

Magic, the Moon and a Pig Named Dog

a play for children
freely adapted from three public domain Afro-Caribbean folk tales

by

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Magic, the Moon and a Pig Named Dog synopsis

Magic, the Moon and a Pig Named Dog is a free adaptation of three classic Afro-Caribbean folk tales and targeted to children ages eight through 13 and adults. The play includes extensive movement sequences, rhymes (which may be spoken or set to music) and magical effects (created with sound and lights). The play is in two acts. Running time is about 70 minutes or longer, depending on the director's choice of type and duration of the movement/dance sequences. It can be performed with a cast as small as 20 or as large as 34 which may include adults and/or children. The characters include talking animals, a witch-like figure, and two narrators who both move the story along and interact with the characters at various points. Puppets may be used in lieu of people in several instances. Music can be used extensively if the production wishes. It may include extant compositions of the director's choosing or created specifically for the production.

The stories center around the activities of JAMEL (who is loosely based on the folk character Anansi), a father of six oddly named but uniquely talented children, who conducts his day-to-day business in a small village. The three stories are about him; his brother AKILAH's encounter with a conjuror and how, by using her magic, he manages to fulfill a task imposed on him by the King and Queen; and one that Jamel creates to tell his family, about a young woman's quest to lead home a pig she has bought as a pet. The third is a framing device for the second: Jamel ventures to a nearby village. En route, he is swallowed by a huge fish and is ultimately rescued by the cleverness, and unusual skills, of his children -- and which results in an explanation of how there came to be a moon.

Magic, the Moon and a Pig Named Dog

There are 34 roles (5 female; 3 male; 26 either gender) in *Magic, the Moon and a Pig Named Dog*. They may be played by as few as 20 actors. Please see the next page for suggested doubling.

CHARACTERS:

First Narrator - male or female

Second Narrator - male or female

Jamel [JUH-mel] - male

Dalia [DOLL-yuh], his wife - female

Their six children (suggested: three male, three female):

See Trouble, the oldest - male or female

Road Builder - male or female

River Drinker - male or female

Stone Thrower - male or female

Cushion - male or female

Game Skinner, the youngest - male or female

Six Townspeople - male or female (suggested: three male, three female)

The King - male

The Queen - female

The Messenger - male or female

Akilah [uh-KEE-luh], a woodsman - male

The Grackle - male or female

The Mole - male or female

Old Conch [CONK] - female

The Page - male or female

Cleota [klee-OH-tuh] - female

The Farmer - male or female

Dog, a pig - male or female

Bull, a dog - male or female

Lion, a bull - male or female

Rabbit, a lioness - female

Pig, a rabbit - male or female

The Fish - male or female

Cleota's rabbit - male or female

The Bird (non-speaking. May be a puppet) - male or female

The Time: Then

The Setting: There

The play may be presented on a bare stage or with as much suggestion of the locales as the director chooses. The music for the songs should be improvised by the actors.

Magic, the Moon and a Pig Named Dog

There are 34 roles in *Magic, the Moon and a Pig Named Dog*. They may be played by as few as 20 actors (4 female; 3 male; 13 either gender).

Suggested doubling

CHARACTERS:

First Narrator - male or female

Second Narrator - male or female

Jamel [JUH-mel] - male

Dalia [DOLL-yuh], his wife - female

Their six children (suggested: three male, three female):

See Trouble, the oldest - male or female

Road Builder - male or female

River Drinker - male or female

Stone Thrower - male or female

Cushion - male or female

Game Skinner, the youngest - male or female

First Townsperson/King/The Farmer - male

Second Townsperson/Queen/Rabbit, a lioness - female

Third Townsperson/Lion, a bull - male or female

Fourth Townsperson/Dog, a pig - male or female

Fifth Townsperson/The Messenger/Cleota's rabbit - male or female

Sixth Townsperson/The Grackle/The Fish - male or female

Akilah [uh-KEE-luh]/The Bird (non-speaking. May be a puppet) - male

The Mole/Cleota [klee-OH-tuh] - female

Old Conch [CONK]/Pig, a rabbit - female

The Page/Bull, a dog - male or female

Playwright's notes

The use of puppets or puppet-like devices is encouraged.

The play's running time will vary according to the amount of movement/dance the director chooses to incorporate. Including its non-verbal elements, it will run 70+ minutes. With no movement sequences, it will run 55-60 minutes.

Most of the locations can be created using lighting, especially with gobos. Scrims and projections may also be useful. Creating specific set pieces to define each location is not recommended. Whatever set pieces are used should be multi-purpose and mobile -- cubes and lightweight benches, for example, that can serve multiple functions.

Music is specified in various places. This may be from extant recordings selected by the director, or written specifically for the production. The director should feel free to use additional music wherever s/he feels it's appropriate. Music that suggests the Afro-Caribbean nature of the material is recommended, although not exclusively: A variety of tuneful music will enhance the show.

Similarly, at least some of the dance used should reflect Afro-Caribbean forms and culture.

In order that "Papa" will scan in Jamel's verses, the word should be pronounced pa-PA. Similarly, "Mama" should be pronounced ma-MA.

ACT I: AT RISE: MUSIC: perhaps drumming, marimbas and a wooden flute. The NARRATORS and the ENSEMBLE appear.

FIRST NARRATOR

Good evening [morning, afternoon]. My name is [NAME]

SECOND NARRATOR

And mine is [NAME]

FIRST NARRATOR

And we're here

(Indicates ENSEMBLE)

-- all of us -- to tell you a story.

SECOND NARRATOR

Three stories, in fact. One about Magic;

FIRST NARRATOR

One about the Moon;

SECOND NARRATOR

And the third is about -- a pig named Dog.

(ALL but the NARRATORS leave the stage.)

FIRST NARRATOR

They all happened many years ago, on a small island in the Caribbean Sea, where there lived a man named Jamel

SECOND NARRATOR

And his wife, named Dalia...

FIRST TOWNSPERSON

(To SECOND TOWNSPERSON, as TOWNSPEOPLE enter.)

Have you heard? Have you heard!?

SECOND TOWNSPERSON

No. I've just returned from our neighboring village. I had bushels and bushels of ---

THIRD TOWNSPERSON

Never mind that! Have you heard about Jamel and Dalia?

SECOND TOWNSPERSON

I told you, I've *just* returned this very minute. How *could* I have heard?

FOURTH TOWNSPERSON

Then I'll tell you!

FIRST TOWNSPERSON

No, I'll tell you.

THIRD TOWNSPERSON

I'll tell you.

SECOND TOWNSPERSON

Why don't you *all* tell me?

FIRST, THIRD, FOURTH TOWNSPERSONS

Well, you see...

(THEY huddle and mime discussion.)

FIRST NARRATOR

Jamel was very famous, for he and his wife Dalia had five children.

(SOUND: A baby crying. JAMEL comes running on.)

JAMEL

(To FIRST NARRATOR)

Six! I have six children!

FIRST NARRATOR

Excuse me -- they had *six* children.

SECOND NARRATOR

Which, I suppose, isn't unusual -- but the children? *They* were - well, a *little* unusual.

JAMEL

(To TOWNSPEOPLE)

My friends! I have a child. I have another child!

FOURTH TOWNSPERSON

You have *another* child?

FIRST TOWNSPERSON

You already had five children, Jamel.

THIRD TOWNSPERSON

And the names you have given them!

FIFTH TOWNSPERSON

Indeed. I was at the birth of the first. [She/He] appeared and -- do you think [she/he] cried? -- no! [She/He] announced:

(Lights rise on SEE TROUBLE.)

SEE TROUBLE

My name is See Trouble.

SIXTH TOWNSPERSON

And the second said, the moment [*she/he*] appeared:

(Lights rise on ROAD BUILDER.)

ROAD BUILDER

I am Road Builder.

FIRST TOWNSPERSON

Then came:

(Lights rise on RIVER DRINKER.)

RIVER DRINKER

I'm River Drinker.

SECOND TOWNSPERSON

The next said

(Lights rise on STONE THROWER.)

STONE THROWER

My name is Stone Thrower.

FOURTH TOWNSPERSON

And the last

THIRD TOWNSPERSON

Until today

FIFTH TOWNSPERSON

Was

(Lights rise on CUSHION.)

ALL TOWNSPERSONS

Cushion!

CUSHION

Uh-huh. Cushion.
(Giggles)

SIXTH TOWNSPERSON

Of all things!
(The CHILDREN giggle.)

JAMEL

I know they are - unusual names.

FIRST TOWNSPERSON

To say the least!

JAMEL

But Dalia and I haven't named them.

SECOND TOWNSPERSON

You haven't?

THIRD TOWNSPERSON

You don't know?!

SECOND TOWNSPERSON

We only moved here just before the harvest.

JAMEL

You see -- they brought their own names with them!

FIFTH TOWNSPERSON

I told you!

JAMEL

And they *are* unusual children: They seem to have special talents no one else possesses.
Don't you, my little ones?

SEE TROUBLE

Yes, Papa.

(To SECOND TOWNSPERSON)

I can look anywhere there is trouble and see it, no matter how far away it is.

STONE THROWER

I can hurl a stone a hundred yards and drive a nail into a board with it.

