW DALTON

I think I know how you made such good time on your journey, Master Crane. You didn't stop to eat along the way!

(ICHABOD points to the plate of bread questioningly.)

Please help yourself.

ICHABOD CRANE

This stew is a culinary delight! I thank you tolerably!

(he salts the stew, tosses the remainder of the salt over his right shoulder.)

WIDOW DALTON

You're most welcome. It's a pleasure to have you staying in my home. There are many families who hope to lodge you, sir.

ICHABOD CRANE

Are they all such fine cooks as you?

WIDOW DALTON

I'm sure they would strive to be. A school master is a man of importance, like the parson.

(WIDOW exits. ICHABOD helps himself to more stew, salts it, tosses salt over his shoulder, and enjoys a couple of spoonfuls. WIDOW re-enters with a steaming pie and waves the scent toward ICHABOD.)

ICHABOD CRANE

What is that heavenly aroma?

WIDOW DALTON

Mincemeat pie. I hope you take to sweets?

ICHABOD CRANE

Tolerably, thank you! What an enchanting place. Jacob Tabot calls it Sleepy Hollow.

WIDOW DALTON

Yes, it is Tarry Town, for the menfolk do linger about the inns and taverns on market days. But anymore, we just call it Sleepy Hollow.

ICHABOD CRANE

And do all its inhabitants possess the same superstitious nature that Jacob Tabot does?

WIDOW DALTON

It depends on who you talk to. Jacob tends to exaggerate.

ICHABOD CRANE

Is the Headless Horseman an exaggeration?

WIDOW DALTON

Master Crane!

ICHABOD CRANE

(looking behind him nervously)

Yes?

(galloping horses and whooping calls are heard abruptly, running by outside the door. WIDOW stands, runs and looks out the window. The sound of horses fades into the distance.)

Who is it?

WIDOW DALTON

That was Brom Bones and the Sleepy Hollow boys. If there's mischief at hand, he's usually close by.

ICHABOD CRANE

About the Headless Horseman....

WIDOW DALTON

(serving him pie)

Master Crane, this region is full of mystery and legend, brought down by our ancestors. Much of it we believe, some of it we take to heart. But some things are never discussed.

ICHABOD CRANE

Then you believe in the Headless...

WIDOW DALTON

It's natural that folks around here sometimes begin to dream dreams and see things.

ICHABOD CRANE

But my good woman! Should such fancies be indulged?

WIDOW DALTON

Have you yourself no room for the wings of fancy?

ICHABOD CRANE

Superstition? Certainly not!

(ICHABOD taps salt into his ale and tosses some over his right shoulder.)

WIDOW DALTON

Then why do you throw salt over your shoulder?

ICHABOD CRANE

It keeps the nightmares away. Ah, Widow Dalton, I cannot contain my capacious swallow!

(he eats.)

Your mincemeat pie shall be remembered in church madam! It shall inspire sweet music!

(he bursts into happy song, croaking)

Not my finest hour, but I lay blame to the sugar in the pie. Sugar is a natural enemy of the vocal chords.

(he hears the faraway cry of a bird, but it resembles a human's)

Gracious! What was that?

WIDOW DALTON

The sounds of the night, Master Crane.

(WIDOW exits with the plates from the table. ICHABOD glances around, frightened. Then he tosses salt over his right shoulder twice, and over his left shoulder once as lights fade)

Scene 3. A singing lesson TOWNSPEOPLE, ICHABOD.

ICHABOD CRANE

Expanding to breathe is preferable to breathing to expand. The lungs will inflate, the diaphragm will descend, the ribs then expand in sympathy with the chest, thusly:

(he demonstrates, producing a horrible croaking sound)

Now, everyone!

(all sing a pleasant "ah" in perfect harmony)

Don't despair! It takes many years to acquire the proper tone! Now, in preparation, my good people, we must learn to speak our words clearly! Repeat after me: A Sleepy Haven Have We Here In Hallowed Sleepy Hollow.

(the group repeats it)

Excellent! Another one: Exaggerate your G, Exaggerate your J, But Never Do Exaggerate the Things That People Say. Roscoe Thompson, can you say that?

ROSCOE

I never said anybody exaggerated.

ICHABOD CRANE

I didn't say you did. I merely asked you to repeat the rhyme.

ROSCOE

Why should I have to say it? Make Brom say it. He's the one exaggerates.

BROM

When did I exaggerate?

ROSCOE

You said Master Crane looked like a scarecrow.

BROM

I did not. I said Jacob Tabot said he looked like one.

PARSON VAN TASSEL

Boys, is this any way to welcome Master Crane?

WIDOW DALTON

It's the same way they treated the old schoolmaster.

ROSCOE

I never did nothin' to ol' Knickerbocker

WIDOW DALTON

He was a pleasant enough man when he first came here, I don't mind saying.

BROM

He never liked us, Widow Dalton.

WIDOW DALTON

No wonder with your midnight rides, and all your practical joke. It's enough to try the patience of Job.

ROSCOE

Who's Jobe? I don't even know any Jobe.

MRS. VAN TASSEL

Apologize to Master Crane, both of you.

ROSCOE

I apologize.

BROM

I apologize.

ICHABOD CRANE

I am aware that I possess physical qualities and a stature that might suggest a scarecrow. Indeed, Jacob Tabot told me so himself. I seem to have stumbled upon a community rich in imagination. I daresay if I wore my collar any higher, I might be mistaken for the local headless horseman.

(everyone looks at ROSCOE)

ROSCOE

I never said anything, honest!

PARSON VAN TASSEL

Brom?

BROM

I swear I never did.

ICHABOD CRANE

Now. Shall we raise our voices to higher duty?

ALL

COME HOME, COME HOME
YE WHO ARE WEARY COME HOME

(the final notes fade as another sound, a wail, overrides
the hymn. all stop to listen.)

MRS. VAN TASSEL

The hour grows late, Master Crane.

ROSCOE

Yeah. Old Knickerbocker used to let us out early in the fall.

ICHABOD CRANE

And why was that?

ROSCOE

He was afraid to walk home after dark, that's why.

WIDOW DALTON

Hold your tongue, Roscoe.

KATRINA

We generally have a picnic after choir, that's why.

ICHABOD CRANE

Delightful!

WIDOW DALTON

I've brought some fresh tarts and apple cider for everyone.

ICHABOD CRANE

Delightful!

WIDOW DALTON

Roscoe, you set the cloth out, and don't eat everything at once.

(ROSCOE takes the cloth and crosses up to the table. WIDOW leads ICHABOD to the table, enticing him with her basket. BROM steps off the bench to talk to KATRINA. MRS. VAN TASSEL sees this and forestalls it)

MRS. VAN TASSEL

Brom, will you help, me bring the sandwiches in from the wagon?

BROM

Yes, Mrs. Van Tassel. Right away.

(he winks and exits. MRS. VAN TASSEL signals to her husband to work on ICHABOD, and then exits following BROM. PARSON VAN TASSEL goes up to the table and leads ICHABOD downstage)

PARSON VAN TASSEL

Don't let those rantipole heroes intimidate you sir. If you can handle them you've got my support. My daughter Katrina admires your vigorous vocal powers, as she puts it.

KATRINA

Papa!

PARSON VAN TASSEL

Now I know you're being well fed at the Widow Dalton's, but will you come to dinner at our place next week? We have a farm on the north shore of the Hudson.

ICHABOD CRANE

I should like that tolerably well, thank you!

PARSON VAN TASSEL

Excellent! (pushing KATRINA toward ICHABOD) Excellent!

KATRINA VAN TASSEL

Master Crane, how DOES one acquire a full tone for the singing voice?

ICHABOD CRANE

(flattered)

The tone, Miss Van Tassel, is formulated in the region below the rib cage. Thusly.

(he demonstrates)

KATRINA VAN TASSEL

I see!

(she tries to reproduce the gesture)

ICHABOD CRANE

No, no. The source of all air is... May I?

KATRINA

Certainly.

ICHABOD CRANE

(he places his hands on her waist, becoming flustered)

The source of all air is here, below the rib cage - the sort of tone desired may be soft, or trembling, or ...emotional. You see.

KATRINA

I see.

BROM BONES

(jealously)

Shouldn't a singer be careful not to put too much emotion in his tone, Master Crane?

ICHABOD CRANE

Yes, too much emotion should be avoided, because...

BROM BONES

Because otherwise someone else, in an effort to maintain a balance, may constrict the muscles of the fist, and a fat lip will be the result.

(ROSCOE laughs)

ROSCOE

I never tried to sing with a fat lip.

(to ICHABOD)

Have you?

ICHABOD CRANE

(realizing the situation)

We need dwell no more on vocal introspection today, Miss Van Tassel.

(ICHABOD starts to return to the table and ROSCOE trips him. ICHABOD falls into the WIDOW's arms and extricates himself amid much fluster and embarrassment. ROSCOE cheers with BROM. KATRINA starts to cross upstage)

BROM

Aren't you going to sit with me, Katrina?

ROSCOE

Yeah, aren't you going to sit with us?

BROM

Get lost, Roscoe.

(ROSCOE skulks away.)

KATRINA

I don't wish to speak to you until you can behave in a mature manner.

BROM

What did I do?

KATRINA

I was talking with Master Crane when you so rudely interrupted.

BROM

He had his arms around your waist.

KATRINA

He was demonstrating tone control.

BROM

Tone control my foot!

KATRINA

And you made Roscoe trip him!

BROM

I did not. Roscoe...

(KATRINA moves up to ICHABOD and links arms. JACOB enters and crosses to WIDOW)

JACOB

Widow Dalton, I heard the singing way over in the church year. One voice in particular - it cleared my sinuses, it did.

WIDOW DALTON

Master Crane has brought some peculiar quavers to our congregation, to be sure.

JACOB

No, it weren't Master Crane. What I heard was another voice entirely.

WIDOW DALTON

Ye, I know. Sometimes I think it must be the wind, but -

JACOB

It ain't the wind.

WIDOW DALTON

Now see here, Jacob. Master Crane is an impressionable fellow. You be careful how you fill his head with ghost stories.

JACOB

It looks to me like our new school master can take care of his self. I do believe Brom Bones has met his match.

(ROSCOE crosses to BROM offering a tart. BROM grabs him)

ALL

Brom!

ROSCOE

What? What? What did I do?

BROM

Why did you have to trip him?

ROSCOE

You wanted me to!

BROM

Did not.

ROSCOE

Did so.

BROM

Did not.

ROSCOE

Did so.

BROM

Did not.

ROSCOE

You're just mad cause Katrina don't like you anymore. She likes Ol' Strawbones.

(chase ensues. ROSCOE hides behind KATRINA and MRS. VAN TASSEL)

BROM

Come on out from there.

ROSCOE

No sir I ain't.

JACOB

Get him, Brom!

ALL

Jacob!

BROM

How can I, when he hides behind the ladies.

ROSCOE

I ain't no chicken.

BROM

(chasing ROSCOE around the ladies)

Are too.

ROSCOE

Am not.

BROM

Are too.

ROSCOE

Am not.

BROM

Are too.

ROSCOE

Am not.

BROM

Then prove it! Ride down the old church road tonight.

(KATRINA steps downstage and ROSCOE follows, hiding behind her skirt)

ALL

No!

MRS. VAN TASSEL

You stop that now, young man.

ROSCOE

Ain't no one in his right mind would ride that road after dark, not even you, Brom.

BROM

Are you calling me a liar?

MRS. VAN TASSEL

I said, that's enough from both of you.

(she leads KATRINA away from ROSCOE)

PARSON VAN TASSEL

Brom. Set the example here and behave yourself.

BROM

But he called me a liar, Parson, and I can't abide that.

ROSCOE

I never said nothin'.

BROM

(stalking toward ROSCOE kneeling at the bench)

Then admit it. I rode Old Daredevil right down the middle of the church road at midnight.

MRS. VAN TASSEL

I'm sure that's of no consequence to any of us, Brom.

KATRINA

That's right, Brom.

BROM

And I don't suppose it's of any consequence who I encountered on that road?

WIDOW DALTON

Don't say it!

WIDOW DALTON AND MRS. VAN TASSEL

Don't say it!

ALL

Don't say it!

ROSCOE

I said I believed you and I do! I do! I do! I do!

ALL

Roscoe!

ROSCOE

Besides, nobody was there but you, Brom, so I guess we just have to take your word for it.

(BROM tears after ROSCOE. The chase ends up with the boys running around ICHABOD)

ICHABOD CRANE

(with surprising authority)

Enough!

(they stop. ICHABOD, bursting with pent-up curiosity, enunciates his question dramatically)

Whom did you encounter on the church road at midnight.

(BROM smugly exits, ROSCOE following. ICHABOD looks around questioningly. Each person he looks at shakes their head and runs off hurriedly.)