

PLAYS FOR
New Audiences

A Division of Children's Theatre Company

Rip Van Winkle

By Frederick Gaines

Based on the story by Washington Irving

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CHARACTERS:

Rip Van Winkle

Dame Van Winkle

Judith Van Winkle

Young Rip Van Winkle

Dame Van Susteren

Van Bummel

Van Ruyder

Brom

Van Eyck

Vedder

Ensemble includes: The women and children of the village, the men of the tavern, Henry Hudson and the Little Men

NOT LICENSED FOR PRODUCTION

ACT I, SCENE 1

The play opens in the village square of a Dutch community in the Kaatskill Mountains. We can see the well where the women of the village gather to do their washing. The children of the village are skipping rope in the open area as their mothers attend to the week's washing. RIP VAN WINKLE enters and runs straight for the jump rope. The CHILDREN sing.

CHILDREN: Rip Van Winkle go up,
Rip Van' Winkle go down,
Rip Van Winkle go all around
On a Saturday afternoon.
Rip Van Winkle jump high,
Rip Van Winkle jump low,
Rip Van Winkle jump to the sun
And to the moon below.
To the tune he jumps,
To the tune he goes,
To the tune he hips and hops
Until it brings him low. . . !

Rip misses and the children tie him up in the rope.

CHILDREN: You missed! Tie him up! Now you have to pay! Loser has to pay!

RIP: No fair! You went too fast!

CHILDREN: Tell us a story! A story to get free!

RIP: My missus will come and be cross with me!

CHILDREN: Tickle him!

RIP: I've told them all already.

DAME

VAN SUSTERN: Meenie, come and help me.

CHILD: Tell a new one.

RIP: Uh. . . uh. . . Ichabod Crane! The Headless - Horseman!

CHILD: That's only for nighttime.

CHILD: For Halloween!

RIP: Henry Hudson!

CHILD: Okay.

As Rip begins to tell the story, the women begin to sing a canon as they work and that song becomes the background for the telling of the story.

WOMEN: Hey, ho, nobody home,
Meat, nor drink, nor money have I none.
Yet I will be happy ...

RIP: Way up in the mountains, when it storms, a sound falls down on the towns below, it sounds like thunder, it sounds like lightning, but it is not so, for those are the sounds of Henry Hudson and his men bowling up in the Kaatskill Peaks. One man has a beard like the wildest of storms and another has a face that consists entirely of nose. . .

DAME VAN SUSTERN, sees DAME VAN WINKLE and her two children as they approach the village square.

DAME

VAN SUSTERN: Dame Van Winkle! Dame Van Winkle!

RIP scurries and ducks behind a sheet hanging on the clothesline, but his hat reveals his place. The children take up a quiet game of jacks or hopscotch and the women resume singing as they wash and wring their clothes. DAME VAN WINKLE and her two children, JUDITH and LITTLE RIP enter. JUDITH immediately sees her father's hat but none of the others seem aware of it.

ACT I, SCENE II

DAME

VAN WINKLE: Good afternoon, Dame Van Susteren. My husband, is he here?

DAME

VAN SUSTERN: Have you come to wash with us, Dame Van Winkle?

VAN WINKLE: I thank you all the same, but it's my lay-about husband I'm looking for.

VAN SUSTERN: My Meenie will be most happy to draw your water for you if you'd like to join us.

VAN WINKLE: Am I carrying a basket of clothes, Dame Van Susteren?

VAN SUSTERN: Uh.. .

VAN WINKLE: As I am not, it seems unlikely that I'll need water drawn.

VAN SUSTERN: Perhaps you'd care to sit with us and talk, Dame Van Winkle. So much going on in the village just now.

VAN WINKLE: Just now it's my husband I want. He hasn't been here?

JUDITH: (To LITTLE RIP) Little Rip, tell father to. . . (JUDITH pantomimes putting his head down. LITTLE RIP slides away from his mother to slip under the sheet to take his father's place. RIP hides behind a rock upstage. LITTLE RIP wears RIP'S hat).

VAN SUSTERN: I think he's with the men cutting winter wood.

VAN WINKLE: I could call that a lie, Dame Van Susteren, but I'll allow it as no more than mistaken apprehension. The man would not lift an axe to timber if his life depended upon it.

VAN SUSTERN: Oh, he did that with my own husband just yesterday afternoon. . .

VAN WINKLE: (To JUDITH) Judith! Where has your brother gotten to?

JUDITH: I think he went on to play with his friend Abraham.

DAME VAN WINKLE spies LITTLE RIP hiding behind the sheet with Rip's hat on and begins to move toward it.

VAN SUSTERN: Now that I think of it, I believe your husband was by and said he had a cow that was wanting his attention. . .

DAME VAN WINKLE whips off the sheet and catches hold of Little RIP by the ear.

VAN WINKLE: Off to Abraham's is he?

JUDITH: We just thought to stay awhile to skip rope if it's all right.

VAN WINKLE: A waste and a folly. Get to home. There is work back there for you..

LITTLE RIP pulls away from his mother and runs off dropping hat.

VAN WINKLE: Young Rip. . .! That boy. As like his father as daylight. (*Picking up the hat*) Judith, I want your father at home. You stay here and you tell him... (*She seems to know where RIP is hiding and directs her words in that direction*). . . should he suddenly appear. (*Gives hat to Judith. She starts off, turns back*). The Bible says not to lie, daughter... though the good women here do not honor that commandment.

She exits. Slight pause and the women resume their work. RIP comes out from behind the rock.

ACT I, SCENE III

RIP: Holy doodle ... she's cross!

VAN SUSTERN: So good of you to help us. (*RIP helps her fold the laundry as they talk*).

RIP: Not at all, a favor returned.

VAN SUSTERN: I meant to thank you for the trout you brought to us yesterday.

RIP: Madam, the pleasure was in the catching and in the sharing.

JUDITH: Here's your hat father. *(Hands Rip his hat. The women have now finished their work and left, leaving JUDITH alone with her father).*

RIP: Your mother's right, Judith. The Book forbids all falsehoods.

JUDITH: Mother says you're wanted at home.

RIP: How good of you to tell me. Well! No use delaying. Off we go.

ACT I, SCENE IV

JUDITH: Why is Mother so cross?

RIP: Your poor mother. Across to bear has your mother. Me, Judith. Your father is not a comfort to have in the home. I work. . . not well.

JUDITH: But you do, Father! All the village knows you do.

RIP: But the difference is. . . not for your mother. Be not too hard on your mother's temper. She loves us all.

JUDITH: Then she shouldn't scold so.

RIP: And I shouldn't play so. None of us are without our faults.

JUDITH: You are.

RIP: Ah. Well. . . nearly. *(They laugh).*

JUDITH: Wouldn't it be easier to just do the work she tells you to?

RIP: The hardest work to do is that you're told to do.

JUDITH: Then do it before she tells you.

RIP: Why didn't I think of that? Be it resolved that this day, if no other, we will do as we are told, we'll labor without stint.

JUDITH: What does "stint" mean?

RIP: Uh. . . fun, I think.

JUDITH: Is labor supposed to be fun?

RIP: I always hoped it would be when I was your age, but I'm learning that it sometimes is not. So, perhaps if we overwhelm your mother with our industry, she'll grant us a reprieve and we might discover something that is fun to do.

JUDITH: Like meet the mail coach?

RIP: Like meet the mail coach.

JUDITH: Do you think she'll let us?

We hear DAME VAN WINKLE'S voice from within the house.

VAN WINKLE: *(Voice off.)* Rip Van winkle!

RIP: Let us. . . hope so.

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