

Monologue Mania!

Scheherazade

By Susan Pargman

Male / 40s-50s / 700 B.C.

About the play: Magic, mystery, revenge, and comedy mix together to produce this colorful legend of the greatest storyteller of the ancient Arabian world. Scheherazade is called upon to use her tale-spinning talents to save her people from certain destruction. Betrayed by his betrothed, the hot-tempered King Raynah decides to punish all the women in his kingdom. Armed only with her wit and just a smattering of magic, Scheherazade recites her stories for the king himself. Her enchanted tale transforms royal counselors into powerful genies and mutates the king into his own worst enemy: a woman. By the final curtain, the king has become a victim of his own revengeful plot!

About the scene: The Grand Vizier is the father of Scheherazade and her sister, Dinny. He takes care of them while maintaining his position as main advisor to King Raynah. It is known that the new wife to the King never lasts the night. He has them beheaded the very next day for he is displeased with them in some way. Scheherazade is determined that she can change the fate of these wives with her stories. Here, the Grand Vizier uses a story himself, hoping the parable will teach Scheherazade that it is a fool's errand to wed the King in hopes she can change him and keep herself alive. Originally told with three players, this monologue gives the actor a chance to switch between three different voices

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GRAND VIZIER:

I begin my tale with the greatest of pleasure. *(He bows.)* It is said, most wise and faithful Daughter, that once there was a prosperous and wealthy farmer who lived in the countryside and labored on his farm. This man owned a fine ox who was a strong and willing worker and a donkey. The wealthy farmer happened to know the secret of understanding the language of beasts. He overheard a conversation one day between these two humble barnyard animals.

(As the ox.) Oh, Watchful One...

CONTINUED on the NEXT PAGE>

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(continued)

Said the ox to the donkey.

(As the ox.) I hope that you are enjoying the service you are getting. Your ground is swept, they feed you sifted barley and offer you cool, fresh water to drink.

(As the donkey.) Yes, it is true.

Answered the fortunate donkey.

(As the ox.) On the contrary, I am taken out to plow the fields day and night, whipped and offered beans soiled with mud. Why am I not treated with kindness, as you are?

(As donkey.) It is because you exert and exhaust yourself to comfort others. Why don't you take a lesson from me? When they take you out in the field, kick with your hooves and butt with your head. Then when they offer you beans to eat, don't eat them. Just sniff at them and then turn away. If you do this, life will be better and kinder to you, and you will find relief.

All this conversation took place, Daughter, while the farmer listened and understood. On the following day he took the ox, placed the yoke upon his head and worked him at the plow. The ox followed the donkey's advice and kicked his hooves and butted with his head. When the farmer offered him beans, the ox only sniffed at them and turned away. So the farmer returned the ox to the stable. Instead of the ox, he placed the yoke on the head of the donkey. And forced him to work all day, plowing the fields until they were done.

That night, the donkey returned to the stable, tired and worn from plowing all day. The ox, who had been resting and chewing cud, invoked many blessings upon the donkey when he returned.

And you, my daughter, will likewise perish because of your miscalculation. Don't expose yourself to peril. I advise you out of compassion for you.