

PLAYS FOR
New Audiences

A Division of Children's Theatre Company

Mother Goose

Developed by

Kathryn Chase Bryer and Janet Stanford

Written by

Janet Stanford

A My First Imagination Stage original play

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Premiere Production
Imagination Stage, Bethesda, MD
Opened March 19, 2022
Kathryn Chase Bryer – Director
Set Design by Giorgos Tsappas
Costumes by Alysha DeVries
Puppets by Matthew Pauli
MOTHER GOOSE played by Toni Rae Salami
PUPPETEER played by Ian Charles
Music arranged by Deborah Jacobsen

CAST:

MOTHER GOOSE A lovable ditz, Mother and caregiver to the universe
PUPPETEER Multiple puppet characters and facilitator for the audience

SET:

The show is designed for a black box space where the audience of no more than 100 sits on benches and the floor close to the action. The central set piece is a 8-foot, four-sided “magic box” structure on casters that serves as Mother Goose’s house, a puppet stage, a surface for shadow play, and ultimately the flying ship that takes the audience up and into the sky at the end of the show. Around the space there are 3 lighting tree poles that support the clouds, cobwebs, clothes lines for kittens’ mittens, and strings of lights that twinkle in the night.

At pre-set, the cloud structures rest at the base of the poles. And a large piece of yellow silk covers the magic box, keeping it as a surprise to be revealed, and allowing one wall to serve as a projection surface during the prologue. In the premiere production, the four sides of the Magic Box were used as follows:

Prologue: Any side covered with a silk on which a front shadow can be thrown
Scene 1: Side 1—Mother Goose House Interior
Scene 2: Side 3 —King Cole’s Castle, (also later The Little Piggies)
Scene 3: Side 1—Mother Goose House Interior
 Side 3—Grandfather Clock, (also King Cole, Kittens, and Mary Had a Little Lamb)
Scene 4: Side 3—Kittens
Scene 5: Side 2—Little Piggies
Scene 6: Side 3—Mary Had a Little Lamb
Scene 7 & 8: Side 4—Itsy Bitsy and the webs

PUPPETS:

The puppets may be as simple or elaborate as desired. In the premiere production, the choice was to use geometric shapes to represent the various animal characters. The piggy heads were built onto small metal buckets; Itsy Bitsy was made of foam balls and pipe cleaners, and the Kittens were just a set of Styrofoam balls for heads inside a basket. Their big mouths were rigged to open in unison with one mechanism to operate them all. We chose not to hide the puppeteer. Many times, he was in full view of the audience and at other times, he was inside the magic box and operating the puppets at various windows and on top of the structure. The opening shadow sequence shows Mother Goose as a miniature cut-out riding in a basket up to the sky and operating a tiny broom in order to clean it of cobwebs.

MOVING PROP:

As she travels from work to home, Mother Goose has a wheelie type contraption (much like a housekeeper's cleaning supply cart). On it she keeps her broom(s), a two-sided suitcase (with one side containing pet foods, and the other the school-room scene for *Mary Had A Little Lamb*), trash bin, and the Kitten's Basket.

PRE-SHOW:

Children ages 1-4 enter the space with caregivers. The friendly puppeteer welcomes them to Mother Goose Country and hands the children a small bag of props containing one colored mitten and a small feather duster. While people settle into seats, the Puppeteer invites 3-5 responsible-seeming adults to come to each of the cloud poles and use the pulley system to raise a cloud up to the top, and tie it off securely. The adults are told that they will be called upon again at the end of the show to operate these same clouds in reverse as the audience travels up to the sky. Then they sit with their kids in the audience close to and around the stage.

PROLOGUE: Magic Box: Covered with large yellow silk

Lights dim as instrumental music comes up on the tune “Old Woman in a Basket.” There is a single lighting instrument DC that throws its beam onto the yellow silk covering our Magic Box.

We see that pieces of cobweb are draped over the top section of the shadow projection surface.

The PUPPETEER, in full view of the audience, moves a basket with a puppet cutout of MOTHER GOOSE inside. Her shadow appears on the yellow silk. In slow motion, the PUPPETEER raises and lowers the basket as if flying while operating the puppet’s miniature broom with sweeping motions. The audience watches the shadow play as:

PUPPETEER *sings*

MOTHER GOOSE *sings from inside the Magic Box*

BOTH: There was an old woman tossed up in a basket
 Seventeen times as high as the moon
 Where she was going, I could not but ask it.
 For in her hand she carried a broom

PUPPETEER: “Old woman, old woman, old woman”, quoth I
 “O wither, o wither, o wither so high?”

MOTHER GOOSE: “To sweep the cobwebs from the sky
 And you may come with me by and by”

As the puppet doll of Mother Goose sweeps, the cobweb material is removed by the Mother Goose actor inside the box so that by the end of the song, the sky has been cleaned for another day.

Transition:

The shadow light goes out. The Mother Goose puppet basket disappears. Together, the performers turn the magic box a couple of times, symbolizing travel and passage of time. On one upstage side of the box, the audience notices ITSY BITSY SPIDER knitting a single, scarf-like length of new cobweb with spider-sized knitting needles. This is the beginning of the new cobwebs which will later fill the night sky. Once the set piece is in place, the PUPPETEER removes the silk beautifully and leaves it in a heap on the stage floor. Lights come up to reveal Side One of the structure which represents the interior of Mother Goose's house.

Scene 1—Box Side One—Mother Goose House Interior

Full sized MOTHER GOOSE enters. She wheels a contraption, perhaps inspired by a housekeeper's cart, that contains her broom (still having some cobweb material), a basket (out of which the Kittens will later appear), a double-sided suitcase that has pet food on one side and the interior of Mary's classroom on the other), and a pillow.

Mother Goose is comically and completely exhausted after a hard day's night and she desperately wants to sleep. But she can't. There are chores she must do first. That's the rule.

- *She pulls the cobwebs off her broom but is so tired that she puts the broom in the trash bin and the cobwebs in the broom closet.*
- *She removes her bonnet and shoes, puts the bonnet in the shoe cubby and her shoes on the hat pegs.*
- *She curls up to go to sleep in her nest made of the yellow silk with added pillow.*

A small door on the Magic Box opens and LAMB appears. She's hungry;

PUPPETEER as LAMB: Baa, Baaaaa.

MOTHER GOOSE: Oh dearie me. How could I forget to feed you?

MOTHER GOOSE is happy to see LAMB, gives her a pet, and goes to get her food.

- *She opens her suitcase and pulls out a chunk of yellow cheese.*

MOTHER GOOSE: Here you go!

- *Sleepily, she places this before the LAMB who vigorously nods “no” because this is not what she eats.*
- *Oblivious to LAMB’s distress, MOTHER GOOSE returns to her sleeping place, rearranging the yellow silk and pillow.*
- *LAMB is not happy. She baas sadly and disappears, leaving the lump of cheese in her window*
- *PUPPETEER appears as MOUSE. He’s hungry too!*

MOUSE: Eeek, eeek.

MOTHER GOOSE: (*yawning*) Oh Mouse, I'm so sorry.

- *MOTHER GOOSE interrupts her business with the bed to show MOUSE she never meant to forget him. Sleepily, she goes back to the suitcase and gets a fish and places it before him.*

MOTHER GOOSE: Here you go.

- *MOUSE vigorously complains in a non-verbal and mousey way.*
- *MOUSE eeks disgustedly and disappears, leaving the fish his window.*
- *MOTHER GOOSE is too pooped to notice. She is heading for bed when...*

KITTEN: Meow, Meow.

MOTHER GOOSE: Oh Kitten, what's wrong with me?

- *MOTHER GOOSE cannot believe she forgot Kitten!*
- *More exhausted than ever, she returns to the suitcase, grabs a handful of grass, plops it down in front of Kitten, scratches him behind the ears.*

MOTHER GOOSE: Here you go.

- *Pleased that she has now cared for all her pets, Mother Goose stumbles towards her bed, collapses gratefully, and begins to snore.*
- *KITTEN is not happy. He meows angrily and disappears, leaving the grass in his window*

Pause as MOTHER GOOSE sighs happily, rolls over in sleep and reaches a deeper stage of relaxation

The LITTLE PIGGY appears, looking around sneakily. He goes to the window with the cheese and gobbles it up noisily. He does the same with the fish and the grass.

LITTLE PIGGY Snort, snort! Burp. *(laughing and snorting joyfully)*

As the Magic Box rotates to the next scene, we see ITSY BITSY continuing to knit his web...

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