

# A TREE IN THE HOUSE



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*To all of our pets  
who do not understand why we "Stand-Ups"  
do what we do.*

A Tree in the House  
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"A Tree in the House" was performed by Mid-America Playwrights Theatre (MAP) in Springfield, IL, 2001.

**RUSTY:** Douglas McDonald

**CHIEF:** Pat Anderson

## A Tree in the House

**HOLIDAY.** Looking for a warm, fuzzy holiday play? This collection of three short plays definitely fits the bill! In “A Tree in the House,” an older dog explains to a puppy why his owners have brought a tree into the house and decorated it with chew toys. In “The Christmas Pickle Tradition,” zoo animals vote on whether the Prairie Chicken’s unusual Christmas ornament should be displayed on the Christmas tree. And in “Muletide Season,” a merry mule who calls himself the “Muletide King” tries to spread some muletide cheer by singing muletide carols and delivering a muletide log. These plays are easy to stage and are sure to charm audiences of all ages with their holiday cheer!

**Performance Time:** Approximately 30 minutes.

## A Tree in the House (2 flexible)

**RUSTY:** A lively puppy who wonders why his owners have brought a tree inside the house and decorated it with chew toys; flexible.

**CHIEF:** An older, worldly dog who knows all about Christmas trees; flexible.

**Note:** Actors wear dog costumes and stand on two legs.

## The Christmas Pickle Tradition (7 flexible)

**BADGER:** English badger who is wise and called upon to help decide whether the Prairie Chicken's ornament should be placed on the Christmas tree; flexible.

**GERMAN SHEPHERD:** A German Shepherd from Germany whose Christmas ornament is an apple; starts every sentence with a slight hop to attention; flexible.

**PANDA:** Forgetful Chinese panda whose Christmas ornament is a brightly colored paper chain; flexible.

**TARSIER:** Small monkey with a long tail and large eyes from Philippines whose Christmas ornament is a paról; flexible.

**PRAIRIE CHICKEN:** Loves her pickle Christmas tree ornament; flexible.

**KANGAROO:** Kangaroo from Australia whose Christmas ornament is a seashell; flexible.

**MOMONGA:** A small flying squirrel from Japan whose Christmas ornament is an origami swan; moves with quick movements; flexible.

## Muletide Season

(1 M, 3 flexible)

**MULE:** A mule who calls himself the “Muletide King” and likes to spread muletide cheer by singing muletide carols and delivering muletide logs; male.

**COW:** Christmas cow; flexible.

**GOAT:** Christmas goat; flexible.

**BOAR:** Christmas boar; flexible.

## Setting

**A Tree in the House:** A backyard.

**Muletide Season:** A Christmas manger display.

**The Christmas Pickle Tradition:** A zoo.

## Props

**Muletide Season:** Christmas tree, manger, log strapped to Mule's back.

**The Christmas Pickle Tradition:** Bare Christmas tree, apple, origami swan, 2 strands of brightly colored paper chains, seashell ornament, brightly colored paper star, pickle ornament.



"It had all those chew toys  
all over its branches.  
It was one of the most  
beautiful things  
I have ever seen."

—Rusty

## A Tree in the House

*(AT RISE: Rusty, a young pup, is connected to a leash that leads backstage. Chief, an older dog, roams free. Rusty starts to bark ferociously in a high-pitched bark. Chief enters slowly, sniffing around as he goes.)*

CHIEF: Quiet, Rusty. It's me!

RUSTY: Chief, Chief! It's you! I wasn't sure! But I'm glad it's you, Chief!

*(Rusty and Chief greet one another with some dog sniffs.)*

CHIEF: Settle down, there, Son. Just settle down.

RUSTY: I can't! I can't! It's so good to see you!

CHIEF: You just saw me yesterday.

RUSTY: What? That long ago? Hi, Chief! Hi, Chief! It's good to see you today!

CHIEF: How's the potty training going?

RUSTY: *(Sheepishly.)* I forgot this morning. *(Enthusiastically.)* But I am remembering more and more!

CHIEF: Are your Stand-Ups nice to you when you forget, or do they bring out that dreaded rolled-up newspaper?

RUSTY: Oh, they just pick me up and whisk me outside. The female Stand-Up keeps reminding me, and reminding me, and reminding me, and reminding me!

CHIEF: It'll get better, Rusty, it's only been two weeks.

RUSTY: I've been here only two weeks? Two weeks? Is that all? Feels like three months! But I do have great affection for my Stand-Ups! They're very nice. Very nice, indeed!

CHIEF: Do they feed you and take you for walks?

RUSTY: Every day! Every day I go out and smell the smells. I love to smell the smells. I play with this chew toy, too. It's round and they throw it.

CHIEF: It's a ball.

RUSTY: *(Pronouncing carefully.)* Ba-a-all.

CHIEF: You fetch the ball and bring it back to them.

RUSTY: What? What? Is that what I'm supposed to do with a ball? Bring it back to them? They yell at me when I pick up the ball, and I'm not sure what they are trying to say. I get so confused.

CHIEF: If you want those Stand-Ups to praise you wildly, just fetch the ball and bring it back to them.

RUSTY: I will, Chief! I will! I just love it when they praise me! They rub me all over, and say kind things to me, and they do this goofy thing with their mouth.

CHIEF: It's a smile. They're smiling at you.

RUSTY: A smile. It's a good thing, right, Chief?

CHIEF: A very good thing.

RUSTY: We can't smile, Chief. How come we can't smile?

CHIEF: Because we aren't Stand-Ups.

*(Rusty ponders this.)*

RUSTY: Makes sense.

CHIEF: How are those little Stand-Ups? Are they nice to you?

RUSTY: Oh, they're the sweetest things. They tug my tail, pinch my ears, and rub my belly all day long! They're the best! The best! But the big Stand-Ups did do a really weird thing last night.

CHIEF: Yeah? Like what? Move your dish to another spot? I hate that!

RUSTY: No, no! They brought a tree in the house.

CHIEF: *(With a loving sigh.)* A tree in the house. Is it that time of the year already?

RUSTY: What does that mean, Chief? What does that mean? They stood it up in the living room and got out these boxes of wonderful chew toys.

**[END OF FREEVIEW]**

"I vote that the Prairie Chicken's  
decoration does not go on the  
tree this year."

—Tarsier

## The Christmas Pickle Tradition

*(AT RISE: A zoo. All animals gather around a bare Christmas tree.)*

KANGAROO: Gather 'round! Gather 'round, all you animals!

MOMONGA: *(Indicating tree.)* Look! Look!

PANDA: The zookeeper put up the tree!

ALL: Ahhhhhhhhh!

MOMONGA: *(Clapping hands in rhythm.)* It's time! It's time!!

PANDA: *(Clapping hands in rhythm.)* It's time for what?

*(Animals make noises and push closer to the tree. Panda is confused.)*

KANGAROO: Settle down, everyone. Settle down. You will all get your turn.

TARSIER: What is everyone so excited about? It's just another Christmas tree.

GERMAN SHEPHERD: *(To Tarsier.)* A tree tradition that we started—us Germans—in Germany. We were the first to bring the—

KANGAROO: *(Ignoring him.)* As you may remember from a year ago—

GERMAN SHEPHERD: Seems like seven years ago to me.

KANGAROO: Yes, Mr. Sheppard, we understand your issue, but we all get to decorate the tree with our own special ornaments, remember?

PANDA: No.

KANGAROO: Could someone help Mr. Panda remember, please? *(Momonga whispers something into Panda's ear.)* We all have to decorate the tree together. Now, who wants to go first?

GERMAN SHEPHERD: Well, we know who's going to be last!

*(All laugh except Kangaroo and Prairie Chicken.)*

PRAIRIE CHICKEN: Hey, you're all laughing at me, aren't you?

GERMAN SHEPHERD: We all know you get to go last. Each year, you get to put your decoration on the tree last.

PRAIRIE CHICKEN: Well, that's my tradition.

PANDA: Oh, darn! What is a "tradition" again? I don't remember what that word means.

KANGAROO: A tradition is something that is passed on from generation to generation.

MOMONGA: It's a notion that we hold on to that we feel is important.

PANDA: Oh, oh, oh, I remember...sort of.

TARSIER: I vote that the Prairie Chicken's decoration does not go on the tree this year.

PRAIRIE CHICKEN: (*Angry.*) Hey, what's the big deal?!

GERMAN SHEPHERD: I agree. It's not very pretty, and it does not have a deep tradition like mine does.

PRAIRIE CHICKEN: It's just fun. It's a fun tradition.

MOMONGA: It's a cute, fun tradition. That would count, right? Right?

KANGAROO: Who is to say that one tradition is better than someone else's?

TARSIER: Get the Badger! The Badger will know what to do!

**[END OF FREEVIEW]**

"Hark! The herald angels sing,  
'Glory to the Muletide King!'"

—Mule

## Mule tide Season

*(AT RISE: Cow, Goat, and Boar are standing by a Christmas tree and manger.)*

COW: My friends, my friends. Thank you so very much for coming this year as we celebrate the start of our Christmas season. It's good to see you all again.

GOAT: Yes, Clara, it's good to see you.

BOAR: *(To Cow.)* And you, too, Gertie.

COW: Boris, I am glad you come back this year.

BOAR: It's good to be back. I'm ready to go.

COW: Each year, we gather in celebration and represent the animals that witnessed the birth of Christ on the very first Christmas, away in a manger.

GOAT: *(Proudly.)* My great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-grand goat was there.

BOAR: *(Proudly.)* Yes, mine, too!

COW: *(Proudly.)* As well as my bovine ancestors. Now, it's our job, our beloved task, to stand by and protect the little baby Jesus day and night.

GOAT: Here! Here! A grand and glorious task we do!

BOAR: So let's sing in recognition of this joyous season!

ALL: *(Sing.)* "Hark! The herald angels sing,  
'Glory to the newborn King.'"

*(Mule enters.)*

MULE: Thank you! Thank you! Thank you, everyone!

GOAT: What?

MULE: I said, thank you!

GOAT: For what?

MULE: For singing praises to me.

COW: We were not singing praises to you.

MULE: Yes, you were.

COW: No, we weren't.



MULE: Were, too.

COW: Were not!

BOAR: Hey, we could do this all night, but we don't have the time.

MULE: Ah, the beautiful Christmas Boar! How are you?

BOAR: The Christmas Boar?

MULE: Exactly! And you must be the Christmas Goat?

GOAT: I am a goat, no doubt about that!

MULE: And you are the illustrious Christmas Cow, are you not?

COW: A cow, indeed. *(To Mule.)* And you are?

*(Mule prances around singing.)*

MULE: I am the Muletide King! *(Poses to accept glory from all.)*

COW: The what?

*(Mule sings again and then stops to pose.)*

MULE: I am the Muletide King!

BOAR: What?

*(Mule sings again, stops, and poses.)*

MULE: I am the Muletide King!

GOAT: We heard that. But we've never heard of the "Muletide King."

MULE: Never heard of the Muletide King?

BOAR: Nope.

MULE: That's me! I am the—

BOAR/COW/GOAT: The Muletide King, we know!

MULE: *(Shocked.)* And you've never heard of me before?

BOAR/COW/GOAT: Never!

*(Mule breaks his pose.)*

MULE: That is very strange. I thought everyone had heard of me before.

GOAT: What do you do?

MULE: What do I do? What do *you* do?

GOAT: I'm a goat, so I just eat grasses and stuff.

MULE: Oh. *(To Boar.)* And you?

BOAR: I'm a boar—a big pig—so I just eat my slop.

MULE: Gross. *(To Cow.)* And you are a cow?

COW: Yes. *(Proudly.)* I can turn hay into milk.

COW/BOAR/GOAT: And what do *you* do?

MULE: I bring tidings of great joy to all during the holiday season!

BOAR: Oh. That's a worthy cause. I like season's greetings!

MULE: Exactly! I am the Muletide King. *(Posing again.)*

COW/BOAR/GOAT: We know!

MULE: And now... *(Reaches out to embrace the other Animals.)* ...let us continue our muletide singing.

COW: What?

MULE: Muletide singing. Caroling. You know, holiday songs. Ready? *(Sings.)* "Chestnuts roasting on an open fire,  
Jack Frost nipping at your nose,  
Muletide carols being sung by a choir—"

BOAR: Wait a second. Those aren't the lyrics.

MULE: Of course, they are! Do you know this one? *(Sings.)*  
"Deck the hall with boughs of holly, (Fa-la-la-la-la-la-la-la-la)  
'Tis the season to be jolly, (Fa-la-la-la-la-la-la-la-la)  
Don we now our gay apparel (Fa-la-la-la-la-la-la-la-la)  
Troll the ancient muletide carol—"

**[END OF FREEVIEW]**