

Blather, Blarney and Balderdash

By Patrick Rainville Dorn

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BLATHER, BLARNEY AND BALDERDASH
Folk and Fairy Tales from the Emerald Isle

By PATRICK RAINVILLE DORN

CAST OF CHARACTERS
(In Order of Appearance)

	<u># of lines</u>
FIN O'GRADY	poor shepherd, wants to marry Pegeen 96
PEGEEN FLAHERTY	young lass, wants to marry Fin 6
MOTHER FLAHERTY	practical, outspoken mother 26
COLM FLAHERTY	brutish lout of a big brother 14
BLATHER	leprechaun 37
BLARNEY	leprechaun 37
BALDERDASH	leprechaun 35
LEPRECHAUN ONE	narrator 5
LEPRECHAUN TWO.....	narrator 5
LEPRECHAUN THREE.....	narrator 4
LUSMORE	friendly hunchback 18
MADDEN	nasty hunchback 15
LITTLE PERSON ONE.....	elf or fairy 34
LITTLE PERSON TWO	another 31
LITTLE PERSON THREE	another 29
LITTLE PERSON FOUR	another 29
LITTLEST LITTLE PERSON	another 15
MORE LITTLE PEOPLE.....	additional elves and fairies (as desired) n/a
LANDOWNER	selfish person 27
LANDOWNER'S WIFE	not long for this world 1
DAUGHTER	his/her lonely, wretched daughter 7
GRIFFIN'S WIFE	helpful woman 20
GRIFFIN	fearsome but beleaguered monster 14
AIDAN.....	poor man with a quest 51



INNKEEPER.....	hospitable soul	17
INNKEEPER'S DAUGHTER	suffers from sneezing fits	14
FARMER.....	has a locked lockbox	13
BOATMAN	rows, rows, rows his boat	8
MOLLY.....	fast on her feet	1
MARTHA.....	even faster	1
SUITORS.....	local bachelors (four or more)	5
IRISHMEN	fellow travelers	7
BRIDGET DOYLE	young adventurer	49
MOTHER DOYLE.....	her poor mother	13
COW.....	spindly thing	6
STRANGER.....	strikes up a bargain	25
CRICKET.....	plays a fiddle or harp	9
MOUSE	dancing mouse	7
BIRD.....	dancing bird	7
WEE WOMAN	shares a bit of news	7
QUEEN (or KING)	concerned monarch	13
PRINCE BRIAN	never laughs	13
VILLAGERS.....	(four or more)	32

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

Though the script is broken down into separate scenes, the action is continuous. There are no set changes. All props are brought on and taken off by the actors. There is one optional intermission.

TIME: Of a magical Irish season.

PLACE: The land of Ire.

Scene One: Our bold hero seeks his heroine and finds the leprechauns.

Scene Two: "The Hunchback of Knockgrafton"

Scene Three: "The Griffin's Feather"

OPTIONAL INTERMISSION

Scene Four: "The Griffin's Feather" cont.

Scene Five: "The Bird, the Mouse and the Cricket"

Scene Six: Our hero finds his tale and his lass.

SETTING

The playing area is an empty stage, upon which freestanding cutouts may suggest the locale. The general appearance is of a nondescript rural setting in the Irish countryside. If a backdrop is used, it may be painted with rolling green hills, farmlands, a stream or cottages in the distance. A cutout cottage (made of cardboard or foam board or freestanding flats) stands LEFT. There is a door opening on the cottage, with a piece of fabric hanging down in the frame. There also is a window. There is a stump EXTREME DOWN RIGHT and a large cutout bush UP CENTER. Other cutout trees and bushes as desired. See SET DESIGN at the back of this playbook.

BLATHER, BLARNEY AND BALDERDASH

Scene One

AT RISE: TRADITIONAL IRISH MUSIC PLAYS as the AUDIENCE arrives. The HOUSE LIGHTS DIM OUT and the MUSIC FADES. As the STAGE LIGHTS FADE UP, FIN O'GRADY ENTERS RIGHT apprehensively, turns and looks OFF RIGHT. BLATHER, BLARNEY and BALDERDASH are hiding behind bush UP CENTER.

FIN: Lambie! Come on, then, before the day is through entirely. (*Waits, then EXITS RIGHT. He RE-ENTERS, carrying a stuffed animal lamb.*) Ah, Lambie, whatever would I do without a friend such as you? Here it is, the house of my dear Pegeen, the light of my dark and dismal life, and I haven't the tongue nor talent to ask for her hand in marriage. Many's the day I've left the flock to pasture so that I might come and court her, and I daresay I may have caught her eye. But that mother of hers, and her brother, too, put me in such a fright. All I can do is stammer and stutter. When I'm in the pasture, I can speak my mind well enough. Your cousins and yourself are nothing if not good listeners. But here, in the village and among the good people of Killarney, it is another story altogether. (*Rallies himself and makes a decision.*) Now my mind is made up. Today I shall propose, come what may. (*Sets Lambie on the floor.*) You wait here. (*Turns, walks toward cottage, then stops and turns back.*) Wish me luck, Lambie. (*FIN knocks on the doorframe. MOTHER FLAHERTY ENTERS through fabric covering door, followed by COLM and PEGEEN. FIN removes his cap.*) Good e'en to you, Mother Flaherty, and how might you be this fine evening?

MOTHER FLAHERTY: Well, and more than well, Fin O'Grady. What brings you to our humble cottage?

COLM: (*Nudges PEGEEN and winks.*) As if we didn't know! (*PEGEEN slaps his arm. She gives FIN an encouraging glance.*)

FIN: (*Flustered.*) I, uh, well...

MOTHER FLAHERTY: Out with it man. State your business here.

COLM: Yeah, state your business. (*Sees Lambie and runs RIGHT to frighten it.*) Boo! Be off with you, or we'll have lamb chops for dinner! (*Lambie is pulled OFFSTAGE with the help of a piece of fishing line attached to its chest.*)

MOTHER FLAHERTY: (*To COLM.*) Hush now, Colm. (*To FIN, who is watching Lambie disappear.*) Well?

FIN: Well, you see, it's like this...

COLM: State your business, state your business...

MOTHER FLAHERTY: *(To PEGEEN.)* Pegeen, darlin', would you be so kind as to invite your big brother back into the house so the lad and myself can talk?

PEGEEN: But Mother, I want to hear what Fin has to say.

MOTHER FLAHERTY: Can't you see the man is tongue-tied? You take your brother in, and I'll tell you the tale soon enough.

PEGEEN: Yes, Mother.

COLM: State your business, state your business...

PEGEEN: All right, you bully of a brother. It's time for your comeuppance! *(Chases COLM around the STAGE as he continues to taunt FIN. She corners him. He puts his hands over his ears. She pokes him in the stomach. He instinctively grabs his stomach. She takes COLM by the ear and leads him toward the cottage. With her free hand, she waves to FIN.)*

COLM: Owww!

PEGEEN: Lamb chops, indeed! *(Waves and blows a kiss to FIN. She and COLM EXIT LEFT.)*

MOTHER FLAHERTY: *(To FIN.)* All right then, Fin. Is that better?

FIN: Yes, thank you, Missus.

MOTHER FLAHERTY: So what's on your mind, as if I didn't know. It's the hand of Pegeen you'll be asking for now, isn't it? *(PEGEEN appears in the window. Throughout the next scene, she listens, but is occasionally distracted by COLM, who also tries to eavesdrop.)*

FIN: How did you know?

MOTHER FLAHERTY: *(Leads FIN DOWN CENTER.)* Do you think love is something that can be hidden under a bushel basket? Faith, my boy, your feelings for each other are as plain as the grubby noses on your grimy faces.

FIN: And you don't mind?

MOTHER FLAHERTY: Mind? Why should I mind? You're an honest fellow, and Pegeen thinks the world of you. She'd make for you a good wife, sure. I raised her to be a hard worker and fearless.

FIN: Well, then. I guess we can set the date and call the priest.

MOTHER FLAHERTY: Sure, and one thing more. Tell me, if you can, what treasure you have to give my Pegeen, to tickle her mind and warm her heart on those long days when you are in the field tending your sheep.

FIN: Treasure? I'm just a poor shepherd. *(Thinks.)* I can give her soft-carded wool and fleece to keep her warm.



MOTHER FLAHERTY: Wool and fleece? I'm speaking of a far greater treasure, man. Now don't be shy. Speak up. The treasure I speak of grows the more you give it away.

FIN: I have neither gold nor jewels.

MOTHER FLAHERTY: Bah! Gold and jewels? What use would a poor country girl have for such things? Now don't make me start to thinking you're not the man for my Pegeen after all.

FIN: I'm afraid I don't know what you mean by treasure.

MOTHER FLAHERTY: Are you daft, man? I can give the girl to you, sure enough, but if you want to keep her, you'd better have a treasure box full of tales to share.

FIN: Tales?

MOTHER FLAHERTY: Stories! It's as dense as a sheep I'm thinking you are. A story is something that grows more valuable the more you share it with others. Don't be a miser, now. Before you can have the hand of my daughter Pegeen, you must tell me a tale.

FIN: I... I don't know any stories.

MOTHER FLAHERTY: Don't know any stories! Not a one? Are you certain?

FIN: *(Thinks.)* Wait! I know "The Three Little Pigs"!

MOTHER FLAHERTY: That's nice, boyo. But a story of your own is what I'm wanting.

FIN: Of my own? I have to make it up myself?

MOTHER FLAHERTY: A person with a knack for telling stories will never be a pauper and his wife will never stray to another pasture.

FIN: But... I wouldn't know where to start! I'm afraid I don't know the first thing about it.

MOTHER FLAHERTY: *(Crosses LEFT, blocking door to cottage.)* Then be off with you, Fin O'Grady, and find one. For you'll not see the love of your life again until you do.

FIN: I can't marry Pegeen without first telling a story?

MOTHER FLAHERTY: I'm afraid not.

FIN: Where am I to find such a thing?

MOTHER FLAHERTY: *(Takes potato from her apron pocket.)* Here, take this potato and sit down on that stump over there. Maybe it's an inspiration you'll find.

FIN: A potato?

MOTHER FLAHERTY: Consider it food for thought. Good luck, boyo.
(*EXITS LEFT.*)

FIN: (*Sits on stump EXTREME DOWN RIGHT, looks at potato.*)
Whatever shall I do? One thing's for sure, I don't feel like eating!
(*Throws the potato at bush, hits it.*)

BLATHER/BLARNEY/BALDERDASH: (*From behind bush.*) Owwww!

FIN: Who's there? Speak up, I say! (*Moves to bush, reaches in and pulls out BLATHER, BLARNEY and BALDERDASH, three leprechauns who are dazed by the blow from the potato. BALDERDASH picks up the potato.*) What are you doing back there, spying on me? Laughing at my sorrowful state, no doubt.

BLATHER: What's the big idea?

BLARNEY: Why did you throw a potato at us?

BALDERDASH: You could put somebody's eye out with that thing.
Potato... eyes... get it? (*No one does.*) Never mind. (*BLATHER, BLARNEY, BALDERDASH and FIN gradually work their way DOWN LEFT.*)

BLATHER: We could have you arrested.

BLARNEY: Yeah, for assault with a deadly vegetable.

BALDERDASH: The court would probably throw it out on appeal.
Potato... a peel... get it? (*No one does.*) Never mind.

BLATHER: All his jokes are half-baked.

BLARNEY: Potato... baked... get it? (*They do, and roll around on the floor laughing hysterically while FIN looks on in utter confusion.*)

BALDERDASH: (*To FIN.*) Why aren't you laughing?

FIN: There's nothing to laugh about.

BLATHER: You should be happy.

BLARNEY: After all, you've caught not one, but three leprechauns.

BLATHER: I'm Blather.

BLARNEY: I'm Blarney.

BALDERDASH: Balderdash!

BLATHER: So now you've caught us, you can keep us prisoner until we hand over our pots of gold.

BLARNEY: Our loss, your gain.

FIN: It's not gold that I'm needing.

BLARNEY: You don't want our gold? What's wrong with you?

BALDERDASH: Maybe somebody threw a potato at him and mashed his brains. Potato... mashed... get it? (*No one does.*) Never mind.

FIN: What I need is a story. I can't marry the fair Pegeen until I can tell her mother a story.

BLATHER: So what's to stop you?

FIN: I don't know any. I don't even know how to tell a story.

BLARNEY: And you're sure you don't want our gold?

FIN: I'm sure.

BALDERDASH: No one has ever turned down our gold before.

FIN: Pegeen's mother says that a story is a treasure that grows and becomes more valuable every time you share it.

BLATHER: She's right.

BLARNEY: A story is worth more than gold.

BALDERDASH: And easier to collect than potatoes, if you know where to look.

FIN: Can you help me find one?

BLATHER: Well, I don't know. Let me check with my fellows. (*They huddle and whisper. He looks up at FIN, then ducks his head back in. BLARNEY does the same. FIN waits. BALDERDASH pokes his head up, sees FIN, throws the potato at him.*)

BLATHER/BLARNEY/BALDERDASH: (*Turns to FIN, together.*) We'll do it.

FIN: Do what?

BLATHER: We'll teach you how to tell a story.

FIN: You will?

BLARNEY: So you can win the fair Peg's hand.

BALDERDASH: And stop chucking potatoes this way and that.

FIN: (*Moves RIGHT, shakes their hands.*) Oh, thank you. You are the kindest leprechauns in all the land of Ire, to be sure.

BLARNEY: (*Leads FIN to the stump.*) Don't mention it.

FIN: Don't mention it?

BLATHER: Don't mention it.

BALDERDASH: Mum's the word. We don't want anyone to know we occasionally do a good deed or two.

FIN: Your secret is safe with me. How do we begin?

End of Scene One

Scene Two

BLATHER: First, we need a protagonist. (*Claps his hands. LUSMORE ENTERS RIGHT, stands DOWN RIGHT. He is wearing a straw hat.*) The protagonist is like a hero. He must face danger, pass a test or win his heart's desire. (*LUSMORE smiles.*)

FIN: I see.

BLARNEY: Next, we need an antagonist. (*Claps his hands. MADDEN ENTERS LEFT, stands DOWN LEFT.*) Sometimes the antagonist is a villain, who stands in the protagonist's way. Or sometimes he shows what happens to those who are not up to the challenge. (*MADDEN frowns.*)

FIN: And what's next?

BALDERDASH: A situation.

FIN: A situation?

BLATHER: A challenge to overcome! (*LUSMORE and MADDEN strike heroic poses.*)

BLARNEY: A quest to undertake! (*LUSMORE and MADDEN strike new poses.*)

BALDERDASH: A hump on your back! (*LUSMORE and MADDEN bend over.*)

BLATHER: (*Puzzled.*) A hump?

BLARNEY: Did you say a hump on your back?

BLATHER: Let's try that again. A daring rescue! (*LUSMORE and MADDEN pose.*)

BLARNEY: Risking life and limb! (*More poses.*)

BALDERDASH: A hump on your back! (*LUSMORE and MADDEN stoop over.*)

BLATHER: (*To BLARNEY.*) Do you have any idea what he is talking about? (*FIN sits on stump, confused.*)

BLARNEY: (*To BLATHER.*) It could be only one story, and one story alone, I'm thinking.

BLATHER/BLARNEY/BALDERDASH: (*Together.*) "The Hunchback of Knockgraffon"! (*[NOTE: Every time someone says "Knockgraffon," EVERYONE "knocks" themselves on the head with the knuckles of one hand.] They clap their hands. From behind the bush pop THREE LEPRECHAUNS. They take their places, with LEPRECHAUN ONE crossing DOWN RIGHT, LEPRECHAUN TWO UP RIGHT and LEPRECHAUN THREE DOWN LEFT. LEPRECHAUN ONE carries a "hump." [See PRODUCTION NOTES.]*)



LEPRECHAUN ONE: *(Stands DOWN RIGHT beside LUSMORE. Narrates.)* There once was a man, a gentle man of Knockgrafton, and a kinder soul you never did see. No one knew his real name because he was terribly shy, you see, on account of the great hump on his back. *(Affixes the hump to LUSMORE'S shoulder. LEPRECHAUN THREE gestures for MADDEN to leave. MADDEN scowls, EXITS LEFT.)*

LEPRECHAUN TWO: *(Crosses to LUSMORE and leads him in a large counterclockwise circle. Stops UP RIGHT, but LUSMORE continues to hobble around in the circle, ending at the bush.)* Everyone called him Lusmore because he always wore a sprig of the fairy cap, called lusmore or foxglove, in his little straw hat. Lusmore was known as the finest basket maker in all of Knockgrafton, skillfully plaiting straw and rushes into hats and baskets. He sold these handy items, and that is how the solitary soul made his livelihood.

LEPRECHAUN THREE: One evening, Lusmore was late in his selling and walking very slowly, on account of his hump. He decided at last to rest for a while by the legendary moat of Knockgrafton. *(LUSMORE walks hunched over, bangs his head on the cutout bush and sits in front of the bush. Removes his hat and rubs his head.)*

LUSMORE: I believe that I will rest myself a while, here by the legendary moat of Knockgrafton. Tired and weary am I, and lonely as can be. If only I could find a friend or two, who could look upon me without recoiling in horror, I'd be the happiest hunchback in all Knockgrafton!

LEPRECHAUN ONE: Presently, Lusmore heard a sweet, delicate, unearthly melody, the like of which he had never heard before. It was the sound of many tiny voices, all singing together.

LITTLE PEOPLE'S VOICES: *(OFFSTAGE. Sing.)* Applesauce, butter brickle, applesauce, butter brickle, applesauce, butter brickle. Hum hum hum hum hum hum hum hum. *(See PRODUCTION NOTES.)*

LEPRECHAUN TWO: Poor Lusmore could hardly believe his ears. He knew at once it must be the little people, the fairies and elves that were known to haunt the legendary moat of Knockgrafton.

LEPRECHAUN THREE: His first thought was to flee immediately. After all, more than one Irish fellow has been made a fool by the whimsical pranks of the little people.

LEPRECHAUN ONE: But before he could raise his weary self to run, a great multitude of little people swarmed about, forming a fairy circle and singing their strange, beautiful song. *(LITTLE PEOPLE ENTER UP CENTER from behind bush, laughing and giggling. The effect is like a crowd of circus clowns exiting a tiny car. Skipping,*

holding hands and reciting the silly song, they form a large circle around LUSMORE and move counterclockwise. [NOTE: if there is no convenient entrance UP CENTER by which the LITTLE PEOPLE may ENTER, they may SWARM IN LEFT and RIGHT.]

LITTLE PEOPLE: *(Sing.) Applesauce, butter brickle, applesauce, butter brickle, applesauce, butter brickle. Hum hum hum hum hum hum hum hum. (The LITTLEST LITTLE PERSON runs along the outside of the circle. Unable to find a way in, she/he sticks her/his foot out, causing the LITTLE PEOPLE to fall like dominoes in a circle. They laugh and pick themselves up.)*

LEPRECHAUN TWO: Lusmore was enchanted by the song. He held his breath so he might not lose the slightest note. And then the fairies sang the heavenly ditty again.

LITTLE PEOPLE: *(They form their circle, hold hands and skip clockwise. Sing.) Applesauce, butter brickle, applesauce, butter brickle, applesauce, butter brickle. (They turn out, away from center, put their index fingers to their lips and look confused.) Hum hum hum hum hum hum hum hum.*

LEPRECHAUN THREE: This time, Lusmore noticed that part of the song was missing. Without even realizing what he was doing, the hunchback of Knockgrifton joined in. *(LITTLE PEOPLE prepare to skip in a counterclockwise circle. BLATHER, BLARNEY, BALDERDASH, LEPRECHAUN ONE, LEPRECHAUN TWO and LEPRECHAUN THREE join the circle. LUSMORE clumsily dances around the inside of the circle, going clockwise and singing along. FIN watches from the stump as the story takes on a life of its own.)*

LITTLE PEOPLE/LUSMORE: *(Sing.) Applesauce, butter brickle, applesauce, butter brickle, applesauce, butter brickle... (The LITTLE PEOPLE turn out, put their index fingers to their lips.)*

LUSMORE: *(Shouts.) Boiled potato and a pickle! (LITTLE PEOPLE stop, pause for a count of three, then as one, turn in to stare at LUSMORE, who stands at the center of the circle. LUSMORE notices that the LITTLE PEOPLE are watching him.) Hello.*

LITTLE PERSON ONE: What did you say? *(The LITTLE PEOPLE gradually form an open circle around LUSMORE, effectively surrounding him but leaving the front open for the AUDIENCE. They give him menacing looks. LUSMORE becomes increasingly nervous. The following LITTLE PERSON lines may be split up amongst as many ACTORS as necessary.)*

LUSMORE: I said "hello."

LITTLE PERSON TWO: No, before that.

LUSMORE: Before that?

LITTLE PERSON THREE: That's right. Before you said "hello."

LUSMORE: Uh, I don't think I said anything. Did I?

LITTLE PERSON FOUR: We think perhaps you did.

LUSMORE: I'm really terribly sorry if I interrupted your singing and dancing. It's just that I've never heard anything so beautiful in all my poor, lonely life.

LITTLE PERSON ONE: Don't try to explain yourself.

LITTLE PERSON TWO: We want to know what you said.

LITTLE PERSON THREE: Right before you said "hello."

LITTLE PERSON FOUR: And you had better tell us!

LUSMORE: I'm not sure that I can remember.

LITTLE PERSON ONE: Can't remember?

LITTLE PERSON TWO: Can't remember what you said?

LUSMORE: *(Tries to ease out of the half circle of LITTLE PEOPLE.)*
Well, let's see. You were singing something about applesauce and butter brickle... *(Prepares to run for his life. The LITTLE PEOPLE don't let him.)*

LITTLE PERSON THREE: We know what we were singing.

LITTLE PERSON FOUR: We want to know what you were singing.

LUSMORE: Uhh...

LITTLE PERSON ONE: Maybe we can jog your memory a little. *(To OTHERS.)* Hit it! *(LUSMORE ducks.)*

LITTLE PEOPLE: *(Form their circle and skip clockwise, chanting.)*
Applesauce, butter brickle, applesauce, butter brickle, applesauce, butter brickle... *(They spin around and look at LUSMORE expectantly.)*

LUSMORE: Oh, now I remember! *(Sings.)* Boiled potato and a pickle!
(LITTLE PEOPLE remain silent for a moment.)

LITTLE PERSON TWO: Boiled potato?

LITTLE PERSON THREE: And a pickle?

LITTLE PERSON FOUR: Boiled potato and a pickle?

LUSMORE: I'm sorry. It just popped out. *(Pause as LUSMORE anxiously searches their faces.)*

LITTLE PEOPLE: We love it! *(ALL cheer and dance around LUSMORE, who is relieved but still a little insecure.)*

LITTLE PERSON ONE: We've been stuck singing the same thing for a hundred years!

LITTLE PERSON TWO: We couldn't think of a way to finish the song.

LITTLE PERSON THREE: You can't imagine how frustrating it is to hum "hum hum hum hum hum hum hum hum" over and over again.

LITTLE PERSON FOUR: For an entire century!

LITTLE PEOPLE: It's enough to make a little person go out of his little mind!

LITTLE PERSON ONE: But you have saved us.

LITTLE PERSON TWO: You finished our song.

LITTLE PERSON THREE: We are so grateful.

LUSMORE: *(Feels a bit shy.)* Oh, it was nothing, really.

LITTLE PERSON ONE: Nothing?

LITTLE PERSON TWO: You think saving our sanity is nothing?

LUSMORE: *(Frightened.)* Please don't hurt me. I only wanted to fit in. I don't have any friends, you see, and you seemed to be having so much fun.

LITTLE PERSON ONE: Don't try to talk your way out of this one, Hunchback of Knockgraston.

LUSMORE: You know who I am?

LITTLE PERSON TWO: Of course! The water nymphs have told us how hard it is for you to gather reeds and rushes by the river.

LITTLE PEOPLE: *(Together.)* On account of that hump on your back.

LITTLE PERSON FOUR: And the fairies of the field have told us about the fine quality hats and baskets you weave, stooped over so.

LITTLE PEOPLE: On account of that hump on your back.

LITTLE PERSON ONE: And the village gremlins tell us that you have no friends at all.

LITTLE PEOPLE: On account of that hump on your back.

LITTLE PERSON FOUR: You have proven your worthiness by helping us with our song.

LITTLE PERSON ONE: You gave us a boiled potato.

LITTLE PERSON TWO: And a pickle!

LITTLE PERSON THREE: We were going to give you a reward.

LITTLE PERSON FOUR: Treasure beyond your wildest dreams!

LITTLE PERSON THREE: But then you said that "it was nothing."



LITTLE PERSON ONE: As if a boiled potato is nothing.

LITTLE PERSON TWO: As if a pickle is nothing.

LITTLE PERSON FOUR: So if what you gave us is nothing, perhaps that's what we should give you!

LUSMORE: I suppose that's all I deserve.

LITTLE PERSON ONE: All right, then. We are agreed. So now we are going to give you nothing.

LITTLE PERSON TWO: We give you nothing to hurt when you gather your reeds and rushes by the river.

LITTLE PERSON THREE: We give you nothing to hinder your labors as you work.

LITTLE PERSON FOUR: We give you nothing to keep you from making friends.

LITTLE PEOPLE: We'll give you nothing on your back! *(They remove the hump. LUSMORE stands, stretches.)*

LITTLE PERSON ONE: What do you think?

LITTLE PERSON TWO: Do you like our gift?

LITTLE PERSON THREE: If you don't like it we can always return it!

LUSMORE: *(Smiles.)* My friends, it is the greatest "nothing" I have ever received. *(ALL cheer and dance. One by one, the LITTLE PEOPLE congratulate him and disappear behind the bush [Or EXIT LEFT and RIGHT], leaving him CENTER.)*

LITTLE PEOPLE: Applesauce, butter brickle, applesauce, butter brickle, applesauce, butter brickle, boiled potato and a pickle! Hee hee hee. *(They are OFF. LEPRECHAUN ONE, LEPRECHAUN TWO and LEPRECHAUN THREE remain and go to their places DOWN RIGHT, UP RIGHT and DOWN LEFT, respectively. BLATHER, BLARNEY and BALDERDASH move to stump and FIN.)*

LEPRECHAUN ONE: *(Steps DOWN RIGHT with BLARNEY and BALDERDASH.)* And so word spread throughout the town and the villages beyond about Lusmore's fateful encounter with the little people.

LEPRECHAUN TWO: Lusmore lived happily ever after, and wherever he went, whether to the river to collect reeds and rushes, or at work weaving his baskets and hats, or when greeting his new friends in the town of Knockgrifton, he always had a song in his heart and on his lips.

LUSMORE: *(Skips in a clockwise circle and EXITS RIGHT.)* Applesauce, butter brickle, applesauce, butter brickle, applesauce, butter brickle— *(He's OFF.)*

FIN: (*Jumps up.*) Boiled potato and a pickle! Oh, that story was a marvel. Never have I seen or heard the like.

BALDERDASH: It's not finished.

FIN: The story isn't over? But Lusmore lived happily ever after.

BLATHER: Ah, but this is an Irish fairy tale.

BLARNEY: And Irish fairy tales always have a bit of a dark twist to them.

FIN: I didn't know.

BALDERDASH: Now you do. So sit down, and let us finish. (*FIN does.*)

LEPRECHAUN THREE: Meanwhile, in the nearby county of Waterford, there was another hunchback, a peevish and cunning creature, as different from Lusmore as the night is from the day. His name was Madden. (*MADDEN ENTERS LEFT. He has a hump on his back. [Optional: MADDEN may carry a butterfly net.]*)

LEPRECHAUN ONE: Hearing about the good-natured Lusmore's remarkable adventure with the little people, the foul-spirited Madden developed a plan. And a wicked plan it was, too.

MADDEN: Seeing as how these little people are in the hump-removing business, I think that I shall visit the legendary moat of Knockgrifton and win them over, as Lusmore did. I'll capture a handful of them, and force them to remove my hump. Then, I'll keep a few of them to use as I please. The people of Waterford would pay a pretty penny to have their ills and ailments eased by the wee magical people of Ireland. I'll be rich!

LEPRECHAUN TWO: So Madden went to the legendary moat of Knockgrifton, and waited for his chance to make his fortune. (*MADDEN sits in front of the bush.*) As the sun began to set, he heard the silliest song in the world, rising up from the moat.

LITTLE PEOPLE'S VOICES: (*OFFSTAGE. Sing.*) Applesauce, butter brickle, applesauce, butter brickle, applesauce, butter brickle, boiled potato and a pickle.

MADDEN: Here they come. (*LITTLE PEOPLE ENTER from behind bush as before. BLATHER, BLARNEY, BALDERDASH, LEPRECHAUN ONE, LEPRECHAUN TWO and LEPRECHAUN THREE join them. They form the fairy circle and begin to skip and chant.*)

LITTLE PEOPLE: Applesauce, butter brickle, applesauce, butter brickle, applesauce, butter brickle, boiled potato and a pickle.

MADDEN: (*Stands. Sings.*) And a big, greasy sausage! (*LITTLE PEOPLE stop.*)

LITTLE PERSON ONE: What did you say?

MADDEN: I said a big, greasy sausage.

LITTLE PERSON TWO: You interrupted our song.

MADDEN: No, I didn't.

LITTLE PERSON THREE: We were singing our applesauce song.

LITTLE PERSON FOUR: And you stuck a big, greasy sausage in the middle of it.

MADDEN: I was helping you.

LITTLE PERSON ONE: But what if we don't want a big, greasy sausage?

MADDEN: I gave it to you anyway.

LITTLE PERSON TWO: Well, we can see that.

MADDEN: So now you need to give me something in return.

LITTLE PERSON THREE: We do?

MADDEN: I know how it goes. I add something to your song, and then you use your magic to give something to me. (*Points to the hump on his back.*)

LITTLE PERSON FOUR: Oh, so that's how it works, is it? Well, perhaps we can oblige you.

LITTLE PERSON ONE: Yes.

MADDEN: You're going to fix my back?

LITTLE PERSON TWO: Oh, yes.

MADDEN: You'll make both my shoulders look the same?

LITTLE PERSON THREE: If that's what you want.

MADDEN: You're not going to argue or fight with me?

LITTLE PERSON FOUR: No.

MADDEN: All right, then, do your magic thing.

LITTLE PERSON ONE: You insist?

MADDEN: Let me have it!

LITTLE PEOPLE: (*Circle around him.*) Jack Madden! Jack Madden!
We know all about you.

LITTLE PERSON ONE: We know about how you are rude to your mother.

LITTLE PERSON TWO: We know about how you hunger for gold.

LITTLE PERSON THREE: We know of your plan to kidnap our brothers.

LITTLE PERSON FOUR: Our magic may never be purchased or sold.

LITTLE PERSON ONE: And now to reward you for being so rotten...

LITTLE PERSON TWO: There's something that we have been meaning to do.

LITTLE PERSON THREE: Instead of that one hump you've rightfully gotten...

LITTLE PERSON FOUR: We're going to add one more, so now you'll have two! (*A LITTLE PERSON reaches behind bush, takes out LUSMORE'S hump, and sticks it on MADDEN'S other shoulder.*)

MADDEN: No! No! It's not fair! I gave you a big greasy sausage!

LITTLE PERSON ONE: Run away, Jack Madden, or we'll put a big greasy sausage on the end of your nose! (*LITTLE PEOPLE spin MADDEN around and send him OFF LEFT. [Optional: The LITTLE PEOPLE put the butterfly net on MADDEN'S head, spin him around and send him OFF LEFT.]*)

LITTEST LITTLE PERSON: (*Crosses DOWN CENTER. To AUDIENCE.*) That'll teach him to mess around with little people. (*ALL laugh, dance and sing as they EXIT behind the bush or LEFT and RIGHT.*) Applesauce, butter brickle, applesauce, butter brickle, applesauce, butter brickle, boiled potato and a pickle. (*LEPRECHAUN ONE, LEPRECHAUN TWO and LEPRECHAUN THREE EXIT with LITTLE PEOPLE. BLATHER, BLARNEY and BALDERDASH remain and cross to stump where FIN stands, applauding.*)

End of Scene Two

Scene Three

BLATHER: And that is the story of "The Hunchback of Knockgrafton."

BLARNEY: What do you think?

FIN: What do I think? I think that was wonderful!

BALDERDASH: So now you know how to tell a story, and you can win the fair Pegeen's hand.

FIN: (*Crosses LEFT. BLATHER, BLARNEY and BALDERDASH follow him LEFT.*) But I could never tell a story like that.

BLARNEY: Why not?

FIN: I just couldn't. I wouldn't know where to begin.

BLATHER: We explained all that. You need a protagonist. A hero.

BLARNEY: And an antagonist. A villain or a monster.

BALDERDASH: And a griffin's feather.

FIN: A griffin's feather? I thought I needed a situation, a challenge or a quest.

BLATHER: Ah, so you have been paying attention.



FIN: I think I'm catching on. But I'm not yet ready to make up a story. It's not that easy.

BALDERDASH: Easier than getting a griffin's feather.

FIN: Don't tell me—you know a story about a hero who needs to find a griffin's feather?

BLARNEY: We're not going to tell you.

FIN: Why not?

BLATHER: Because you told us not to.

FIN: Oh.

BALDERDASH: I want to tell the story.

BLARNEY: Not if he doesn't want to hear it.

FIN: I didn't say I didn't want to hear it.

BALDERDASH: *(Pouts.)* It's a good story.

FIN: I do want to hear it.

BLATHER: Then you shouldn't have said you didn't.

FIN: I didn't! I mean I did, but I didn't mean it.

BLARNEY: But now you do?

FIN: Yes.

BLATHER: You do mean it that you don't want to hear the story?

FIN: No!

BALDERDASH: I want to tell the story.

BLARNEY: But he doesn't want to hear it.

FIN: Hush, now! I do want to hear the story. I'm longing to hear the story. I'm dying to hear the story. Now stop interrupting, and let him tell the story! *(Pause.)*

BLATHER: You're sure?

FIN: Tell the story! *(Pause.)* What was it about again?

BALDERDASH: It's called "The Griffin's Feather." *(BLATHER, BLARNEY and BALDERDASH clap their hands. LANDOWNER ENTERS LEFT, followed by LANDOWNER'S WIFE and DAUGHTER. They pose as the picture of a perfect family.)*

LANDOWNER: *(Narrates.)* There once was a very wealthy landowner, who had plenty of wealth and plenty of land. In fact, he had plenty of everything, except for family. His wife was dead ...

LANDOWNER'S WIFE: Urk! *(She "dies" and drops to the floor. SUITORS ENTER RIGHT and drag her OFF RIGHT.)*

DAUGHTER: And there was only the one daughter. (To LANDOWNER.) Hello, Father.

LANDOWNER: Hello, Daughter. (Narrates.) The landowner thought the world of his daughter, and he thought the sun, moon and stars of her, too. (To DAUGHTER.) It's a whole galaxy I'm thinking of you, darlin', from a long time ago and far, far away.

DAUGHTER: How sweet. But you know, of course, dear father, that some day I must marry and go off to live with another.

LANDOWNER: (Narrates.) The landowner didn't like that idea very much, for it would mean that he would be alone, and to be wealthy and have plenty of land but no one to share it with is a sad, hard thing to ponder.

DAUGHTER: (Narrates. As she speaks, SUITORS ENTER RIGHT in single file, march up to her one by one, give her a flower, receive a smile and are summarily rejected by LANDOWNER. BLATHER, BLARNEY and BALDERDASH lead FIN into the line of SUITORS, helping him participate in the story. Each time a SUITOR steps up, her expectations and hopes rise. As each one is sent OFF RIGHT, she sinks down in discouragement and disappointment. BALDERDASH is the last to join the line and offers her a feather duster.) One by one, young gentlemen would come to pay their respects, and one by one, the daughter hoped that each might be the man to free her from the cares of a wealthy and landowning life. But one by one, the wealthy landowner sent them all away. (Sighs as the last SUITOR EXITS.)

LANDOWNER: You are a wealthy landowner's daughter. None of these men are worthy of you. I guess you'll just have to stay with me until you're old and gray.

DAUGHTER: (Narrates.) But the daughter's heart was broken, and as her hopes were dashed, she found that she became very weak. (SUITORS, including BLATHER, BLARNEY, BALDERDASH and FIN rush ON RIGHT to catch her before she falls over. They line up on either side of her. When she stumbles LEFT, they move LEFT, holding up their hands as if to catch her. When she stumbles RIGHT, they move RIGHT. During the next few lines, FIN wanders back over to the stump to watch.) She had become so weak, she could hardly stand. She thought that she might swoon at any moment. The world spun about and she became dizzy. Her breath came in short, shallow gasps. She began to hyperventilate. Little black spots began to swim in front of her eyes. There was a roaring sound in her ears. Her palms felt clammy and her knees wobbled. She began to feel nauseated...

LANDOWNER: (Impatient.) All right, we get the idea.

DAUGHTER: *(Narrates, moving DOWN RIGHT toward stump.)* At the lonely and wretched prospect of living a wretched, lonely, lonely, wretched, lonely, lonely, wretched, wretched life, her soul at last could take no more, and she fell into a deep sleep... *(Swoons onto FIN'S lap, then suddenly wakes up.)* from which no one could awaken her. *(Falls asleep again. FIN pushes her off his lap. She falls to the floor. Several SUITORS EXIT RIGHT, then RE-ENTER, bringing on a low, rolling platform.)*

LANDOWNER: *(Looking down at her.)* This is unseemly. You are a wealthy landowner's daughter, for crying out loud. *(SUITORS, including BLATHER, BLARNEY and BALDERDASH, roll DAUGHTER onto the rolling platform. Eyes closed and clutching her bouquet of flowers, she lies on the "bier" as the SUITORS roll her UP CENTER. He follows. SUITORS EXIT LEFT and RIGHT. Narrates.)* Unable to wake her, the wealthy landowner took her home and as he cared for her and the weeks and months passed, still she did not awaken. *(To DAUGHTER.)* Wake up! *(To AUDIENCE.)* See what I mean? *(Steps over her, crosses DOWN CENTER. Narrates.)* The wealthy landowner summoned all the doctors in Ireland... *(SUITORS ENTER LEFT and RIGHT, taking up positions on either side of the platform. BLATHER, BLARNEY and BALDERDASH signal for FIN to join them. He does.)* ... but they could do nothing for her.

SUITORS: There's nothing we can do for her. *(They EXIT LEFT and RIGHT. FIN tries to go back to the stump, but BLATHER, BLARNEY and BALDERDASH push him OFF LEFT, protesting.)*

FIN: No! I want to watch! *(He finally gives in and EXITS LEFT, pulled OFF by BLATHER, BLARNEY and BALDERDASH.)*

LANDOWNER: *(Narrates.)* At last the landowner realized that without his daughter, his wealth and land meant nothing at all. *(Crosses to stump. To himself.)* Oh, wither away, a wretched, lonely man am I. Lonely and wretched. *(Pauses.)* And lonely.

GRIFFIN'S WIFE: *(ENTERS RIGHT. Narrates.)* One day, a strange and mysterious woman visited the landowner, claiming to know how to cure the daughter's mysterious ailment. *(To LANDOWNER.)* What this girl needs are three griffin feathers, freshly plucked from a griffin's tail. I just happen to know that the only griffin in the county lives far away and on the other side of the river. *(Points LEFT.)*

LANDOWNER: That's good news. Tell me, how much would it cost to buy these feathers? I'm a wealthy landowner, you know.

GRIFFIN'S WIFE: The feathers are not for sale. They must be plucked directly from the griffin's tail by the hand of a heroic lad, strong and true.

LANDOWNER: But where am I to find such a man?

GRIFFIN'S WIFE: Ask around.

LANDOWNER: *(Narrates.)* And so he did. *(SUITORS, including AIDAN, FIN, BLATHER, BLARNEY and BALDERDASH, ENTER LEFT, single file, marching in military style. FIN is more enthusiastic about playing a role in the story.)*

SUITORS: Hut, hut, hut hut. *(BALDERDASH, who brings up the rear, fails to stop in time and causes a chain reaction of collisions along the line. They all salute.)*

BALDERDASH: *(Hits his forehead with his hand a little too hard.)* Ow.

LANDOWNER: *(Walking up and down the line of SUITORS like an officer inspecting the troops.)* I'm looking for a heroic lad, strong and true, to go to the other side of the county and pluck three feathers from a griffin's tail. Is anyone interested?

SUITORS: *(Step forward. AIDAN is one step behind the others, as he is distracted looking at the DAUGHTER. He steps forward and says the line just a bit late.)* Sir! No, sir! *(They step back.)*

LANDOWNER: But I need the feathers to cure my lonely and wretched daughter, over there. I'll tell you what. If any of you can fetch the feathers and heal my daughter, he can have half my lands and wealth. So what do you say now?

SUITORS: *(Step forward. Again, delayed reaction from AIDAN.)* Sir! No, sir! *(They step back.)*

LANDOWNER: Why not?

SUITORS: Because we know what a griffin is, sir!

LANDOWNER: Oh. Well, I don't. *(To GRIFFIN'S WIFE.)* What is a griffin, anyhow?

GRIFFIN'S WIFE: *(Stands on stump. As she speaks, LANDOWNER and SUITORS gather around DOWN RIGHT, leaving DAUGHTER asleep on the platform UP CENTER. They become more and more frightened as she describes the GRIFFIN. GRIFFIN ENTERS LEFT, unseen by ALL ON STAGE. GRIFFIN moves closer and closer to the CROWD, miming the actions as she describes them.)* Not all griffins are the same, but an Irish griffin is a monstrous creature with the head of a man, the wings and tail of an eagle and the body and legs of a lion. The griffin is a ferocious fighter with talons for hands and claws on his feet. He prowls the countryside, plundering and pillaging the farmlands. He can tear trees out of the ground by their roots and snap the backs of oxen with a single blow. And he's so stubborn, he'll never, ever take out the garbage, no matter how many times you ask



PRODUCTION NOTES

PROPERTIES

BROUGHT ON, Scene One: Stuffed lamb (FIN); potato (MOTHER).

BROUGHT ON, Scene Two: Removable hump (LEPRECHAUN ONE); optional: butterfly net (MADDEN).

BROUGHT ON, Scene Three: Fake flowers, low platform on casters (SUITORS); feather duster (BALDERDASH); mugs; cutout poster board signs shaped like “thought bubbles” from a comic strip, that say, “Uh oh.” “Not a good idea.” “Get me out of here!” “I can’t swim.” “SOS” or “Help!” “Is there a psychiatrist in the house?” “Is there a policeman in the house?” and “Mommy!” (IRISHMEN); handkerchief (INNKEEPER’S DAUGHTER); lockbox, mallet, bag of gold (FARMER); rowboat with oars (BOATMAN); poster of trees (MOLLY); poster of oxen (MARTHA); lock of hair (INNKEEPER); bag of garbage (GRIFFIN).

BROUGHT ON, Scene Four: Fiddle with bow or Celtic harp may be cutout from foam board (CRICKET); handkerchief, sliced potato (MOTHER); coins, two stools (VILLAGERS); bag of gold (PRINCE BRIAN).

BROUGHT ON, Scene Five: Handkerchief (COLM).

SOUND AND MUSIC

Begin and end the show with traditional Irish music. A variety of Irish and Celtic CDs are available at any music store or library.

The LITTLE PEOPLE’S applesauce song has no set melody, only a rhythm. Feel free to invent a melody, or chant the “song.”

The reel or jig: A reel is easiest for amateurs to learn, because it uses a 4/8 time and involves group movement similar to square dancing. A jig is trickier, because it is in 6/8 time. If no one involved in the production knows anything about Irish step dancing, check your local library for a video. There are several excellent performance tapes (like “Riverdance,” “Lord of the Dance” and others), and even a few educational videos available. The best is “Celtic Feet: Irish Dancing Step by Step with Colin Dunne, Star of Riverdance,” published in 1995 by Wienerworld Limited and distributed by Acorn Media in Bethesda, MD.

Whatever music you decide to use, please respect copyright law, as many of the new recordings are original and are copyrighted. It is the responsibility of the director to make sure that appropriate permissions are secured for any music used in the production. Please contact the U.S. Copyright Office 101 Independence Ave. S.E., Washington, D.C.

20559-6000, phone (202) 707-3000, internet: www.copyright.gov for further information.

Crashing sound comes from backstage. It may be a taped sound effect, or use a “crash box,” a sealed wooden box with metal objects inside that can be shaken or dropped to create the effect “live.”

FLEXIBLE CASTING

Blather, Blarney and Balderdash is an ensemble show, with many opportunities for even the least experienced actors to shine. Doubling of parts is recommended, unless you have a very large cast. Most of the “crowd scenes” involving the LITTLE PEOPLE, SUITORS, IRISHMEN and VILLAGERS require at least four actors. If you have a large cast, distribute the individual lines fairly amongst them. Also, encourage the actors to invent a unique name and personality for their character. Actors can emerge from the ensemble to take on any of the larger speaking roles.

The following roles can be played by either male or female actors: BLATHER, BLARNEY, BALDERDASH, LEPRECHAUNS, LITTLE PEOPLE, LANDOWNER; INNKEEPER, IRISHMEN, STRANGER, CRICKET, MOUSE, BIRD, QUEEN/KING, VILLAGERS. If the LANDOWNER and/or INNKEEPER are played as females, simply change any relevant lines (as well as spouses) to reflect the appropriate gender.

COSTUMES

All of the actors wear simple clothes reminiscent of rural Ireland (ie, Henley or collared shirts, vests or jackets, corded trousers, work boots and caps for the men, dresses with aprons for the women.) Accessories may then be added to suggest individual characters as follows:

FIN O’GRADY: Fleece vest.

COLM FLAHERTY: Handkerchief sticking out of back pocket.

BLATHER/BLARNEY/BALDERDASH: Colorful vests, pointy ears (optional), funny facial hair, fancy hats (BALDERDASH could wear a beanie with propeller).

LUSMORE: Basic dress, straw hat, hump (the hump must be removable; a pillow, covered to match his coat, may be attached with Velcro).

MADDEN: Hump (padding added to jacket); Velcro backing on other shoulder so second hump can be attached.

LITTLE PEOPLE: Males can be elves, females can be fairies. May have pointy ears, pointy shoes and/or wings, but these are not required. In the original production, they wore brightly colored vests, scarves or aprons to contrast with the homespun, earth tone colors of the “mortals.”

LANDOWNER: Cutaway coat to indicate wealth and position.

DAUGHTER: Dress that indicates that her father is wealthy.

GRIFFIN: Combination of a lion costume and an eagle costume. Furry or fleece pants, white hooded sweat shirt with felt feathers attached and with strip of fabric hanging down to back of knees for “tail.” Slippers or socks and cotton gloves with felt “claws” or “talons” hot glued on.

BOATMAN: Rain slicker and rain hat.

COW: Udder added to spotted sweat suit, horns attached to headband.

STRANGER: A colorful vest and a fancy hat.

CRICKET: Antennae, black cutaway coat, black pants.

MOUSE: Hood with mouse ears, long tail.

BIRD: Hooded sweat shirt with felt feathers attached, baseball cap under the hood to suggest “beak.”

QUEEN (or KING): Beautiful dress or robe with cape, crown.

PRINCE BRIAN: Fancy jacket and pants, medallion, crown.

ACCENTS

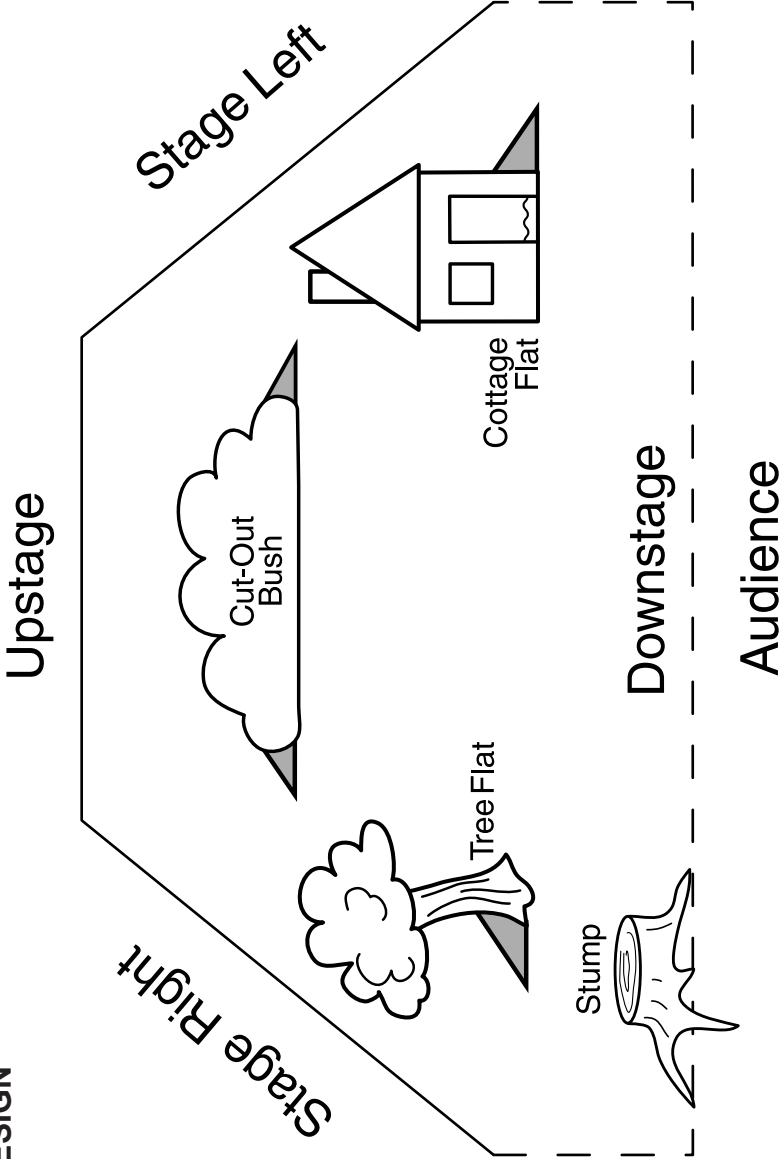
It is not necessary or even advisable to try to use Irish accents in the production of this play. Irish phrases and syntax permeate the dialogue, giving the play its distinctive flavor. Some actors may wish to use an accent, but inconsistent use of a dialect throughout the cast can be very distracting for an audience. Directors should follow this rule: if the use of a dialect interferes with the clear communication of the words, ideas or relationships, it should be avoided.

NOTE ON THE ROWBOAT

The boat can easily be made from a large cardboard box, painted to look like a boat. A cardboard bow can be added to the front. Cardboard oars can be attached through slots in the sides. Let strips of blue crepe paper hang down from the box to represent “water.” The box should be large enough for a “passenger” to climb in, but a tight enough fit to make AIDAN uncomfortable by BOATMAN’S proximity. BOATMAN “wears” the boat by pulling straps, which are attached to the sides, over his shoulders.



SET DESIGN



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