

# The Story of Hansel and Gretel

Book by VERA MORRIS  
Music and Lyrics by BILL FRANCOEUR

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 **Pioneer**  
DRAMA SERVICE

## THE STORY OF HANSEL AND GRETEL

Adapted and dramatized from the stories of  
the Brothers Grimm and Adelheid Humperdinck Wette

Book by VERA MORRIS

Music and lyrics by BILL FRANCOEUR

### CAST OF CHARACTERS

(In Order of Appearance)

	<u># of lines</u>
HANSEL..... young boy, always hungry	142
GRETEL..... his sister, same age	155
FREDERICK ..... a neighbor boy	47
SUSIE ..... a neighbor girl	44
JOHANNA ..... another	43
LYDIA..... a gypsy	51
FRICK ..... a goblin in the service of the witch	98
FRACK ..... another	98
WITCH ..... not nice at all	115
MOTHER..... of Hansel and Gretel	60
FATHER..... same. A woodcutter and toy maker	40
TROLL..... citizen of the forest, unpleasant	20
OWL ..... wise and helpful	27
DEW PRINCESS ..... sprinkles dewdrops in the morning	27
ECHO ..... young girl, a forest sprite	18
SANDMAN ..... helps children to sleep	10
CASPAR ..... a gingerbread cookie	5
KATRINA..... another gingerbread cookie	6
Additional Children and Gingerbread Cookies as/if desired	

## SEQUENCE OF MUSICAL CUES

MC 1	Hansel and Gretel (Prologue) .....	Dew Princess, Company
MC 2	There's Gonna Be a Public Holiday .....	Frederick, Johanna, Susie, Hansel, Gretel and Chorus of Passerbys
MC 3	The Gingerbread Witch .....	Witch, Frick, Frack
MC 4	Tap, Tap, Tap .....	Gretel, Hansel
MC 5	Apple Muffin Goblins .....	Frick, Frack
MC 6	Close Your Eyes and Sleep .....	Gretel, Hansel
MC 6a	Close Your Eyes and Sleep—Reprise ....	Sandman, Dew Princess, Owl
MC 6b	The Gingerbread Witch—Reprise .....	Witch, Frick, Frack
MC 7	Entr'acte .....	Instrumental
MC 8	Hocus-Pocus .....	Witch, Frick, Frack, Gingerbread Cookies
MC 9	Good Enough to Eat .....	Hansel, Gretel, Witch
MC 9a	Close Your Eyes and Sleep—Reprise ....	Hansel, Gretel
MC 9b	The Oven .....	Instrumental
MC 9c	The Oven—Reprise .....	Instrumental
MC 10	Raise Your Voices .....	Father, Men, Hansel, Gretel, Children, Mother, Women
MC 10a	Hansel and Gretel (Epilogue) .....	Company
MC 11	Curtain Call .....	Instrumental
MC 12	Exit Music .....	Instrumental

## SYNOPSIS

The action of play takes place near a dark forest.  
The country is Germany and the time is long ago.

### ACT ONE

Scene One: The woodcutter's hut.  
Scene Two: In the forest.  
Scene Three: Deeper in the forest.

### ACT TWO

Scene 1: The witch's compound.  
Scene 2: In the forest.  
Scene 3: Back to the Witch's compound.

## THE STORY OF HANSEL AND GRETEL

PRIOR TO CURTAIN: Strange, mysterious and wonderful SOUNDS of the deep forest are heard... birds calling, leaves rustling in the wind, a babbling brook... all FADING INTO MUSIC CUE 1: "Prologue." A SPOTLIGHT FADES IN on the DEW PRINCESS DOWN CENTER. The rest of the COMPANY is silhouetted throughout the set or IN FRONT OF CURTAIN.

DEW PRINCESS: (*Sings.*) Come hear my story of two little children,  
Living in the forest a long time ago.  
Two little children hiding in the forest,  
Hansel and Gretel, so the story does go.

DEW PRINCESS/CHILDREN'S CHORUS: (*Sing.*)  
Two little children, playing in the forest,  
Sleeping in the flowers of crimson and blue.  
Two little children, calling in the forest,  
Hansel and Gretel are waiting for you.

COMPANY: (*Sings.*) You may find them on a mountain,  
In a valley far below,  
Singing softly in the treetops,  
Making angels in the snow.  
Two little children, running through the forest,  
Laughing in the sunshine that brightens their day.  
Come, little children, all the world is waiting,  
Hansel and Gretel... Hansel and Gretel...  
Hansel and Gretel, you'll find your way.

### ACT ONE Scene One

SETTING: A woodcutter's hut—a poor place suggested by a table RIGHT CENTER with a stool or small bench in front. STAGE LEFT is a fireplace with a cooking kettle, another stool in front. Another DOWN LEFT. Optional suggestion of a back wall. Entrance into the hut from outside is UP RIGHT. Other areas of the hut are OFFSTAGE, DOWN LEFT. On the table are some carved wooden toys and a pitcher (of milk). Some homemade brooms and a basket are on the floor by the fireplace. Outside the hut, UPSTAGE, there is either a scenic backdrop with a painted woodsy view or some cutout trees to establish the fact we are in "forest country." (NOTE: For various suggestions on how to "dress up the settings," consult PRODUCTION NOTES at back of playbook.)

AT RISE: We see two young children, HANSEL and GRETEL, brother and sister. HANSEL is seated at the table carving a toy soldier out of a piece of block wood. GRETEL is seated DOWN LEFT. She is tying string around

the twigs of a handmade broom. GRETEL is a little on the bossy side and HANSEL usually defers to her.

HANSEL: I'll never be able to carve a toy as good as Father. He's the best woodcutter and toy maker in these parts.

GRETEL: You do very well, Hansel. You've got nothing to be ashamed of. When you're as old as Father, you'll be as good as he is.

HANSEL: It's nice to think that. I hope it's true.

GRETEL: Of course it's true. (*Displays broom.*) This broom is almost finished.

HANSEL: I could carve much better if I weren't so hungry.

GRETEL: Work harder, Hansel. You won't be so hungry then.

HANSEL: That makes no sense, Gretel. No sense at all. (*He puts aside the block of wood and carving knife.*) We've got this fine pitcher of fresh milk Frau Rosmer brought us. I bet it tastes sweet. (*He grabs the pitcher.*)

GRETEL: (*Jumps to her feet.*) No, Hansel, no. Mother is going to make a nice pudding. You mustn't drink so much as a drop. This new broom is to pay Frau Rosmer for the milk.

HANSEL: A few gulps won't spoil the pudding.

GRETEL: Don't be a little pig, brother.

HANSEL: But, Gretel, we've had nothing to eat but thin soup for a whole week. I'd rather be a little pig than a starving boy.

GRETEL: I have some bread. I've been saving it. (*She puts down the broom and produces a small piece of bread from the pocket of her dress.*) I'll share it with you. You won't be hungry anymore. (*She breaks the bread in two, crosses to HANSEL and gives him half. He immediately tears at it.*) Mother is sure she'll be able to sell her wedding ring. And Father has gone to the Public Holiday in the next town. He's bound to sell some toys and brooms. We'll have lots to eat. You'll see.

HANSEL: I wish we weren't poor.

GRETEL: We are poor—there's no denying that. (*HANSEL coughs.*)

HANSEL: The bread has stuck in my throat. It's so old and dry.

GRETEL: I'll get you a cup of water. (*She starts to EXIT DOWN LEFT.*)

HANSEL: No need. This milk will do the trick. (*He grabs the pitcher and takes several thirsty gulps. GRETEL is horrified.*)

GRETEL: Hansel—the pudding!

HANSEL: There's plenty left. (*GRETEL moves back to the table and takes the pitcher. Checks the level.*)

GRETEL: You drank almost half.

HANSEL: (*Rubs his midsection.*) I'm still hungry.

GRETEL: (*Worried.*) I don't know what Mother will say. (*Moves to DOWN LEFT stool with pitcher.*) I'll put this over here where I can keep an eye on it while I work. (*She puts the pitcher on the floor by the stool. VOICES from OFFSTAGE UP RIGHT, excited and loud.*)

FREDERICK'S VOICE: Hansel! Gretel!

SUSIE'S VOICE: Are you home?

JOHANNA'S VOICE: Time for a holiday!

GRETEL: (*Turns UP RIGHT.*) It's Frederick! And Susie! And Johanna! (*FREDERICK, SUSIE and JOHANNA APPEAR at the entrance to the hut. About the same age as HANSEL and GRETEL.*)

FREDERICK: Hello, Hansel! Gretel!

SUSIE: Are you going to the Public Holiday?

JOHANNA: It's going to be great fun.

GRETEL: Father's gone, but we have to stay home.

HANSEL: I'm to carve wood, and Gretel is to make brooms.

SUSIE: Where's your mother?

HANSEL: Gone to sell—(*GRETEL doesn't want the OTHERS to know her MOTHER is forced to sell her wedding ring. She cuts HANSEL off.*)

GRETEL: Some brooms. She's gone to sell brooms. At the crossroads. Come in, come in. Don't stand in the doorway looking like scarecrows. (*The YOUNGSTERS ENTER, quite at home.*)

FREDERICK: We can't stay. It's a long walk to the next town. (*As the dialogue plays, FREDERICK crosses to the stool at the fireplace, sits. SUSIE crosses to the DOWN LEFT stool, sits. GRETEL stands beside her. JOHANNA sits at the table with HANSEL.*)

JOHANNA: There's going to be music and dancing and clowns.

SUSIE: And a puppet show!

FREDERICK: And a strong man lifting weights over his head. His name is Hercules. It's going to be spectacular! (*MUSIC CUE 2: "There's*

*Gonna Be a Public Holiday.” Sings.)*  
There’s gonna be a public holiday.  
Ring the bell, sound the horn, raise the roof,  
It’s a celebration!

JOHANNA: *(Sings.)* There’s gonna be a public holiday.  
Give a yell, give a cheer, when you hear,  
“It’s a celebration!”

FREDERICK: *(Sings.)* I feel it getting closer,

FREDERICK/JOHANNA: *(Sing.)* It’s getting closer, closer,  
Hip, hip, hooray!

SUSIE: *(Sings.)* There’s gonna be a public holiday.  
Musn’t wait, hesitate, don’t be late,  
It’s a celebration!

HANSEL/GRETEL: *(Sing.)* There’s gonna be a public holiday.  
Lead the way, what a show, gotta go,  
To the celebration!

ALL FIVE: *(Sing.)* I feel it getting closer,  
It’s getting closer, closer,  
Hip, hip, hooray!

FREDERICK: *(Sings.)* There’ll be music and dancing,  
And singing and puppets...

JOHANNA: *(Sings.)* ...Clowns and the strongman, Hercules.

SUSIE: *(Sings.)* There’ll be cookies and candy,  
And pudding and ice cream...

FREDERICK/JOHANNN/SUSIE: *(Sing.)* All for you today!

ALL FIVE/CHORUS OF PASSERBYS: *(Sing.)*  
There’s gonna be a public holiday.  
Ring the bell, sound the horn, raise the roof,  
It’s a celebration!  
There’s gonna be a public holiday.  
Give a yell, give a cheer, when you hear,  
“It’s a celebration!”  
I feel it getting closer,  
It’s getting closer, closer,  
Hip, hip, hooray!  
*(The next four stanzas are sung as a duet.)*

FREDERICK/JOHANNA/SUSIE/CHORUS I  
There’ll be music and dancing,  
And singing and puppets,



Clowns and the stongman, Hercules.  
There'll be cookies and candy,  
And pudding and ice cream,  
All for you today!

HANSEL/GRETEL/CHORUS II

Yodelay, yodelay-ee.  
Yodelay, yodel-ay-ee.  
Yodel-ay, yodelay-ee-ay-oo.  
Yodel-ay, yodel-ay-ee.  
Yodelay, yodel-ay-ee.  
Yodel-ay, yodelay today!

FREDERICK/JOHANNA/SUSIE/CHORUS I

Yodel-ay, yodelay-ee.  
Yodelay, yodel-ay-ee.  
Yodel-ay, yodel-ay-ee-ay-oo.  
Yodel-ay, yodel-ay-ee.  
Yodel-ay, yodel-ay-ee.  
Yodel-ay, yodel-ay today!

HANSEL/GRETEL/CHORUS II

There'll be music and dancing,  
And singing and puppets,  
Clowns and the stongman, Hercules.  
There'll be cookies and candy,  
And pudding and ice cream,  
All for you today!

ALL: (*Sing.*) It's time to celebrate this public holiday!

HANSEL: (*At end of song.*) That does sound exciting! Can't we go, Gretel?

GRETEL: What would Mother say if we disobeyed her? You're to carve toys, and I'm to make brooms.

SUSIE: That doesn't sound like much fun to me.

JOHANNA: Last year at the Public Holiday they had a man who could swallow a sword.

FREDERICK: And a goat that could do sums. They had a dancing bear, too.

SUSIE: They'll all be back this year.

HANSEL: (*More and more excited.*) A dancing bear! Oh, Gretel, we've got to go. If Mother wants to punish me—well—I'll just take my punishment.

GRETEL: You won't have to take your punishment because you're not going.

HANSEL: (*Stands.*) I will if I want to.

GRETEL: (*Arms akimbo, defiant.*) You're not going to the Public Holiday and neither am I.

HANSEL: Am too!

GRETEL: Am not!

FREDERICK: In that case, we'd best be off.

SUSIE: We don't want to miss any of the fun.

JOHANNA: I've got three coins to spend.

HANSEL: (*Snatching up a carving.*) Would you like to buy a wooden toy?

JOHANNA: No. I don't like wooden toys. (*LYDIA, a gypsy girl, APPEARS at the hut's entrance UP RIGHT.*)

LYDIA: Good day to you, children. Good fortune follow you wherever you go.

HANSEL: Who's that?

FREDERICK: It's the gypsy, Lydia.

LYDIA: I was passing by when I heard someone mention three coins.

JOHANNA: I have three coins, Lydia.

LYDIA: In that case, this is your lucky day, Johanna. (*LYDIA steps INSIDE the hut. She holds a basket of trinkets and brightly-colored ribbons and scarves. She moves RIGHT of JOHANNA.*) Everything's a bargain. I've got ribbons and scarves and pretty earrings and bracelets and such.

SUSIE: It's no use, Lydia. The coins are for the Public Holiday.

LYDIA: But that's in the next town. So far away. Such a long walk. Why, by the time you got there it'd be near nightfall. Aren't you afraid to return when it's dark?

FREDERICK: What's there to be afraid of?

LYDIA: What everyone's afraid of—the witch! (*OTHERS laugh.*)

OTHERS: The witch! Ha! Ha! The witch! Ha! Ha!

FREDERICK: You can't frighten us with that old folk tale, Lydia.

HANSEL: No one believes that foolishness about a witch.

LYDIA: (*Annoyed that they doubt her.*) It's true! It's true, I tell you. Gypsies know about such things. You can't fool a gypsy when it comes to witches. (*With dramatic emphasis, gesturing to the outside forest.*) She lives on the dark side of Ilsestein Mountain. She's as old as the hills and has the power of a demon. Up the chimney she flies, astride her broomstick. Over hill, over dale. Over cleft, over valley. Through mist and storm. (*The CHILDREN are "enthralled." They're plainly frightened by LYDIA'S dark words, but they want to hear more... and more.*)

SUSIE: Have—have—have you ever seen her, Lydia?

LYDIA: Many times. But I always look away. She has the evil eye.

JOHANNA: Does... does she have a name?

LYDIA: She does. She is called... Gingerbread Witch!

CHILDREN: (*Terrified.*) Gingerbread Witch! (*STAGE EFFECT: LYDIA and CHILDREN "freeze" in position. Supposedly, LYDIA is continuing with her description of the WITCH and her doings. If possible, the major part of the hut is thrown into DARKNESS and a LARGE CIRCLE OF LIGHT HITS DOWN RIGHT. From OFFSTAGE, DOWN RIGHT, comes the hideous LAUGHTER of GINGERBREAD WITCH. MUSIC CUE 3: "The Gingerbread Witch."*)

WITCH'S VOICE: (*Loud and nasty.*) Heeheeheeheeeeeeeeeee! Hahahahaaaaaaa! Hohohohoooooo! Wheeeeeeee! (*As OTHERS remain frozen in position, two horrid little GOBLINS lumber IN from DOWN RIGHT and stand in the CIRCLE OF LIGHT. They are FRICK and FRACK, henchpeople to the GINGERBREAD WITCH. They, too, laugh.*)

FRICK/FRACK: Heeheeheeeee. Heeheeheeeee.

WITCH'S VOICE: (*OFF RIGHT. Speaks.*) Here I come! Ready or not. Heeheeheeeeeeeeeee! (*IN zooms the WITCH astride her broom. What a scary sight! Long thin nose, long stringy hair, pointed chin, wide-brimmed cone hat. She speaks to the broom as if it were a horse.*)

WITCH: (*Speaks.*) Whooooooaa broom. Whoa, I say. (*She stops. ABOUT THE GINGERBREAD WITCH: She has plenty of energy and pep. There is nothing "tottering" or "feeble" about her—unless she chooses, when she's in the mood, to act so. She does squint because her eyes are weak. She's clever and witty and cruel and nasty and scary and sometimes—funny.*) Oh! How I love to ride my broom. I've had it for centuries, and I haven't had to replace one straw. Wheeeeeeeeeee. Over hill and dale! Over cleft and valley! Through mist and storm! Hee, hee, heeeeeeeeeee! Wheeeeeeeeeee!

FRICK: Hee, hee, heeeeeeeeeeeeeee!

FRACK: Wheeeeeeeeeee!

WITCH: (*Speaks.*) Silence, you miserable goblins! When I want to hear you laugh and carry on, I'll let you know. Understand?

FRICK: (*Speaks.*) We understand, Gingerbread Witch.

FRACK: (*Speaks.*) We live only to serve you, Gingerbread Witch.

FRICK: (*Speaks.*) You're the boss lady.

FRACK: (*Speaks.*) Command and it shall be done.

FRICK: (*Speaks.*) Noble Gingerbread Witch!

FRACK: (*Speaks.*) Gracious boss lady!

WITCH: (*Speaks.*) That's better!

(*Sings.*) I'm a witch, I'm a witch, strudel doodle doodle-dum.

I love to eat, yummy yummy yummy-yum.

I want (*To someone in audience.*) **you** in my tummy tummy-tum.

Best beware of the Gingerbread Witch!

FRICK/FRACK: (*Sing.*) Best beware of the Gingerbread Witch!

WITCH: (*Sings.*) I'm a witch, I'm a witch, strudel doodle doodle dee.

I love to bake, fiddle faddle fiddle fee,

Boys and girls, diddle daddle, two or three.

Best beware of the Gingerbread Witch!

FRICK/FRACK: (*Sing.*) Best beware of the Gingerbread Witch!

FRICK: (*Sings.*) She's cruel and scary,

FRACK: (*Sings.*) Best be wary,

FRICK: (*Sings.*) Legendary,

FRACK: (*Sings.*) Ugly, hairy.

WITCH: (*Sings.*) Awfully extraordinary.

FRICK/FRACK: (*Sing.*) No, she ain't the Sugarplum Fairy!

WITCH: (*Speaks. Sarcastic.*) Sugarplum Fairy indeed. I despise fairies... always flitting about with their magic wands, doing goody goody things... ugh, repulsive!

(*Sings.*) I'm a witch, I'm a witch, strudel doodle doodle doo.

I've a nice hot oven just for (*To someone in audience.*) you!

Boys or girls, any little kid'll do.

(*Speaks.*) How about a shove

(*Sings.*) From the Gingerbread Witch?

FRICK/FRACK: (*Speak.*) How about a shove

(*Sing.*) From the Gingerbread Witch?!

FRICK: (*Sings.*) She's cold and brutal,

FRACK: (*Sings.*) Off her noodle,

FRICK: (*Sings.*) Dipsy doodle...

FRACK: (*Sings.*) One sick strudel.

FRICK/FRACK: (*Seeing that the WITCH is eyeing them angrily. Sing.*)  
Time for us to up 'n' tootle!

WITCH: (*Sinister. Sings.*) How'd you like to be a little poodle?  
(*Speaks. Sweet.*) Hum.. That's not a bad idea. Two lovely little  
poodles... (*A shout.*) for dessert!

FRICK: (*Speaks.*) No, your horribleness.

FRACK: (*Speaks.*) No, your cruelty.

FRICK: (*Speaks.*) Not a poodle!

FRACK: (*Speaks.*) Not a poodle! (*Excited.*) I wanna be a pit bull.

FRICK: (*Not believing his ears; to FRACK. Speaks.*) What?!

WITCH: (*Speaks.*) Silence! Now, where was I? Oh yes.  
(*Sings.*) I'm a witch, I'm a witch, strudel doodle doodle-dum.  
I love to eat, yummy yummy yummy-yum.  
I want (*To someone in audience.*) **you** in my tummy tummy-tum.  
Best beware of the Gingerbread Witch!

FRICK/FRACK: (*Sing.*) Best beware of the Gingerbread Witch!

WITCH/FRICK/FRACK: (*Sing.*) Best beware of the Gingerbread Witch!

WITCH: (*Speaks in rhythm.*) Let's eat! (*At end of song.*) Hear me well,  
goblins. This day many children will be going to the next town. It's  
the Public Holiday and the town square will be filled with  
merrymakers. You, Frick, and you, Frack, will find some way to  
divert children to my mountain—the Ilsenstein. Once they are  
there, I will do the rest. Ha, ha, ha. Hee, hee, hee.

FRICK: How can we divert the children?

FRACK: Children don't like us.

FRICK: They're always saying unpleasant things about goblins.

FRACK: Children can be so rude.

WITCH: (*Snarls.*) You heard me. If you fail—I will turn you into apple  
muffins and feed you to the crows. HaHaHaaaaaaaa! (*FRICK and  
FRACK, horrified, cling to one another for support.*)

FRICK: (*Shaking.*) We won't fail you, Gingerbread Witch!

FRACK: (*Shaking.*) What you wish for you shall have!

WITCH: Then we understand one another. (*Snaps.*) Get busy, goblins!  
There's work to be done. (*She holds tight to the broomstick.*)  
Giddyup! HeeHeeeHeeeeeeeee. HaHaHaaaaaaa! HoHoHooooooooo!  
Wheeeeeeeeeee! (*She zooms OFF, DOWN RIGHT.*)

FRICK: We'd better not fail her!

FRACK: If we do, it's apple muffin time. (*They lope OFF after the WITCH.*  
*STAGE LIGHTS BACK TO NORMAL. The CHILDREN are all ears,*  
*listening intently as LYDIA rambles on.*)

LYDIA: ...and with wonderful cakes and candles and tasties she tempts  
little children with her munching, crunching, chomping house.  
(*ALL gasp.*)

JOHANNA: What—what—what does she do with them?

SUSIE: The children.

LYDIA: Are you sure you want to know?

OTHERS: (*Numbly nodding their heads.*) Uh-huh.

LYDIA: She puts them into a red hot oven and bakes them into—  
gingerbread children. (*CHILDREN gasp.*)

SUSIE: And then?

LYDIA: And then, she eats them! (*At that, EVERYONE is standing.*)

ALL: Auuuugh.

FREDERICK: That's a stupid story. You only told us that story so we  
won't go to the next town.

LYDIA: Not so.

JOHANNA: You want me to spend my three coins buying something  
from you instead of buying something at the Public Holiday.

LYDIA: No, no. What I told you is the truth. The truth! (*Serious tone.*)  
Don't you recall, long ago, Katrina the goose girl and Caspar her  
brother went into the deep forest and never were seen again.

HANSEL: Everyone said they were gobbled up by wild beasts.

GRETEL: They were never found.

LYDIA: That's because the witch got them.

SUSIE: You didn't scare me. (*Determined.*) I don't know what anyone  
else is going to do—but I'm going to the Public Holiday. Now.  
(*SUSIE strides to the door, OUT and OFF LEFT. FREDERICK follows.*)

FREDERICK: Wait for me, Susie. I'm coming along. (*Snickers.*)  
Gingerbread Witch? Ha! (*He's OUT. JOHANNA moves to the door.*)

JOHANNA: I'm going to tell my mother you tried to scare us, Lydia.  
Gingerbread children, indeed. (*She stops, turns to LYDIA.*) You  
ought to be ashamed of yourself. (*Angrily, she stomps her foot,*  
*follows after the OTHERS.*)

LYDIA: (*Shrugs.*) What can I say? It's the gypsy curse. To speak the  
truth and not have it believed. Tsk, tsk. It was always so.

HANSEL: The witch is only a fairy tale. (*Hopeful.*) Isn't she?

LYDIA: Believe what you will. (*To GRETEL.*) Where's your mother?

GRETEL: She's out. She had some things to attend to.

LYDIA: Tell her I'll be back. (*Moves for door.*) She always buys her string  
from me. (*She EXITS, moves OFF RIGHT.*)

HANSEL: I wish we could go to the Public Holiday.

GRETEL: (*The realist.*) Well, we can't and that's that.

HANSEL: Wish I could see that sword swallower and the goat that can  
do sums. And Hercules the Strong Man. There'll be music and  
singing and dancing.

GRETEL: We can dance here.

HANSEL: Here? In the hut?

GRETEL: We'll pretend we're in the next town. We'll have a wonderful  
time.

HANSEL: It won't be the same.

GRETEL: Use your imagination. (*MUSIC CUE 4: "Tap, Tap, Tap." Sings.*)  
With your foot you tap, tap, tap.  
With your hands you clap, clap, clap.  
Right foot first, left foot then  
Round about and back again!  
(*Speaks.*) Come on, Hansel, now you try it.

HANSEL: (*Speaks.*) All right.  
(*Sings.*) With your foot you tap, tap, tap.  
With your hands you clap, clap, clap.  
Right foot first, left foot then  
Round about and back again!

GRETEL: (*Sings.*) That was very good indeed.  
I am sure you will succeed.

Try again, yes, I can see,  
Hansel soon will dance like me!  
With your head you nick, nick, nick.  
With your fingers, click, click, click.  
Right foot first, left foot then  
Round about and back again!

GRETEL: (*Speaks.*) Now it's your turn.

HANSEL: (*Speaks.*) Here I go.  
(*Sings.*) With your head you nick, nick, nick.  
With your fingers, click, click, click.  
Right foot first, left foot then  
Round about and back again!

GRETEL: (*Sings.*) Brother, watch what next I do.  
You must do it with me, too!  
Don't be shy now, it's your chance.  
Take my arm. It's time to dance.  
(*As they dance.*)  
Tra-la-la-la-la-la-la!  
Tra-la-la-la-la-la-la!  
Tra-la-la-la-la-la-la!  
Tra-la-la-la-la-la-la!

GRETEL: (*Sings.*)  
With your foot you tap, tap, tap.  
With your hands you clap, clap, clap.  
Right foot first, left foot then  
Round about and back again!

HANSEL: (*Sings.*)  
Tra-la-la-la-la-la-la!  
Tra-la-la-la-la-la-la!  
Tra-la-la-la-la-la-la!  
Tra-la-la-la-la-la-la!

HANSEL: (*Sings.*)  
With your foot you tap, tap, tap.  
With your hands you clap, clap, clap.  
Right foot first, left foot then  
Round about and back again!

GRETEL: (*Sings.*)  
Tra-la-la-la-la-la-la!  
Tra-la-la-la-la-la-la!  
Tra-la-la-la-la-la-la!  
Tra-la-la-la-la-la-la!

HANSEL/GRETEL: (*Sing.*) Tra-la-la-la-la-la-la-la,  
Tra-la-la-la-la tra-la!  
Tra-la-la-la, tap, tap, tap!

(*At end of song, MOTHER APPEARS at the doorway UP RIGHT. On seeing her dancing CHILDREN, she becomes furious.*)

MOTHER: So! You wicked, wicked children! (*HANSEL and GRETEL stop dancing and look to the sound of the voice.*)

GRETEL: Mother!

HANSEL: We didn't see you there.



MOTHER: (*ENTERS hut; angry.*) I left you to work—so we might have something decent to eat for a change. When I return, what do I find? Obedient children? No—disobedient children.

GRETEL: Please don't be angry, Mother. (*Picks up the new broom she's made.*) I finished this broom. It's for Frau Rosmer. (*Indicates the milk pitcher.*) She paid with sweet milk.

HANSEL: (*Holds up toy he's been working on.*) I've made a good start on this toy soldier.

MOTHER: At least we'll have a milk pudding. (*She crosses for the pitcher and picks it up. HANSEL sits at table.*)

GRETEL: Did you sell your ring?

MOTHER: No one will buy a wedding ring.

GRETEL: I'm glad you didn't sell it, Mother. I'd rather go hungry.

MOTHER: Children can afford to be sentimental. (*Looks into pitcher.*) Why, there's only half a pitcherful.

HANSEL: Well, Mother, uh, uh, uh—

MOTHER: No need to explain. You've always been a greedy boy, Hansel.

GRETEL: It was because some dry bread stuck in his throat, Mother.

MOTHER: (*Returns pitcher to the table.*) What's the matter with washing it down with water?

HANSEL: (*Anxious to change the subject.*) Maybe Father will have good news.

MOTHER: Maybe the moon will turn blue. Maybe the sun will turn to ice. (*Resigned.*) Ah, well. I'd better start a fire for the pudding. (*She crosses to the fireplace and kneels down.*)

HANSEL: Then there's enough left for the pudding?

MOTHER: I know how to stretch things out. I've had plenty of practice. There's more than enough milk for the pudding. No thanks to you.

HANSEL: In that case, another swallow or two can't hurt. (*He picks up the pitcher and puts it to his lips. GRETEL is aghast.*)

GRETEL: No, Hansel. No. You mustn't. (*MOTHER spins about.*)

MOTHER: Hansel, what are you doing!?! You wicked boy. Put down that pitcher! (*Startled, HANSEL jumps up. In doing so, he drops the pitcher and, supposedly, the remaining milk spills onto the floor. Quickly, GRETEL crosses to the pitcher, drops to her knees and wipes at the milk with the corner of her dress.*)

HANSEL: I didn't mean any harm, Mother. Honest, I didn't. (*MOTHER is about to explode. She stands.*)

MOTHER: You selfish children. You wicked boy. Look what you have done. What will I give your father to eat? More dry bread, alas.

HANSEL: I didn't mean to drop the pitcher, Mother.

MOTHER: But you did. You did. Very well, it's wildberries for dinner.

GRETEL: There are no berries left in the forest, Mother. We've picked them all.

MOTHER: Go deep into the forest. Deeper than you've ever been before.

HANSEL: You mean to the dark side of Ilsenstein Mountain?

MOTHER: You've never picked wildberries there, have you?

HANSEL: No one has. It's too scary.

MOTHER: Don't make me any angrier than I already am. (*She picks up the basket and hands it to GRETEL.*) Don't come back until this basket is overflowing with wildberries.

GRETEL: But, Mother, it will soon be getting dark.

MOTHER: Then you'd better hurry. (*Commands.*) You heard me. (*A sweeping gesture to the door.*) Outside!

HANSEL: (*Hoping to placate her.*) Yes, Mother. We'll go. We'll get food. Don't worry.

MOTHER: (*On the verge of tears.*) Ha!

GRETEL: Come along, brother. The sooner we go, the sooner we can come back.

HANSEL: Yes, yes. (*HANSEL and GRETEL run from the hut, turn LEFT and OFF. Dejected, MOTHER sits at the table.*)

MOTHER: I no longer have any patience. My temper is short and my weariness long. Hunger is a terrible thing. We've nothing to live on. The soup is thin. The stale bread is almost gone and there's only water to drink. If only I had some money. (*MOTHER turns and buries her face in her arms on the table top. Sobs. LYDIA APPEARS at the doorway, from RIGHT.*)

LYDIA: (*Calls out.*) Hello? It's me, Lydia.

MOTHER: (*Lifting her head.*) Eh? What?

LYDIA: Surely you need some string for your brooms. You must be out by now. As you know, I sell only the best.

MOTHER: (*Eager.*) Come in, come in, Lydia. I have something that will interest you. I'll sell it to you at a fair price. Better than fair.

LYDIA: I'm always interested in a bargain. (*LYDIA ENTERS hut, steps to MOTHER.*) What have you to sell? (*MOTHER thrusts forth the finger with her wedding ring.*)

MOTHER: This. It's pure gold. (*LYDIA takes MOTHER'S hand and studies ring.*)

LYDIA: Pure gold it may be, but this is no ordinary ring. This is your wedding band.

MOTHER: (*Desperate.*) What will you give me for it?

LYDIA: Nothing. To buy another's wedding ring is to court bad luck.

MOTHER: A few copper coins. Anything. Hunger dwells in this hut, and it grows and grows.

LYDIA: No wedding rings. No.

FATHER'S VOICE: (*OFF RIGHT.*) Where's my Hansel? Where's my Gretel? Where's my loving wife?

MOTHER: My husband!

LYDIA: Sounding happy and pleased with himself.

MOTHER: How can this be? (*FATHER APPEARS at doorway. He carries a large basket filled with good things to eat. MOTHER stands.*)

FATHER: A happy day, indeed, wife. See what I have here. Hello, Lydia. (*Strides to the table and puts down the basket. In triumph, he takes things from it and holds them up.*) Sausages and fine cheese... apples and grapes... a side of ham... eggs... celery and carrots... fresh bread and jam... chocolate and pastries... (*MOTHER is nearly overcome. All she can do is gasp as each foodstuff is produced and put on the table.*)... a tin of coffee and another of tea... spice drops and cabbage...

MOTHER: Enough! I can stand no more. (*Delirious, she drifts to the stool at the fireplace and sits.*)

LYDIA: Fortune has smiled on you.

FATHER: Most kindly it has. This morning I took a sack of wooden toys to the Public Holiday. I thought, with luck, I would sell one or two. But, wonder of wonders, my toys were loved by one and all and quickly bought up. I could have sold a hundred more. Never has a woodcutter been so blessed. (*Looks about.*) Where are the children? This is one night Hansel and Gretel won't go to bed hungry.

MOTHER: *(Wailing.)* If only I had known.

FATHER: What's wrong?

MOTHER: I was angry with them. Hansel spilled the milk that was meant for supper. I sent them into the forest to pick wildberries. Deep, deep into the forest. I told them not to come back until the basket was full.

FATHER: But it will soon be nightfall.

LYDIA: *(Worried.)* Not to the dark side of Ilsenstein Mountain?

MOTHER: Yes. That's where they have gone.

LYDIA: *(Alarmed.)* It's a cursed place. Nothing but evil. She lives there.

MOTHER: She? Who are you talking about?

LYDIA: The Gingerbread Witch! She turns children into gingerbread boys and girls, and then—gobbles them up!

MOTHER: *(Screams.)* Make her stop. The children!

FATHER: It's only foolish gypsy talk. Superstition.

LYDIA: I tell you, the Gingerbread Witch is real.

FATHER: On Ilsenstein Mountain there are things far more real and dangerous than a witch.

LYDIA: Such as?

FATHER: Wild boars and hungry bears. Wolves. Sharp teeth and long claws.

MOTHER: The children! The children!

FATHER: *(Running OUT of hut UP RIGHT.)* We must save them. Hansel! Gretel!

MOTHER: *(Runs OUT after FATHER.)* The children! The children! Hansel! Gretel! *(LYDIA looks after the departing parents and then to the table, which is now covered with good things to eat. Quickly, she steps to the goodies and begins to stuff her face as she recalls the MOTHER'S words.)*

LYDIA: "Hunger dwells in this hut." *(She gobbles as much food as her mouth will hold.)*

End Of Scene One

## End of Script Preview

## PRODUCTION NOTES

### Stage and Hand Properties

ACT ONE, Scene One—Woodcutter’s Hut: Table with wooden toys and a pitcher (metal so it won’t smash on hitting stage floor), three stools or chairs, fireplace with kettle, optional suggestion of a back wall, forest backdrop or some cutout trees.

Brought On: Block of wood with knife (HANSEL); homemade broom with string, bread crust (GRETEL); basket with trinkets and scarves (LYDIA); broom (WITCH); gold wedding ring (MOTHER); basket loaded with foodstuffs (FATHER).

ACT ONE, Scene Two—Brought On: Sign with pointing arrow and lettering reading: THIS WAY HOME (FRICK); large stuffed doll (JOHANNA); cudgel or club (TROLL).

ACT ONE, Scene Three—Deeper in the Forest: Tree stump.

Brought On: Jar of water (DEW PRINCESS); necklace of wild flowers (GRETEL); basket (HANSEL); long cloak with hood, small sack with “sand” (SANDMAN); broom (WITCH).

ACT TWO, Scene One—Witch’s Compound: Cottage [facade], large cage with padlock and key (cage should be large enough for HANSEL to fit inside), large oven with door, wood kindle, worktable covered with sack of sugar, sack of flour, spoon, bowls, items for baking.

Brought On: Wooden poles or thick sticks (FRICK, FRACK); large ruby ring, platter of raisins, broomstick (WITCH).

ACT TWO, Scene Two—Brought On: Necklace of wild flowers—same as in ACT ONE, Scene Three (TROLL).

ACT TWO, Scene Three—Back to Witch’s Compound: Same as ACT TWO, Scene One. Twig on ground.

Brought On: Broom (GRETEL); apron, pan of fudge (WITCH); key (FRICK); chest of sparkling jewels (GRETEL).

### Sound Effects

Sounds of the deep forest—chirping birds, leaves rustling, wind; thunder; motorcycle being kick-started (to simulate WITCH “starting up” her broomstick—strictly optional); thunderous booms.

### Miscellaneous

DRESSING UP THE SET: The best idea is to keep everything simple, so things can be quickly moved on and off. However, anything that

emphasizes a “woody” flavor will greatly enhance the mood. The forest background, additional trees, some overhanging foliage.

**COSTUMES:** As indicated by the script, the usual Grimm fairy tale sort of thing. However, FRICK, FRACK and TROLL should be dressed a bit on the grotesque side. OWL, of course, should have a costume that suggests feathers. KATRINA and CASPAR, as Gingerbread Cookies, wear brown outfits (dyed pajamas will do) and either hoods or round pie-plate faces with the mouth, nose and eyes painted white—like frosting. Buttons, too, of course.

**LARGER CAST:** Add more children going to the Public Holiday and additional gingerbread “cookies.”

**SMALLER CAST:** DEW PRINCESS or OWL can double as KATRINA, SANDMAN can double as CASPAR. With a few minor line adjustments, SUSIE and JOHANNA can be combined, etc.

**FLEXIBLE CASTING:** SANDMAN can easily be played by a female. FRACK and FRICK can both be male, both female. Or one of each. TROLL can be male or female. Play can easily be performed by an all-female cast.

**FRICK/FRACK:** If the actors stumble over the same-sounding names, e.g.—“Frick?”—“Yes, it’s Frick, Frack”—don’t worry about it. It’s good for a laugh.

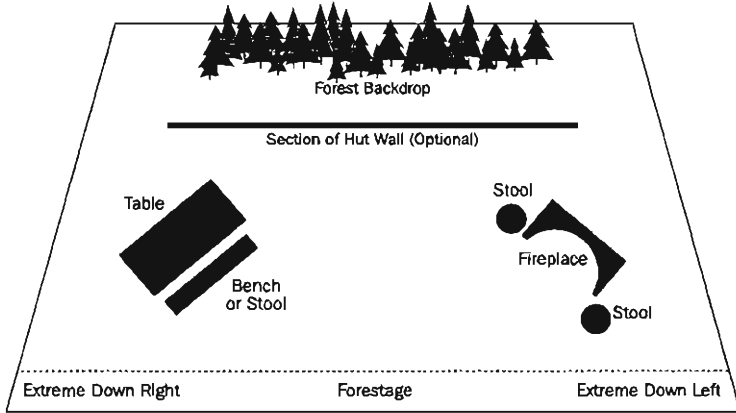
**ECHO:** Although it’s not necessary, it makes for a good effect if ECHO’S offstage calling can be amplified in some fashion.

**SANDMAN DUST:** Some “glitter flakes” or tiny spangles will show up nicely.

**MOTORIZED BROOM:** At the end of ACT TWO, Scene One, WITCH takes off on her broom. Think about having her kick her shoe to the broom’s side, as if she were starting a motorcycle. Play the SOUND EFFECT LOUDLY.

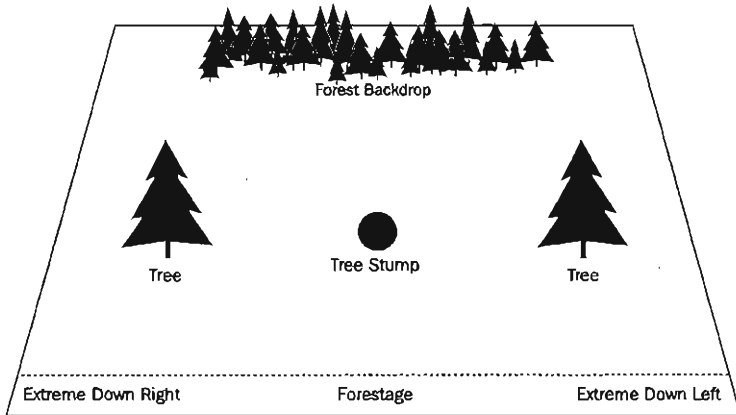
## THE STORY OF HANSEL AND GRETEL

### Basic Floor Plan (Woodcutter's Hut)



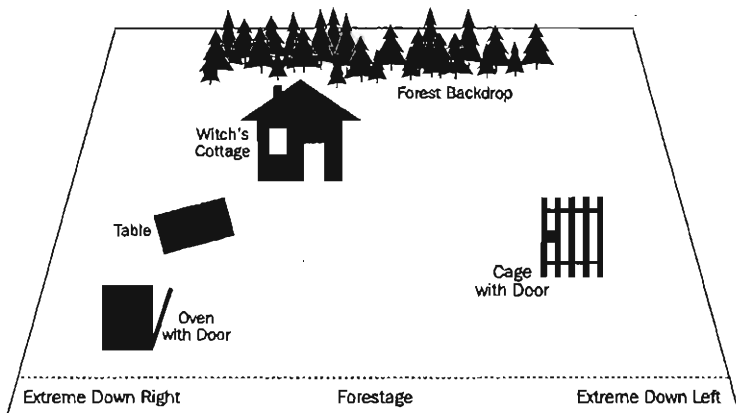
## THE STORY OF HANSEL AND GRETEL

### Basic Floor Plan (In the Forest)



## THE STORY OF HANSEL AND GRETEL

### Basic Floor Plan (Witch's Compound)



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