

The Ugly Duckling

by Hans Christian Andersen

Adapted by Bill Robertson



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Bitesize Theatre Co., 8 Green Meadows, New Broughton, Wrexham, LL11 6SG

The Ugly Duckling

synopsis

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CAST:

HANS ANDERSEN
CHILDren (18)
STORK (2)

MOTHER duck
SADIE
SOPHIE
SHARON
SAMMY
UGLY

GRANNY IDA
GRANNY CAMPBELL
GRANNY APLEYARD

STANLEY SHELDUCK
OLLIE

CAT
EEL
YARD Occupants (11) ducks, hens, turkeys
QUEEN ISABELLA
LADY IN WAITING1
LADY IN WAITING2
GANG members (15) ducks, hens
Small TURKEY
Big TURKEY

WILD Ducks (21)
HUNTER(s)
DOG

WOMAN
CHUCKie-low-legs
SONNIE

RAVEN

MAN
NORA
JAN
WIFE

WINTER CHARACTERS (?)

SWANS (3)
Other Inhabitants of Swan Lake

In each scene where there are crowds or groups of characters, each line spoken by one of the group is given a different character number. (e.g. GANG1; GANG2; GANG3 etc) (except where it is part of a conversation). This allows the director to be flexible in selecting who says each line and allows for a variable number of speaking parts within each group. The number shown in brackets above indicates the maximum number of spoken parts for each group. However, the groups can be larger or smaller than this number as required.

Scene 1 Odensk, Denmark

[The Mother Duck and her eggs, (4 the same size and one much bigger) are hidden in the centre of a large clump of reeds and rushes. Centre stage. Hans Andersen enters with a group of children. Hans is in a hurry.]

CHILD1: Tell us a story, Hans.

CHILD2: Yes! Please tell us a story, Hans.

HANS: Oh no. I'm afraid I'm far too busy to tell you a story today. I've got two pairs of clogs to mend for Mrs. Grublemayer, his worship the Mayor wants his best shoes soled before he attends a banquet tonight and Duke Ferdinand's Butler wants his squeaky shoes to have nice new soft soles, so that he can't be heard when he listens at keyholes.

CHILD3: Oh, please Hans.

ALL: Please!

HANS: Oh alright, *[sigh]* I suppose I'm never really too busy to tell you a story. But it will have to be a short one. The school bell will go soon and you know how annoyed Mr. Petersen, the schoolmaster gets, when you're all late for school!

ALL: Hurrah!

[Song: Hans Christian Andersen]

HANS: **I'm Hans Christian Andersen
As anyone here will tell
I'm the town's only shoemaker
So I'm the best as well
I'll mend your shoes and I'll fix your boots
I'll polish them for free
I can make you shoes with a pointed toe
With a buckled strap or a satin bow
All a miracle to see
I'm Hans Christian Andersen, Andersen, that's me.**

**I'm Hans Christian Andersen
I've many a tale to tell
And though I'm a cobbler, I'd say
I tell them rather well.
I've told the tale of 'The Nightingale'
And 'The Little Mermaid' too.
The story world that my tales unfold
Has monsters and villains and heroes bold.
So real you'd think they're true.
I'm Hans Christian Andersen, Andersen, that's who.**

HANS: **I'm Hans Christian Andersen
My pen's like a babbling brook
At night I write my stories down
In my fairy tale note book
But most of all what I love to see
It just thrills me through and through
Are the children listening to my tales
As I travel the roads through towns and vales.
Let me tell you all one too
I'm Hans Christian Andersen, Andersen, that's who.**

HANS: So what story shall it be... Thumbelina? The Emperor's New Clothes? Holger the Dane ?

CHILD4: No! No! We've heard all of those stories before. We want a new story.

HANS: A new story ?

CHILD5: Oh yes, Hans. Please can we have a new story?

HANS: A new story. I see. Well alright, a new story. Everyone sit down and gather close. *[the children all sit in a semicircle facing Hans]* Mmmm. Now let me see. Yes! YES! But I'm going to need you all to help me. Can you do that?

ALL: Yes!

HANS: Good. Now I want you all to imagine the scene. Imagine that it's early summer. Go on, imagine! *[to audience]* You too! *[the children close their eyes tight and try to imagine. meadow sfx]* That's right!.....Early summer when the wheat is a golden yellow and the oats are still green and the hay is stacked in the rich low-lying meadows. There are butterflies everywhere and the air is full of the bleating of new born lambs and the tap-tap-tapping of baby birds breaking out of their shells. The countryside is really lovely in the early Summer, don't you think?

ALL: Yes!

HANS: Oh yes!....Now, do you all know the deep lakes where the water's too cold to swim in, even on the hottest summer's day ?

ALL: Yes.

HANS: Well, if you were to go from there, through the Great Wood...

CHILD8: The wood where the wolves live?...

CHILD9: And the witch?....

HANS: Oh, now witches and wolves in the Great Wood?... that's just a once upon a time story from long, long ago.

CHILD9: It's not. It was just last year.

HANS: Last year?

CHILD8: Yes! In the story of Peter and the Wolf.

HANS: Oh, I see. Well, there's nothing scary in the Great Wood now, and besides we're not going to stay there, we're going to the other side of the wood.....Where we're going to find a grand old mansion that stands in the sunniest spot of one particular low lying meadow... and surrounding the mansion, there's a deep, deep moat. [**Fairy music**] Now, from the walls of the house, great dock leaves grow right down to the water's edge.... And do you know, some of those dock leaves have grown so tall that young Marlene here, could stand underneath them, and you wouldn't even know she was there ?

ALL: Ooo! [*laugh*]

HANS: Now amongst those leaves it's so secluded you would think you were in the depths of the Great Wood. And the light is cool and magical as it filters down through the leaves. [*The Storks enter. Egyptian dance*] Well on one glorious fine day in early summer as the sun shone on all the green dock leaves....

CHILD10: [*pointing at the Storks*] Who are they ?

HANS: Why, they are Storks. Majestic birds who come here all the way from Egypt, carrying new born babies to us from the cradle of civilisation.

CHILD11: Oh!

HANS: But our story doesn't concern the Storks. [*the Storks open the reed bed to reveal Mother Duck sitting on her nest*] Oh No! We're here to find a Mother Duck who is sitting on her nest under the dock leaves..... There she is now. [*Mother Duck stands up and rubs her bottom*] She's been sitting on her eggs for a very long time... a very long time indeed.

Scene 2 The Moat

MOTHER: Oooo! Quack! I've never known such stubborn eggs. I've been sitting here for weeks and weeks and weeks and there's not been one peep out of any of them. Quack! Now I'm not one to complain, but to say that I'm tired of sitting here would be a bit of an understatement. Quack! It's not as if it's really comfy either, or that I've been getting loads of visitors to help pass the time, because I haven't. And if one more duck tells me I should be used to it by now, I swear I'll swing for them. Oooo! [*she rubs her bottom again*] Oh, my name, by the way, is Michelle Shelduck it's a bit of a mouthful, especially for a duck. So most people around here just calls me Shel for short....Quack! And where's my husband ? Well might you ask! Stanley... that's his name... Stanley is never here to take a turn on the nest. He's always off with his mates from the Duckyard. So don't get me started on Stanley....Quack! Quack! Ooh! How I dream of the day when I can have a nice long soak in that there moat. [*sigh*] I'm not even near enough to just dabble my feet in to cool off. [*There is a tapping noise*] Here! What's that ? [*getting excited*] Oh, I think it's started. It's started....Oh! At last [*more tapping*]. Yes! It's starting to happen. Yes! Yes!

[**song: Zip-a-dee-doo-dah. While the ducklings hatch.**]

[*Four of the five eggs hatch. All except largest.*]

**This is my moment. Now it's okay.
All my eggs will be hatching today.
All of my ducklings'll be on display.
All this egg sitting is just so passé.**

**I'm so proud to be a mother
Oh! Look! They're hatching.
And just watch they'll all be matching.
Quack-a-dee doo-dah, Quack-a-dee-ay
Wonderful feeling wonderful day.**

**Come on you ducklings, don't you be shy
Out you pop, it's as easy as pie
You'll learn to swim in the blink of an eye
Let's celebrate it's the fourth of July**

**Let me help you out my darling.
Jump out and over
Take a taste of meadow clover
Quack-a-dee doo-dah, Quack-a-dee-ay
Wonderful feeling wonderful day.**

ALL: Cheep! Cheep!

MOTHER: Quack! Quack!

SADIE: Mummy ?

MOTHER: Yes dear.

ALL: Mummy! [*They all give her a hug*]

MOTHER: Quack! Quack! Now don't you go wandering off. Stay close. Have a good look around, though. Green's very good for the eyes.

SAMMY: Wow! How big the world is.

SHARON: There's much more room than there was inside my eggshell.

MOTHER: Do you think this is the whole world? My goodness me, no! It stretches for a long, long way. I mean on the other side of the garden there's the parson's field.... and then beyond that.... well....well, even I haven't been as far as that ! Now, let's get organised... Now that you're all out.... I suppose you are all out, aren't you ? Let me see... 1.2.3.4.....4? 4? Where's number five ? Oh No! I haven't got you all yet! Number five is still not hatched and he has the biggest egg too. [*Taps on number five egg*]. Oh dear, what am I going to do ? ... I can't sit here and look after all these other little ones, can I ? What I need is some help. [*shouts*] Quack! Quack! [*Nothing happens*] Come on, you can all shout with me. [*with ducklings*] Quack! Quack! [*Still nothing. to audience*] Alright! You lot !....Will you help us shout? [**audience: yes but feeble**] Oh come on! Surely you can do better than that. Will you shout with us ? [**audience: yes**] That's better. Alright then after 4. 1.2.3.4 [*with audience*] Quack! Quack!

[*Three Old Ducks enter. Granny Ida (Eider); Granny Campbell (Scottish/Mrs.Doubtfire) and Granny Appleyard, who is a little tipsy*]

IDA: What's all this noise about ?

MOTHER: Oh, thank goodness you're here Granny Ida.

IDA: What's the matter deary?

CAMP: Yes! What's all this fuss about ?

APPLE: What's uuuup?

IDA: Granny Appleyard, Granny Campbell and I were just passing when we heard you shouting.

CAMP: So, what can we do for you, lassie?

MOTHER: Well, you see, all of my little ducklings have hatched.....

IDA: Yes! So I see!

APPLE: Oh, aren't they just lovely. [*starts to well up*] I always get all emotional when I see little ones. [*blows nose/beak*]

CAMP: Don't mind her she's been at the scrumpy apples again.

IDA: Is this your first time, deary ?

MOTHER: Well, yes, but....

IDA: So I suppose you'll be needing our advise on the raising of your young 'uns.

CAMP: Well you've come to the right ducks.... we are the most knowledgeable ducks in these parts when it comes to raising ducklings.

APPLE: I've had ten broods of my own and I've been nanny to thirty five others, you know. So I can certainly tell you a thing or two.

MOTHER: Yes..yes... Thank you.... but at the moment my problem is that I've got this one egg that hasn't hatched and I need to sit on it... but I need someone to look after the others while I do?

IDA: Oh, that is a problem.

CAMP: Well, what about your husband, can't he help?

APPLE: Well, what day is it ?

IDA: Mmm! Thursday !

APPLE: Oh, well, you can't expect any help from a man on a Thursday!

MOTHER: I don't get any help from Stanley on any day. He's useless.

CAMP: That's men for you!

MOTHER: How long do you think it'll take to hatch ?

IDA: Mmm! Well, that's very difficult to say. Let me have a look at the egg. [*Granny Ida inspects the egg, gives it a tap here and there*] There's not even a crack in the shell and the others are already hatched. Mmm!

[*the three old ducks go into a huddle*]

CAMP: Yes! Agreed!

MOTHER: Why should this one take such a long time, do you think?

IDA: Mmm! Well, we're fairly sure that this is a turkey's egg!

APPLE: I was cheated like that once, and I had no end of trouble and worry with the creatures, for I may tell you that turkeys are afraid of water. I just couldn't get them into it, no matter what I tried...I quacked and snapped at them, but it was no good.

MOTHER: A turkey's egg ? Are you sure ?

APPLE: Yip! It's a turkey's egg, alright!

CAMP: You'd probably be as well to just.. leave it alone and teach the other children to swim. These four are some of the finest ducklings I've ever seen!

MOTHER: Yes, well, they're all exactly like their father... he always late, too!.... But I don't think I can leave number five. I think I'll have to sit on it a bit longer.

CAMP: Well, please yourself, but I'd say it's a waste of time.

MOTHER: I've sat here so long already, that it won't make that much difference.