

Playstage

Junior

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MERLIN THE MAGICIAN



Amazing Man of Mystery!

An imaginative retelling of “The Sword in the Stone”.

Written by

Stewart

Auty



MERLIN THE MAGICIAN

CAST LIST

Narrator 1

Narrator 2

Servant (Boy or Girl)

Puny Boy

Sir Ector

Sir Grummore

Two children (non-speaking)

School Inspector (Severe looking, with glasses and hair tied back in a bun)

Kay, son of Sir Ector

Arthur, known as Wart

Merlin

Postman/lady

Archimedes, Merlin's pet owl

Fish (at least 4)

Little John

Much the Miller

Robbie Wood

Maid Marian

Queen of the Fairies

Lady in Waiting 1

Lady in Waiting 2

Friar Tuck

Dog Maid

Dominant

Ant Troop (at least 4, preferably more)

Four birds: Sparrow, Nuthatch, Woodpecker and Pigeon

Squire

37 parts. Many parts can be doubled up.

Approximate running time 1 hour.

MERLIN THE MAGICIAN

SCENE 1

(Enter 2 elegant and graceful NARRATORS dressed in very ladylike gowns. They take their places behind lectern/table placed centre stage)

NARRATOR 1

Welcome everyone! Today/tonight we will retell a magical story based on the legend of King Arthur.

NARRATOR 2

As well as magic, we promise you mystery as we tell our story.

NARRATOR 1

Both magic and mystery, wow! Look they're on the edge of their seats already!

NARRATOR 2

Sometime in the fifth or sixth century, and we're really sorry that we can't be more precise...

NARRATOR 1

...For that is what makes ancient myths and legends so curiously magical...

NARRATOR 2

You see, nothing was written down.

NARRATOR 1

Stories were told and retold, and as time passed, each storyteller added a bit more.

NARRATOR 2

Sometime long, long ago, England was thrown into turmoil when the King, Uther Pendragon, became seriously ill.

NARRATOR 1

Uther had been a good king, fair but firm, but unfortunately he had no obvious successor.

NARRATOR 2

It was rumoured that Uther had a baby son, who was too young to rule any kingdom.

NARRATOR 1

The kingdom was in turmoil, because of the uncertainty caused by Uther Pendragon's illness.

NARRATOR 2

Many people saw an opportunity to become the future king, and for a time there were battles between the armies of rivals for the throne.

NARRATOR 1

Then, in London, almost overnight it would seem, a strange stone appeared, with a sword in it.

NARRATOR 2

It looked rather like this...

(Scruffy looking SERVANT enters, dragging a low trolley on which lies the sword in the stone. Wears a flat cap.)

SERVANT

Where do you want this then?

NARRATOR 1

Oh, anywhere you like.

NARRATOR 2

We don't want it for long. We're just setting the scene.

SERVANT

I'll leave it here then.

NARRATOR 1

No not there, it might be in the way.

SERVANT *(Hands on hips)*

When you said *anywhere you like*, I thought that *anywhere* would do. That I could choose.

NARRATOR 1

Well, you thought wrong. That was a mistake. You're only a humble servant after all.

NARRATOR 2

Remember your place, lowly servant. You do not make decisions. You take direction and instruction.

SERVANT

Alright. I know my place. *(Removes flat cap)* Beggin' your pardon, ladies. Please forgive me.

NARRATOR 2

Good grovelling! Don't worry – we'll position it exactly where we want it.

NARRATOR 1

You can go now. We'll send for you when we want it removed.

(Exit SERVANT)

NARRATOR 2

I'll need your help to move it.

(Both NARRATORS pushing/pulling)

NARRATOR 1

There that's about right!

NARRATOR 2

Now where we? Oh, yes, the stone.

NARRATOR 1

Now the more observant of you will have noticed two things. First, there appears to be a sword sticking out of the top of the anvil.

NARRATOR 2

And secondly, but perhaps of greater significance, lower down there is an inscription.

NARRATOR 1

Which we will now read to you, as the only ones who can read for themselves are sitting at the back, and are too far away.

NARRATOR 2

And those who are nearer the front probably cannot read...

NARRATOR 1 (*Big voice*)

The inscription reads “Whoso pulleth this sword of this stone and anvil is rightwise king born of England.”

NARRATOR 2

Now where the stone came from, well that’s a mystery.

NARRATOR 1

And we promised you mystery! Remember? But word soon got round, and many tried to withdraw the sword.

NARRATOR 2

Here are some now ready to chance their arm.

(Enter PUNY BOY dressed in leotard with large ‘dumbbell weights’. (SEE PRODUCTION NOTES.) PUNY BOY demonstrates his weight lifting prowess.)

NARRATOR 1

You might not believe this, but this is the strongest boy in England!

PUNY BOY

Have I got this right? All I have to do is remove the sword from the stone, and I’ll be the future king of all England?

NARRATOR 2

That’s all you have to do! It’s as simple as that!

PUNY BOY

Easy-peasy, lemon squeezy! Prepare to meet the future king of England!

(PUNY BOY, flexes his muscles, does a bit of bending and stretching)

PUNY BOY

Oooh! This is hard! I do believe it’s stuck firm. It’s too much for me, and I’m the strongest boy in England!

NARRATOR 1

Thus ended the reign of King Puny Boy before it had even started.

PUNY BOY

If Puny Boy cannot remove the sword, then no one can, because I'm the strongest boy in the whole land!

NARRATOR 1

You've said that once. Off you go. Today is not your lucky day.

(Exit PUNY BOY)

NARRATOR 2

Many tried to remove the sword, and they all failed, and soon the stone with the anvil on top was forgotten.

NARRATOR 1 *(Shouts)*

Servant!

(Enter SERVANT)

SERVANT

No need to shout!

NARRATOR 2

We've done with the stone for now, although we will need it later.

SERVANT

I'm neither deaf nor stupid, nor was I far away.

NARRATOR 1

Careful, Servant! Remember who you are. Backchat does you no favours!

NARRATOR 2

More to the point, remember who we are!

(SERVANT lifts rope and drags trolley and exits)

NARRATOR 1

So this is where our story really begins.

NARRATOR 2

We move now to Ector Castle close to the Forest Sauvage.

NARRATOR 1

The Forest Sauvage is a dark and dangerous place, full of wild and dangerous animals, and, as such, a place to avoid.

NARRATOR 1

Only the very brave, or foolhardy, entered the dark and dangerous forest.

NARRATOR 2

Outside the castle, Sir Ector and his good friend and drinking companion Sir Grummore are chatting away about Sir Ector's two sons.

NARRATOR 1

Kay is Ector's only natural son, and he doesn't really get on with his adopted brother, Arthur, whom everyone calls Wart.

NARRATOR 2

Sir Ector adopted Wart when he became an orphan, a praiseworthy act of charity which shows just what sort of a compassionate knight he was.

NARRATOR 2

We really should be going. We've set the scene and introduced the characters. We might see you later! Bye for now!

NARRATOR 1

But keep a lookout for the magic and mystery!

(Exit two NARRATORS; SERVANT places a tray with teapot and two cups on the table. Enter ECTOR and GRUMMORE both carrying chairs or stools. SERVANT joins TWO CHILDREN and WART and they sit in a corner and quietly play a board game)

SIR GRUMMORE

By 'eck, Ector, but you make a nice cup of tea!

SIR ECTOR

Even though the water is so hard. But I didn't ask you to visit just to discuss cups of tea.

SIR GRUMMORE

I'm happy to enjoy the sunshine and chat about anything you wish.

SIR ECTOR

That's good of you. A problem shared is a problem halved.

SIR GRUMMORE

Problem? It's nothing dangerous, is it?

SIR ECTOR

No, Grummore, it's not dangerous. It's about my sons Kay and Wart.

SIR GRUMMORE

What have they done now? Still fighting and arguing, I shouldn't wonder.

SIR ECTOR

No more than normal. That's Wart, over there, playing with the local children.

SIR GRUMMORE

He seems a good lad.

SIR ECTOR

Kay resented me adopting Wart. He's very jealous.

SIR GRUMMORE

They need to learn to get on together.

SIR ECTOR

Exactly right! Learning, that's it! So, I've been thinking, they both need some edification.

SIR GRUMMORE

Edification? What's that when it's at home?

SIR ECTOR

You know – organised learning, that's what they need.

SIR GRUMMORE

Oh, you mean horse riding, jousting, sword fighting, fencing, – that sort of thing?

SIR ECTOR

Not exactly, but looking at the edge of the palace gardens, a bit of fencing might come in useful.

SIR GRUMMORE

What sort of learning had you got in mind?

SIR ECTOR

Well there's Court Hand for a start.

SIR GRUMMORE (*Mimes various tennis shots*)

You mean tennis skills, don't you? Played with the hand, on a court.

SIR ECTOR

No, tennis hasn't been invented yet. Court hand is a style of handwriting, much favoured by the French aristocracy.

SIR GRUMMORE

So you want them to do handwriting practice?

SIR ECTOR

Yes, and then there's Summulae Logicale, which, I'm told, is the history of logic. There's also Organon to consider.

SIR GRUMMORE

Ah, the art of paper folding. Very useful skill!

SIR ECTOR

I presume you jest, sir! Organon is a blend of philosophy and scientific investigation.

SIR GRUMMORE

Knew that all along, old boy.

SIR ECTOR

And finally there's Repetition and Astrology.

SIR GRUMMORE

Ah! Astrology! The study of the movement and relative positions of celestial objects, more commonly called Fortune Telling. But what's Repetition?

SIR ECTOR

Put simply, it's looking at repeat patterns, and learning to predict.

SIR GRUMMORE

You mean numbers! Numbers make patterns!

SIR ECTOR

Not just numbers! Anything musical, like singing, playing an instrument, even dancing, they all follow repeat patterns. Recognise the pattern and you have understanding.

SIR GRUMMORE

This all sounds very complicated. So here's my advice, for what it's worth. You'll have to employ a tutor. You need someone who knows all these things to teach Kay and Wart.

SIR ECTOR

That's what I was thinking! Great minds think alike, eh, Grummore?

SIR GRUMMORE

You'll have to draw up a job description, and advertise the post, and then interview the applicants.

SIR ECTOR

I need to make sure I appoint the right person.

(Enter SCHOOL INSPECTOR carrying a large magnifying glass)

SCHOOL INSPECTOR

I couldn't help overhearing. Sorry about that. Snooping around and eavesdropping are occupational hazards.

(SCHOOL INSPECTOR examines everything closely through magnifying glass, including Sir ECTOR)

SIR ECTOR

Pray tell me, who might you be?

SCHOOL INSPECTOR

I'm your local School Inspector. Scrutiny is what I do, close scrutiny. And it sounds like you're setting up a school; so naturally, I'll want to inspect it.

SIR ECTOR

It's nothing to do with you! This is a private arrangement for my two sons. You can hardly call it a school.

SCHOOL INSPECTOR (*sounding irritable*)

You were discussing a curriculum, so naturally there will be a timetable of lessons?

SIR ECTOR

Well, yes, I suppose so.

SCHOOL INSPECTOR

Will your pupils sit at desks, have a mid-morning break of no longer than fifteen minutes, break for lunch and continue their learning during the afternoon?

SIR ECTOR

Something like that.

SCHOOL INSPECTOR

Did you know LISTEN is an anagram of SILENT?

SIR GRUMMORE

By Jove, Ector, old boy, she's right!

SCHOOL INSPECTOR

Of course I'm right! I'm a School Inspector! I've decided that what you're setting up is a school. I need to assess value for money.

SIR GRUMMORE

There'll be no money involved, so this doesn't concern you. Good of you to drop by. Why don't you take a walk until your hat floats?

SCHOOL INSPECTOR (*raises magnifying glass*)

I will be keeping an eye on you. You haven't heard the last from me.

(Exit SCHOOL INSPECTOR. Enter KAY, carrying a bow, with a quiver of arrows on his back)