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Introduction

Working with acting students in the creative theatrical process is one of my great joys. Whether participating in a class or main stage production, the personal skills developed through the art of acting open up vast new worlds of opportunity to the student, regardless of age. Yet, as an instructor I have been challenged to find effective, appropriate resources to aid in the learning process. Necessity, being the proverbial “mother of invention,” has inspired me to create a series of scenes that fit the needs of my acting students, both children and adults. The scenes have become so popular with my students and have filled such a gap in the material I needed that I began to think they might be a welcome resource for other teachers and directors as well. I like humor. Actually, I love humor. Most often I prefer directing a good comedy over a dramatic piece. Don’t get me wrong, there is definitely a place for dramatic work in the process of developing acting skills. But for most students I encounter, comedy is a logical and easy first step into the theatre. Comedy helps loosen up the students’ inhibitions and gives them permission to have fun with the learning process. Characterizations become broader and theatrical elements are learned with little effort.

The scenes contained in this book are based on familiar characters with a comedic spin on their situations. I looked at the characters and situations presented in children’s rhymes, stories, and songs and took a slightly different approach to the storylines. I have included the reference stories and rhymes that correspond with each scene as, believe it or not, the majority of my young students do not know many of the common nursery rhymes on which the scenes are based.

Most of the characters may be played by either gender, and several scenes can be expanded to accommodate an entire classroom. Each scene explores different theatrical components identical to those found in full-length scripts. For example, several scenes deal with the understanding that something has just occurred Off-stage. The scene then unfolds around the unseen event, affecting the characters as they enter the stage and all the events and reactions that follow. Some scenes are based on specific genres. Some scenes are based on the development of characters and relationships. Some revolve around the discovery of new information and the process of solving problems and finding solutions.