

Plays for Young Audiences

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

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Puss in Boots

Story by
Charles Perrault

Adaptation by
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Music Composed by
Hiram Titus

Puss in Boots was first presented by The Children's Theatre Company for the 1981-1982 season. All Rights Reserved.

Characters

- Puss
- Beauregard Cazeau
- Miss Adele
- Harmon Boozer
- Solon Boozer
- Murlis Boozer
- *Minister*
- *Policeman*
- Stalebread Charlie
- Family Haircut
- Warm Gravy
- Cajun
- *Whiskey*
- *Clem*
- *Miss Eulalie*
- *Queen Malvina*

- Carlos
- Vincentino
- French Woman
- Madame Ninotte
- Mayor Daugette
- Mrs. Daugette
- Magnolia Daugette

Orchestra Includes:

- Clarinet/Saxophone
- Trumpet
- Trombone
- Tuba
- String Bass
- Keyboards
- Percussion

Doubling can occur with characters in *bold*.

Ensemble includes: Gamblers, Singing Waiters, Others

Sequence of Scenes

ACT ONE

Scene 1	Miss Adele's Gambling House
Scene 2	A Cemetery
Scene 3	The French Market
Scene 4	Mayor's Mansion
Scene 5	A Bayou
Scene 6	The Mysterious Babies Club

ACT TWO

Scene 1	A Street
Scene 2	Mayor's Mansion
Scene 3	Veranda
Scene 4	Queen Malvina's Consulting Room
Scene 5	A Field
Scene 6	Croque Mitaine's Mansion

Act 1, Scene 1

Act Curtain in. Orchestra plays overture. As trumpet blows ascending notes, the sound of shattering glass. Lights burst up through Act Curtain [scrim] of wild gambling activity. It is turn-of-the-century New Orleans; we see a huge, round, felt-covered table beneath a shaded lamp. The two gamblers in the poker game are PUSS, a debonair black cat, and BEAUREGARD CAZEAU, a young Creole aristocrat. MISS ADELE and another LADY, heavily made-up and wearing evening clothes, and several OTHER GAMBLERS - wealthy Creole gentlemen - observe the game. At the end of the music, PUSS has all the chips beside him and CAZEAU is scribbling on a piece of paper. All that CAZEAU has left beside him is a fine pair of red leather boots styled like those worn by seventeenth-century musketeers.

PUSS: (Coolly, in a suave French accent.) Well, monsieur? You have prepared the deed?

CAZEAU: (With an angry flourish, signing the document and tossing it to PUSS.) Take it, bête noire ! My fortune, my lands, my family estate - everything I own is now yours!

MISS ADELE: (Murmuring as she strokes CAZEAU 's cheek.) Pauvre cheri . . .

PUSS: Not quite everything, monsieur. True, I have won all evening - and you have lost. But you still have something of value: the red boots, n'est-ce pas?

CAZEAU: (Bitterly.) Red boots?! Mere trifles for Mardi Gras! What are they to me?

PUSS: Nothing, perhaps. But me they would suit very well. Shall we continue the game? One final wager: all that I've won so far - in exchange for monsieur's red boots,

CAZEAU: Monster! You mock me!

PUSS: Not at all, not at all. Voila: you may cut the cards! (He places the deck in front of CAZEAU, who hesitates.) (To ADELE.) Adele . . . a fresh deck of cards, -s'il vous plait . Don't let him touch it.

ADELE takes a new deck from a table drawer.

CAZEAU: (To one of the GAMBLERS.) If you would be so kind, monsieur . . .

FIRST GAMBLER: (Taking the cards from ADELE.) But of course.
GAMBLER shuffles the new deck; PUSS cuts it. The deck is shuffled again; CAZEAU cuts it. GAMBLER shuffles the cards once more, as CAZEAU becomes increasingly nervous. PUSS remains impassive.

CAZEAU: Sacre bleu! Deal! Deal!
GAMBLER deals to CAZEAU and PUSS. Each takes up his cards and studies them. CAZEAU immediately looks *very* relieved and laughs.

PUSS: (Coolly.) Monsieur is amused?

CAZEAU: Very! (He flings his cards down onto the table. GAMBLERS look at them and gasp.)

FIRST GAMBLER: Quelle chance!

SECOND GAMBLER: A straight flush!
CAZEAU reaches across the table for the deed, the chips, and the money.

PUSS: One moment, monsieur . (He puts his cards onto the table. GAMBLERS exclaim again.)

THIRD GAMBLER: Ah! C'est merveilleuse!

FIRST GAMBLER: Five of a kind!

PUSS: (To CAZEAU.) As you see, I win again. The red boots, they are mine. (CAZEAU flings the boots to PUSS, who deftly catches them and immediately puts them on.)

CAZEAU: Take them and be damned to you! I am ruined! Ruined! (CAZEAU puts his face in his hands as PUSS stands up and admires his new footgear.)

PUSS: (Calmly.) Merci, cher Cazeau, for a pleasant evening. Now that I have what I wanted, you may take back the rest of your fortune.
Everyone is astonished. CAZEAU looks at PUSS incredulously.

CAZEAU: (Blankly.) What?

PUSS: I would not so deprive monsieur. And what is wealth but a burden? Take it back; it is yours.

CAZEAU: I - I . . .

PUSS: And now I will say bonne- nuit . One word of advice, mon ami: the gambling, leave it alone. For someday someone might take you seriously.

CAZEAU: (*Furiously.*)Blaguer - farceur – gros bête, va! So, why did you play?

PUSS: Why, for love of the game, monsieur, for love of the game. Adieu.

Exit PUSS. The others seem more pleased and relieved than CAZEAU, who sits scowling darkly.

FIRST GAMBLER: (*Gazing after PUSS.*)Quel beau geste !

SECOND GAMBLER: What generosity!

THIRD GAMBLER: That one has a noble heart.

ADELE hugs CAZEAU, but he brutally thrusts her away.

CAZEAU: (*Savagely.*) And what of me? The humiliation! Never can I live this down! Never!

FIRST GAMBLER: But you had lost everything!

SECOND GAMBLER: He returned your fortune!

CAZEAU: (*Bitterly.*) But what he has taken, he can never restore. And what has he gained? An enemy for life! I will destroy that animal, I swear it! He will regret the night he played with Beauregard Cazeau!

The others look at CAZEAU with trepidation. Blackout.

Act 1: Scene 2

A New Orleans cemetery, replete with wrought-iron gates, columns topped by statues of angels, and many elaborate tombstones and mausoleums. A jazz funeral provided by the RAZZY DAZZY SPASM BAND is in progress for Old Man Boozer. The flower-covered coffin is flanked by a Baptist MINISTER and a small CHOIR. The MOURNERS include the dead man's three sons: HARMON, SOLON, and MURLIS. PUSS wearing the red boots, is also in attendance; the tip of his tail is bandaged.)

MINISTER: (Intoning.) "For as much as Almighty God hath received unto Himself the soul of our dear departed Brother Boozer, we therefore commit his body to the grave . . ." (Loud groans and sobs from the MOURNERS, obscuring the MINISTER'S continuing oration.)

FIRST MOURNER: (Sobbing.) Such a good old man!

SECOND MOURNER: (Nodding in agreement and sobbing.) When he was sober.

MINISTER: (Intoning.) "Ashes to ashes, dust to dust . . . "

STALEBREAD CHARLIE: (To Audience, concluding the MINISTER'S statement.) ". . . If de Bogeyman don' getcha, den de whiskey must!"

MINISTER: (To the choir leader, a portly matron.) Now, Miss Eulalie, if you will . . .

Accompanied by BAND, CHOIR sings the following with commendable solemnity.

CHOIR: PORE OL' DADDY
PORE OL ' DADDY
PORE OL' DADDY DONE DIED
NOW WE LAY HIM DOWN TO REST
DE LAWD KNOWS WHY, BUT DE LAWD KNOWS BEST
SING HOSANNA HIS NAME BE BLESSED
SING HOSANNA CUZ DE LAWD KNOWS BEST
PORE OL' DADDY DONE DIED
NOW LAY HIM DOWN TO REST

After the song, loud wails and more weeping from MOURNERS, who surround the three Boozer Boys to comfort them. PUSS joins the BAND.)

STALEBREAD CHARLIE: (*In amazed delight.*) Why, look a' here, if it ain't de boss hisself!

PUSS: Hey, Stalebread. Got a new group, I see.

STALEBREAD CHARLIE: (*Proudly.*) De bestest evah! Dis here's my Razzy Dazzy Spasm Band: Cajun, Whiskey, Family Haircut, and Warm Gravy. Boys, say "hi" to Puss, one fine feline.

BAND MEMBERS: (*Varioulsy.*) 'Lo, Puss. Hey. How do.

PUSS: Greetin's, boys. Play many funerals?

STALEBREAD CHARLIE: Sho' do. Dey's lots of money in dead folks. And at night we play over to Miss Lulu White's - a nightclub called "The Mysterious Babies."

PUSS: Why, Miss Lulu's a most particular friend of mine.

STALEBREAD CHARLIE: She'd be powerful glad to see you, Puss.

PUSS: (*Grinning.*) I know, I know.

STALEBREAD CHARLIE: Say, what happened to your tail?

PUSS: Got it caught in a door.

STALEBREAD CHARLIE: Was you comin' or goin'?

PUSS: I was goin' . . . real fast!

They laugh.

STALEBREAD CHARLIE: So what you doin' here? You a friend of the deceased?

PUSS: Yes, indeed. That old man and I used to kick up quite a ruckus. (*HARMIN, SOLON, and MURLIS emerge from the crowd and corn DSR. PUSS notes them sadly, shaking his head.*) Too bad none of his boys has half his gumption.

MOURNERS and CHOIR start to line up behind BAND.

STALEBREAD CHARLIE: Well, 'scuse us, boss. We got to lead the procession back into town.

PUSS: Sure thing, Charlie. Be seein' you, boys.

STALEBREAD CHARLIE: *(To BAND.) All together, now. Numbah 18: "He Rambled 'Round the Tawn Till the Butcher Cut Him Down." (The BAND begins a march, leading the CHOIR and MOURNERS to and fro and finally offstage as they sing jubilantly.)*

COMPANY: OH, DIDN'T HE RAMBLE, RAMBLE!
HE RAMBLED 'ROUND THE TOWN
TILL THE BUTCHER CUT HIM DOWN!
OH, DIDN'T HE RAMBLE, RAMBLE!
HE RAMBLED TIL THE BUTCHER CUT HIM DOWN!

PUSS sits down on mausoleum unit SL and observes the Boozer boys who move DSC . MINISTER remains USR a t Boozer's grave.

HARMON: *(Laboriously counting a wad of dollar bills.)* "Ninety-eight, ninety-nine, a hunnerd." Well, brothers, the old man didn't leave us much.

SOLON: Good thing you looked in the mattress, though.

HARMON: And now we got us a hard mathematical problem: what's a hunnerd dollars, split three ways? *(HARMON and SOLON try to find the answer by counting on their fingers.)*

MURLIS: It's thirty-three apiece, with one to spare.

SOLON: *(Ceasing his calculations, to HARMON.)* Let's presume that baby brother's right.

HARMON: Lemme divvy it up, then. *(Giving SOLON some money.)* Thirty-three for you . . . *(Giving MURLIS some money.)* Thirty-three for you . . . *(Counting the remaining cash.)* And thirty-three for me . . . with a buck left over. Now . . . what's a hunnerd pennies, split three ways? *(HARMON and SOLON start counting on their fingers again.)*

MURLIS: *(Wearily.)* Oh, never mind. You two each take an extra fifty cents.

SOLON: Why, that's mighty generous of you, mighty generous.

HARMON: Tell you what, Murlis - see 'at ol' cat used to pester Daddy? You can have him.

PUSS reacts indignantly.

SOLON: I bet he's worth a t least a quarter!

PUSS reacts even more indignantly.

MURLIS: *(Without enthusiasm.)* Thanks. Much obliged.

HARMON: Well, come on, Solon. We got money to burn.

SOLON: I ' m gonna buy me a box o' them fancy see-gars!

Exit HARMON and SOLON, laughing. MURLIS gazes after them a moment and sighs. Then he looks at the money in his hand. MINISTER steps to MURLIS.

MINISTER: *(Coughing portentously .)*A-hem. Dear Brother Murlis . . .

MURLIS: *(Looking up.)* Hello, Reverend. That was a mighty nice service.

MINISTER: *(Unctuously .)* Our very finest: a choir, a band, a few extra mourners -and all for only thirty-two dollars and fifty cents. *(He holds out his hand to the astonished MURLIS.)*

MURLIS: Huh?

MINISTER: Your brothers said you'd make payment in full.

MURLIS: I see. Well, here. *(MURLIS hands the money to MINISTER, who deftly counts it and hands MURLIS a coin. MURLIS stares at the remnant of his inheritance.)*

MINISTER: Your change, Brother Murlis. Of course, it is customary on such a sad occasion to make a small donation . . .

MURLIS: But I've only got fifty cents.

MINISTER: *(Taking back the coin.)* That's small enough. Have a bless-ed day.

Exit MINISTER. MURLIS turns to PUSS.

MURLIS: Well, Puss, I guess it's just you and me now . You're all I got in the world.

PUSS: *(Indignantly.)* Then you ain't got nothin'! Don't nobody own this cat!

MURLIS: I s'pose you're right. Well, then, skedaddle. I'll just sit down here and wait. *(He sits, sighing heavily. PUSS goes over and looks at him quizzically.)*

PUSS: What you waitin' for?

MURLIS: My funeral. They won't have to carry me far, neither.

PUSS: *(Disgusted.)* Good thing your daddy can't hear 'cause this would kill him! A great big boy like you, all growed up . . . why, I'd be ashamed! You ain't even begun to live, let alone die!

MURLIS: Oh, scat. I ain't got a penny to my name.

PUSS: So? All I've got is the boots on my feet and the brains in my head and they're more than enough, since I know how to use 'em!

MURLIS: But you're only a cat.

PUSS: "Only a cat! Only a cat!" Stand up, mister; them's fightin' words! *(PUSS growls and spits in catlike fashion, jumping back and forth with his front paws held up like a boxer's. MURLIS laughs and shakes his head.)*

MURLIS: 'Twouldn't be a fair fight. You'd whup me for sure.

PUSS: *(Relaxing his pose.)* Reckon I would. You're no fun at all! Well, come on, Murlis.

MURLIS: *(Surprised.)* What?

PUSS: I can't teach you a lesson 'lessen we leave! I'll show you what "only a cat" can do!

(Singing.)

WHY, I 'M THE SASSIEST, BRASSIEST , CLASSIEST CAT

YOU COULD EVER HOPE TO MEET!

I'M THE SNAZZIEST, JAZZIEST, PIZAZZIEST CAT

THIS SIDE OF BOURBON STREET!

YOU GOTTA GET UP AND GROW!

YOU GOTTA MOVE WITH THE BEAT!

YOU GOTTA LET YOURSELF GO
SO YOU'LL LAND ON YOUR EEET!
JOIN THE JAMBOREE
WHEN YOU REALIZE YOU'RE FREE!
I'M THE SASSIEST, BRASSIEST, CLASSIEST CAT
YOU COULD EVER HOPE TO MEET!
I' M THE SNAZZIEST, JAZZIEST, PIZAZZIEST CAT
THIS SIDE OF BOURBON STREET!
YOU GOTTA HOLD YOUR TAIL HIGH!
GRAB YOURSELF A DREAM!
KEEP YOUR WHISKERS DRY
TILL YOU CAN WET 'EM IN THE CREAM!
THEN YOU'LL BE PURRIN' JUST LIKE ME
WHEN YOU REALIZE YOU'RE FREE!

(Dance.)

YOU KNOW YOU'VE GOT A LOT TO GIVE,
SO LEARN TO STRUT YOUR STUFF!
YOU MAY NOT HAVE NINE LIVES TO LIVE
BUT ONE CAN BE ENOUGH!
HOLD YOUR TAIL HIGH . . .

MURLIS: Gonna grab myself a dream!

PUSS: KEEP YOUR WHISKERS DRY . . .

MURLIS: So I can wet 'em in the cream!

PUSS: AND YOU'LL BE PURRING JUST LIKE ME
WHEN YOU REALIZE YOU'RE FREE

PUSS & MURLIS: WHEN YOU/I REALIZE YOU'RE/I'M FREE
REALIZE YOU/I'M FREE

(MURLIS looks at PUSS with awe.)

MURLIS: I didn't know cats could sing.

PUSS: Bet you never ast 'em. Ain't you got no curiosity?

MURLIS: *(Teasing.)* Hear that killed a relative of yours.

PUSS: *(Grinning.)* Lies and slander, lies and slander. *(Seriously.)* Well, I'm ready to go. You comin' ?

After glancing at cemetery, MURLIS looks at PUSS; their eyes meet.

MURLIS: Yes, I ' m comin' with you! Lead on, Puss; I vow I'll follow!

PUSS: First smart thing you've said today. Why, there's a whole world waitin' down the road - and its name is New Orleans! C'mn!

(Music. PUSS starts jazzing down the road singing reprise of previous song.

MURLIS follows. Exit PUSS and MURLIS. Blackout. Act Curtain in.)