

Plays for Young Audiences

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

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A Special Trade

By
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From the Book by
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A Special Trade was originally produced by the Children's Theatre Company in the 2007-08 season.

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Player B (B): plays the BARTHOLOMEW puppet, Good Neighbor, some shadow puppets and as actor OLD BARTHOLOMEW, plus being story-teller.

Player N (N): plays NELLY puppet and Good Neighbor, as well as an actor Nelly, plus being story-teller.

Player P (P): plays MRS. PRINGLE as an actor; as a puppeteer she plays dogs, sprinkler, etc. Like the others she is also a story-teller.

The lines spoken by the characters BARTHOLOMEW, NELLY and MRS. PRINGLE are introduced by their full names in capital letters.

Some small houses are standing left on the SR fence. A little car is standing on the SL road, just in front of the red bridge. The stroller is standing beside the front tree downstage left). Most of the props and puppets are hidden behind the blue flat or the back of the tent. The Bumblebees behind the red bridge, the ambulances are behind the right and left fence respectively. The flower pot is behind the right fence.

On entering the theatre, the audience is greeted by a soft beautiful light, bathing the entire stage.

THE PARTS OF THE PLAY.

1. THE LOCK.

- 1A. Greeting the children, getting them seated.
- 1B. Looking for good neighbors.
- 1C. The Neighbor Song with bumblebees.

2. BARTHOLOMEW AND MRS. PRINGLE.

- 2A. They get created, they meet.
- 2B. Their dance.

3. LOOKING FOR NELLY.

- 3A. Introducing Nelly.
- 3B. The peek-a-boo

4. THE BUMP.

- 4A. Going for a walk.
- 4B. Over the Bump.

5. THE SPRINKLER.

- 5A. Preparation for the sprinkler.
- 5B. The Sprinkler Song.
- 5C. Through the Sprinkler.

6. THE SKATING.

- 6A. Sprinkler singing before the skating.
- 6B. The skating.

7. THE ACCIDENT.

7A. Talking on the bench.

7B. The white fabric.

7C. Falling.

7D. The ambulance.

8. THE SHADOWS.

8A. Preparing for the scene.

8B:1. Shadows on the screen.

8B:2. The song by Nelly.

9. NELLY AND BARTHOLOMEW MEET AGAIN.

10. THE DOGS.

10A. The angry dog.

10B. The nice dog.

11. THE SECOND SPRINKLER.

11A. Preparation. (song)

11B. Through the sprinkler once more.

12. THE END.

1. The lock.

The doors to the theater are opened. The actors come through. NELLY enters first playing "Time Flies So Fast" on the glockenspiel. The stagehand shuts the doors behind them and kindly yet firmly prevents the audience from getting into the theater. The actors cross to the middle of the lobby. (GET AWAY THE LAMPS IF POSSIBLE ?) BARTHOLOMEW and PRINGLE help the children form a circle around the actors. When the audience is quiet and focused on the actors, NELLY stops playing and then, and not until then, the actors start speaking.

P: Welcome!

B: You are so welcome to our show, *A Special Trade*.

P: But you-you are especially welcome. And you. And you. And you!

PRINGLE is going out among the audience, gives attention to the children as well as to adults. B is following her.

B: And you and you and you...

(THEY COME INTO POSITION BETWEEN THE AUDIENCE)

N: Take it easy. Everyone is especially welcome. Come follow us. We will help you to find a good seat for you. And you. And you. For everyone! But please, wait for me and please don't run. Take it easy and keep your voices quiet. There is a little girl in there sleeping. You have your slippers on so you don't wake her up.

NELLY begins playing the glockenspiel again, walks to the door which is opened by the stagehand and the actors lead the audience, not rushing, into the theater. NELLY and glockenspiel lead, the other actors follow, helping the children to keep from running and help them find seats. The stagehand and perhaps the usher help as well.

The artists are standing like this: Player B is SR, Player P in the middle, and Player N SL. (The light focuses on the three players standing in the middle of the stage, close to the audience, DSC.) When everyone is sitting, NELLY takes the focus and slows down her playing 'til it fades out. The stagehand takes the glockenspiel and heads to the follow spot. The actors give the stagehand focus during this.

B: Now we're going to tell you a story about A SPECIAL TRADE.

N: Once upon a time there was a little town . . .

P: And in that little town everyone was a good neighbor . . .

They look around for the neighbors.

B: Where are the good neighbors?

P: I'm a good neighbor.

N: We need some more good neighbors!

P: They must be somewhere.

B and N cross US, B to stage right and N to stage left. They go behind the fences searching and hide behind the fences where they put on their neighbor puppets (this could also happen behind the flat). P stays close to the audience DSC. She is searching, too. The light remains on her, she keeps the attention on herself while B and N put on their puppets. This may require the actors crawling on the floor.

P: Do you see any good neighbors?... Are you a good neighbor?... Yes, I bet you are. But I don't know you, you are not my neighbor, you see. I've got to find my neighbors.

The good neighbors B and N appear. B behind the SR fence, N behind the fence SL. (Lights on them.)

B+N: Here we are.

P: Good! My good neighbors!

P hurries back to the neighbors, over the bump. The light close to the audience fades out. The three neighbors shake hands. P takes the command, acts like the leader of a choir. P is standing in the middle, in front of the gate, B behind the SR fence, N behind the fence SL. (Lights on all the three of them, the light on the bridge in front of them is weaker, more like an early sunrise.)

P: A one a two a three . . .

MUSIC. *They all begin to sing and dance. B and N stay behind the fences. P has a "free" role and can move around.*

All: Of our little town we want to tell you
It isn't big but nice as few
We have tiny houses and big big trees
In our streets time is standing still
Good neighbors we are, every one of us

Good neighbors we are-you...you...and you
Yes, good neighbors we are you and you...

Of our little town we want to tell you
It isn't big but nice as few
We have tiny houses and big big trees
In our streets time is standing still
In the shade of the trees fly the bumblebees
In the shade of the trees fly the bumblebees
Yes In the shade of the trees fly the bumblebees
Yes, in the shade of the trees fly the bumblebees
Yes In the shade of the trees fly the bumblebees
Yes In the shade of the trees fly the bumblebees

P takes the two bumblebee puppets from their position behind the SR fence bridge, let them fly up to the audience, crosses DSR around tree, then she lets the bumblebees fly parallel with the audience towards the left, going back to the other puppeteers SL. During this sequence, the music and the two other players sound like bumblebees. P flies the bumblebees back US.

In the shade of the trees fly the bumblebees
Everything here is more than O.K.
Except Mr. Oliver's bumpy driveway.
Yes, except Mr. Oliver's bumpy driveway.

*The bumblebees get in the car and drive on the bridge. They begin to sound and act like cars racing, they come to the bump, jump, roll and crash. Crash in the music too
P "crashes" the car and the bumblebees, which fly into B/neighbor's arms. He hands off to stagehand behind the flat. P joins the others, standing in front of gate, and they sing together:*

Good neighbors we're all in this place
But the best one of all, in all ways,
Who can that be, yes, who?
It must be Bartholomew!
Yes, it must be Bartholomew.

2. BARTHOLOMEW AND MRS. PRINGLE.

N: Where is Bartholomew?

P: No Bartholomew?

They look around. P walks through the gate, behind the right fence. But B releases himself from the neighbor-puppet, going SR, rounding the right fence, he walks straight to the blue bench, puts on the cap and the moustache lying on the bench, makes himself into BARTHOLOMEW, grabs the harmonica, sits down on the blue seat, plays a phrase. Light on him, the light on the

neighbors fades out.

BARTHOLOMEW (B): I'm Bartholomew. Nice to meet you.

MUSIC. *Bartholomew begins to play a more upbeat, rhythmic version of "Our Little Town" on the harmonica. While BARTHOLOMEW takes focus, N and P leave used puppet/props behind fence— now they stand behind the SL fence (NELLY SR, PRINGLE SL) and watch him. Light up on them (and remaining on BARTHOLOMEW). He gets to his feet, plays his harmonica, dances a little by himself, impatient and expectant.*

P: Bartholomew really likes playing his harmonica.

N: He likes dancing even more. Especially dancing with Mrs. Pringle. . .
Where is Mrs. Pringle?... No Mrs. Pringle? We need a Mrs. Pringle to
dance with Bartholomew.

P: Where can we find a Mrs. Pringle?

N: Easy. I know what to do.

N helps P into coat behind the SL fence, as a dress shop clerk might, and gives her handbag. N puts Pringle's hat on. Pringle starts to cross away SL, can't see, turns back to get glasses, which N crosses to her with and hands them to her.

The light on P and N fades out. The light on BARTHOLOMEW remains. N crosses SR behind the right fence and removes the houses standing on that fence and hides them behind fence. On the same spot she puts a flower pot. At the same time. A spot finds P. She is moving closer to the audience, rounding the left fence to the left, stops and stands in the middle of the stage, in front of the red bridge (DSC). Light on her.

MRS. PRINGLE (P) *(to the audience)*: My name is Mrs. Pringle.
Nice to meet you.

BARTHOLOMEW stops playing, comes up to MRS. PRINGLE.

BART: Mrs. Pringle, how nice to see you. May I?

MRS.P: Bartholomew, I'd love to.

MUSIC. *DSC. Spotlight on B and P. The music is a very up tempo, very rhythmic version of "Our Little Town". It starts nice and easy but becomes wilder and wilder, the dance likewise very impressive for an elderly couple. PRINGLE uses her handbag in the dance, spinning it around, etc. BARTHOLOMEW gets more tired than MRS. PRINGLE. BARTHOLOMEW falls down on the blue bench, spotlight goes out (Mrs. P. crosses with him) , panting, very tired, has been dancing a little bit too much for his own good. MRS. PRINGLE crosses DSC.*

3. LOOKING FOR NELLY.

Mrs. P: Bartholomew really likes to be with his old friends. But his very best friend is his youngest neighbor, Nelly.

BART: Where is Nelly?

MRS.P: Yes, Nelly, where are you?

MRS. PRINGLE and BARTHOLOMEW look for NELLY. MRS. PRINGLE goes under bridge, crosses behind gate. Lights up on the fences and the gate. Only BARTHOLOMEW remains down front. He goes on looking for NELLY. He moves to the SL fence. The light on the center and the blue seat fades out, creating a light similar to the first “neighbor light.”

MUSIC. *We hear the opening phrases of “Time Flies So Fast”, possibly on a flute. The flower pot, – moved by N - standing on the SR fence starts moving towards him – accompanied by the music. The audience most certainly tells him, otherwise he notices the movement by himself. BARTHOLOMEW is surprised and moves towards the moving flower pot. It stops – and disappears!*

He looks behind the fence to the left... No, he cannot find anything strange and turns to the audience over R shoulder...then NELLY – handled by N - appears on his right side. She looks at him. When BARTHOLOMEW is told by the audience that she is beside him he turns to his right. But too slowly and the long way around, first turning to the audience. NELLY disappears and when BARTHOLOMEW looks for her on his right side she appears on his left. . . This peek-a-boo game is repeated three times. After the last time BARTHOLOMEW is smarter and standing so that he can see behind the fence. He turns to the audience. Still no NELLY! Because NELLY appears behind the gate. (This scene needs the extra NELLY puppet-a simpler version is used on the fence; the “gate-puppet” is the puppet that will be used in all the following scenes.) NELLY is very happy – handled by P, who is hidden behind the gate and never seen during the following.

NELLY: Da da.

BARTHOLOMEW gets scared – hurries to the gate, standing beside it in order not to stand in the way of NELLY. When he gets to the left side, NELLY of course gets to the right side. A new kind of peek-a-boo game. NELLY ends up on top of the fence.

BART: Nelly, Nelly, don’t move. Just stay where you are. I’ll get you.

NELLY: Da da.

At last she crawls forward and falls off. BARTHOLOMEW catches her when she falls. He hugs her. Holds her in his arms, slides over the red bridge and sits down on the top of the red bridge. B is to her left.

4.THE BUMP.

MUSIC. *The music changes character, gets emotional, the “time flies so fast” NELLY is seated beside him on his left, handled by B. BARTHOLOMEW hugs her.*

The light concentrates on the middle of the red bridge where they are. N walks through the gate, she is playing the glockenspiel. She plays the melody. N crosses R around the USSR tree, ends up behind the red bridge, behind BARTHOLOMEW and NELLY. N looks at BARTHOLOMEW and NELLY.

N: Nelly and Bartholomew are friends. They ever will be. Nothing will ever change. They think.

N puts her instrument on the floor and becomes the puppeteer of the NELLY puppet. N standing on her knees behind NELLY. NELLY is eagerly twisting in the arms of BARTHOLOMEW, tries to tell him something.

NELLY: Da da.

BART: A walk down the block to Mrs. Pringle's garden?

NELLY: Da da.

BART: Kay kay.

BARTHOLOMEW carries NELLY to the stroller SR and puts her in the stroller. N moves behind the right fence playing the “glockenspiel”. The glockenspiel is handed off to a stagehand Light concentrates on the red road where they are and the red bridge – the bump. Once again N becomes the manipulator of the NELLY puppet.

BART: Look, here’s the bump. Now we must go very slowly.

NELLY: Da da.

BART: Faster instead of very slowly?

NELLY: Da da.

BART: That fast?

NELLY: Da da!

BART(*looks round*): Kay kay.¹ But don’t tell anyone.

NELLY: Da da.

¹ Kay Kay, or K.K., is a childish version of “O.K.”. You may choose to use K.K. instead of O.K. throughout.

BARTHOLOMEW pushes the stroller. N is walking on her knees beside the red road on the gate side. BARTHOLOMEW prepares himself like an athlete, scratches with his foot like an attacking bull, takes a run. P crosses behind SL fence..

P: Stop! Wait! *(To the audience)* Bartholomew will be running so fast, that this has to be done in slow motion.
(To BARTHOLOMEW) Bartholomew, slow motion, please.

BART: O.K.... Nelly, get ready for the bump!

NELLY: Da da!

MUSIC. *We hear music and P disappears behind the SL edge of flat to change into the sprinkler. BARTHOLOMEW pushes the stroller towards the bump. (To give an impression of speed a special light – something like a disco-ball -- begins to rotate, faster and faster.) The music plays faster and faster, too.) When the stroller is passing over the bump in extreme slow motion, it bounces and NELLY flies out of the carriage, makes a complete turn in the air and falls back down into the carriage into a perfect sitting position – ten points! NELLY giggles. (The rotating light stops and fades out.)*

5. THE SPRINKLER.

NELLY: Bum.

BART: Bum? Bump! Oh Nelly, you said your first word!

NELLY: Bum bum. Da da.

BART: No, we won't do the bump again. Now we are going to Mrs. Pringle's garden.

BARTHOLOMEW, pushing the stroller, crosses to DSC. During this N crosses over red road SL of bump, meets B and N DSC telling the audience:

N: Yes. Now they are going to Mrs. Pringle's garden.

N and B have a scene with the children.

N: BUT In Mrs. Pringle's garden there is a big sprinkler. You must walk a long way around it, otherwise you will get very wet. May I have the sprinkler, please.

MUSIC. *You hear the sprinkler music. P is dressed as a Sprinkler in raingear,*

*including a sou'wester, and carries an umbrella from which hang long silk ribbons.
P enters from SL flap of tent as N, NELLY and B cross backwards to the SR end of the red road
and focus on The Sprinkler.*

*The Sprinkler crosses to center of bridge and sings.. (The light on the road
and bridge remains and light DSC is added.)*

I'm the one, I'm the one,
The one who makes the world so green!
Come to me, come to me
You little ones who want to grow,
'Cause I'm the sprinkler, I'm the sprinkler
I'm the wettest sprinkler in the world.
Every little vegetable/veggie
Come to me, come to me now
I give you my water, I sprinkle and spray
Plump fruits and green peas
I make you happy, I make you grow
You are my children, all in a row.
I make the world so green,
Love every little bean,
'Cause I'm the sprinkler, I'm the sprinkler,
I'm the wettest sprinkler in the world.
This is true, yes, you can bet
I sprinkle all things soaking wet!

*The Sprinkler focuses on B, NELLY and N When the
umbrella is rotated it creates the illusion of sprinkling water.*

BART: Ah, there is Mrs. Pringle's sprinkler. We'd better go another way.

NELLY: Prink-la da da.

BART: You want us to go through the sprinkler?

NELLY: Prink-la da da.

BART: But you'll get wet.

NELLY: Et et, da da.

BART: You might catch a cold.

NELLY: Da da. Da da da da da.

BART: O.K. Get ready, get set, CHAARRRRRRRRGE!

*The Sprinkler is rotating very fast. BARTHOLOMEW pushes the stroller SL through the “water.” N crosses behind SR fence and voices NELLY puppet from there. They are moving slo mo. Nelly is excited. **MUSIC** changes like in the way before the bump, similar changes in lighting too.*

NELLY: WHEEEEEEE! Et et, da da.

BART: One more time?

NELLY: WHEEEEEEE! Et et, da da.

BART: Kay kay.

B and N cross SR through the sprinkler water again.
