



Mitchell Roush

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BIG DOG PUBLISHING

P.O. Box 1401

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THE SEARCH FOR MOTHER GOOSE

INTERACTIVE COMEDY FOR YOUNG AUDIENCES.

Mother Goose's son, Gary, embarks on a journey through Nursery Rhyme Land to save his mother from the clutches of Sly McSneakerson, who wants to steal all of Mother Goose's nursery rhymes. On his quest to find the villain's hideout, Gary seeks the help of Little Bo-Peep, Humpty Dumpty, Little Miss Muffet, and the Three Blind Mice, and he quickly discovers that these characters have big problems of their own! Can Humpty Dumpty put himself back together with the help of only one King's man due to royal cutbacks? Will Little Bo-Peep always be known as the world's worst shepherd? Will Little Miss Muffet ever be cured of arachnophobia? And will the Three Blind Mice realize that they are actually blind? Humor and hijinks abound in this entertaining play for young audiences.

Performance Time: Approximately 60 minutes.



From *Mother Goose's Nursery Rhymes*, 1877

About the Story

"Mother Goose" is the name given to the fictional author of the Mother Goose stories and nursery rhymes. In book illustrations, Mother Goose is sometimes depicted as a goose that wears a bonnet or an elderly Welsh peasant woman who wears a hat and shawl. No specific person has been credited as the author of the Mother Goose nursery rhymes or fairy tales. The term "Mother Goose" is referenced as early as 1650 in Jean Loret's *La Muse Historique*. The first Mother Goose nursery rhymes were published in 1695 by French author Charles Perrault in his book, *Tales of Mother Goose*.

Characters

(2 M, 3 F, 10 flexible, opt. extras)

MOTHER GOOSE: Loves to write new nursery rhymes and read them to her son; wears reading glasses; female.

GARY THE GANDER: Mother Goose's son who thinks there is nothing special about him; flexible. Note: If female, change the name to Garyanna and drop "gander."

SLY MCSNEAKERSON: Kidnaps Mother Goose and tries to steal her nursery rhymes; wears a long black cape; has a piercingly loud identifiable cackle; flexible. Note: If male, character has a dark handlebar mustache.

LITTLE BO-PEEP: Grumpy girl who always loses her sheep; female.

SHEEP 1-4: Little Bo-Peep's naughty sheep who don't listen to her and like to run off; wear sheep costumes; flexible.

HUMPTY DUMPTY: British egg who often falls off of his wall and has to piece himself together with just one King's man and one horse due to royal cutbacks; wears an egg costume showing a crack on his head that goes from his forehead to his chin; male.

KING'S MAN: A royal knight from the King's Court who rides a wooden horse and has been called upon to help put Humpty Dumpty together again; wears armor or a robe with a royal insignia; male.

LITTLE MISS MUFFET: Southern belle who likes to sit on her tuffet but has a severe spider phobia; wears an elegant gown/dress; speaks with a southern accent, optional; female.

SPIDER: Spider who loves eating apples and hopes to become Little Miss Muffet's bodyguard; wears a spider costume with eight legs; speaks with a New York accent, optional; flexible.

MOUSE 1, 2: Blind mice who think they are pirates; wear mouse costumes with an eye patch over one eye and a

bandana on their head with their large ears popping out of the top; speak like pirates; flexible.

MOUSE 3: Spacey, blind mouse who tries to be a pirate but isn't very successful; wears a mouse costume with an eye patch over one eye and a pair of underwear for a bandana on his head; doesn't speak like a pirate; flexible.

EXTRAS (Optional): As additional Sheep.

Setting

Nursery Rhyme Land, a magical place where Mother Goose's characters reside.

Sets

The sets can be as simplistic or elaborate as your budget allows and can be easily constructed to suite traveling troupes. Flats can be constructed to fold up and stand on their own. Doorframes can easily be put on wheels and/or carts. To represent Nursery Rhyme Land, walls can have a landscape painted on it with glittery flowers and clouds and a smiley sun to give it a whimsical feel, if desired. The center wall has a sheet that pulls down revealing each nursery rhyme. The separate scene settings listed below should be simplistic with only a few large set pieces.

Gary the Gander's bedroom. There is a bed/cot and a rocking chair.

Little Bo-Peep's pasture. There is a stool. A backdrop of a pasture may be used, optional.

Humpty Dumpty's wall. There is a "brick" wall. Stairs/step ladder are located behind the wall. The wall can be made from wood and put on a cart and/or wheels. The staircase on the back can connect to the trapdoor, if a trapdoor is used.

Little Miss Muffet's garden. Tuffets can be made with papier-mâché. The tuffets with functional tops have wooden frames covered with papier-mâché and can be wheeled on.

Edge of the forest. There is a large tree. The tree can be cut out of plywood or cardboard and has a brace on the back.

Sly McSneakerson's hideout. There is a doorway that is viewed from the side by the audience. On one side of the doorway, there is an old wooden desk and chair.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

Scene 1: Gary's bedroom, bedtime.

Scene 2: Gary's bedroom, the next morning.

Scene 3: Little Bo-Peep's pasture.

Scene 4: Humpty Dumpty's wall.

Scene 5: Miss Muffet's garden.

Scene 6: Three Blind Mice's tree.

Scene 7: Sly McSneakerson's hideout.

Props

Giant, oversized book entitled, <i>Mother Goose's Nursery Rhymes</i>	Large sheet with Three Blind Mice nursery rhyme
Reading glasses	Wooden horse (child's stick horse or saw horse)
Paper	Sealed envelope
Quill pen (feather)	Spider web
Alarm clock	Apple
Ransom note	Chains
Shepherd's crook/staff	Legal piece of paper for contract
Stool	Tree branch
Long grey beard	Pair of underwear, for Mouse 3's bandana
Tea set	2 Swords (plastic)
Large sheet with Little Bo-Peep's nursery rhyme	
Large sheet with Humpty Dumpty's nursery rhyme	
Large sheet with Little Miss Muffet's nursery rhyme	

SPECIAL EFFECTS

Alarm clock
Deep rumbling
Sound of earthquake
Cracking sound
Evil or magical sound
Fast-paced chase music

Note: Directors may choose to incorporate music to use between scenes and during scenes to heighten mystery, fantasy, humor, etc. to make the show more engaging for young audiences.

**"OLD MOTHER GOOSE,
WHEN SHE STARTED TO WANDER,
WOULD RIDE THOUGH THE AIR
ON A VERY FINE GANDER.**

**MOTHER GOOSE HAD A HOUSE,
IT STOOD IN THE WOOD,
WHERE AN OWL AT THE DOOR,
AS SENTINEL STOOD.**

**SHE HAD A SON, JACK,
A PLAIN LOOKING LAD,
'T WAS NOT VERY GOOD,
NOR YET VERY BAD."**

—From "Old Mother Goose" (1815)

Scene 1

(AT RISE: Gary the Gander's bedroom. There is a bed and a rocking chair. Mother Goose is putting her son, Gary the Gander, to bed.)

MOTHER GOOSE: Are you ready for bedtime, Gary, my dear?

GARY: Yeah, I suppose.

MOTHER GOOSE: Did you enjoy the day you had today?

GARY: Yeah, I suppose.

MOTHER GOOSE: That's wonderful, my dear, simply wonderful. And are you excited about tomorrow?

GARY: Yeah, I suppose.

MOTHER GOOSE: Hmm...Gary, my dear, do you think it would be possible that you might say something else?

GARY: Yeah, I suppose.

MOTHER GOOSE: Oh! *(Tickles him and they both giggle. Playfully.)* A stubborn gander...that's what you are.

GARY: Yeah, I suppose.

MOTHER GOOSE: What's wrong, my dear? You seem as though there's something on your mind.

GARY: It's hard to say, Mother.

MOTHER GOOSE: Oh, do give it a try, darling.

GARY: That's just it. There's nothing to say!

MOTHER GOOSE: You are not making any sense, my dear.

GARY: All my life I've been a simple, boring gander. There's nothing special about me. There's nothing great that I can do. I don't have any talents. And I haven't done anything that anyone can be proud of.

MOTHER GOOSE: Oh, my little darling, how wrong you are.

GARY: All I want is to be important. I want to be a special gander. I want to do something that people will remember me by.

MOTHER GOOSE: And there's nothing wrong with that precious little dream.

GARY: No matter what I do, all I have are boring thoughts on boring days with only boring things to talk about.

MOTHER GOOSE: Gary, you are always trying to sweep the world right off its feet.

GARY: And here I am. No matter how much I try, I'm still here...with nothing to show for it.

MOTHER GOOSE: My dear, please listen to me and listen ever so carefully. There is nothing wrong with wanting to earn a special place in this world. Your heart is so big. (*Embraces Gary.*) Why, I've never met a single gander, or goose for that matter, that has a larger heart than you, little darling.

GARY: Really?

MOTHER GOOSE: Of course, my dear! Would I have any reason to lie to you? Would you like to know something else that's exciting?

GARY: Sure!

MOTHER GOOSE: No matter what happens in this world, no matter where your life takes you, there will always be two things that are true in your life.

GARY: And what are those?

MOTHER GOOSE: Oh, my little dear, always trying to jump the gun. (*Both laugh.*) You will find your place in this world. You, my darling, will do something so wonderful that everyone will see it as incredible and admirable.

GARY: Do you really think so?

MOTHER GOOSE: Why, certainly, my dear. I know this is true.

GARY: Wow! And what's the other thing?

MOTHER GOOSE: There will never be a day that passes in your life that I won't be proud of you. You, my sweet little gander, will always make this Mother Goose the proudest mother in all the animal kingdom.

GARY: Do you really mean that?

MOTHER GOOSE: Of course! Would I have any reason to lie to you? (*Kisses Gary on his forehead.*) But, my little dear, don't get too eager to take on the world just yet. After all, you're just a little gander. Now, nestle in and enjoy some wonderful sleep.

GARY: Mother, wait!

MOTHER GOOSE: What is it, my dear?

GARY: You forgot to tell me one of your nursery rhymes.

MOTHER GOOSE: Oh, gracious me! I nearly forgot!

GARY: You know that I can't fall asleep until you tell me one.

MOTHER GOOSE: Don't I know it, my little darling. (*Sits down in her rocking chair.*) Here's a new one I just wrote this morning. I have a feeling you'll really enjoy it. (*Pulls out a giant oversized book entitled, "Mother Goose's Nursery Rhymes."* She puts on her reading glasses. Reads.)

"Hickory, dickory, dock,

The mouse ran up the clock.

The clock struck one,

The mouse ran down,

Hickory, dickory, dock." (*Gary is asleep and snoring. Mother Goose kisses him on the forehead. She picks up her rocking chair and moves it USR. To audience.*)

Why, hello there! Aren't you all cute, adorable, little darlings. I'm sorry you had to wait a bit for your turn to come. After all, little Gary is my pride and joy and our chats and nursery rhymes are some of my favorite moments with my sweet little gander. And I'm sure I don't have to tell you that sometimes getting a little one to actually go to sleep can be the greatest challenge in a mother's day! (*She chuckles, sits in her rocking chair, puts on her reading glasses, and pulls out paper and a quill. Pause. Realizes something. Approaches the audience. To audience.*) Oh, my! Dear gracious! How terribly rude of me! Forgive me, my little darlings. I've just realized that I've been a terrible hostess and not even introduced myself. Good evening to you all. I am Mother Goose. You may have heard of me, or, perhaps, you've heard of some of my work. Are you

familiar with nursery rhymes...Humpty Dumpty and Little Bo-Peep and the whole gang? *(Audience responds.)* You are?! Oh, well, how delightful! I am simply delighted to be able to share a little bit of my life with all of you. This may come as a surprise to you, but life for good ol' Mother Goose is much simpler than you may have realized. Sure, one of the things that brings me the most pleasure is writing down my wonderful nursery rhymes in my book so that all may enjoy and share. But my life is a far cry away from living the dream as a famous and rich author. As you can tell, I am just a regular old mother, and I couldn't be happier! Since my sweet little Gary the Gander has come along, I've had to adjust a few things in regard to my writing schedule. Don't fret, all those wonderful and memorable nursery rhymes you love are still being concocted and composed for all of your darling hearts to share. Now that I've finally got my sweet little dear put to bed, I can spend a few moments working on my newest little rhyming creation. Again, thank you so much for stopping by to see me. It's always a joy to have guests around the house. I'm quite certain we shall have many fun moments together.

(Mother Goose chuckles, scurries back to her rocking chair, puts on her reading glasses, pulls out the paper and feather quill, and begins to write. Sly McSneakerson sneaks quietly on opposite Mother Goose. He begins to inch closer and closer until he bumps his foot on the bedpost of Gary's bed.)

SLY MCSNEAKERSON: Ouch!

MOTHER GOOSE: *(Startled.)* Good gracious me! Who in the world are you, sir?

SLY MCSNEAKERSON: Geez! Now I've done it!

MOTHER GOOSE: I beg your pardon?

SLY MCSNEAKERSON: I messed it all up!

MOTHER GOOSE: Forgive me for not knowing, sir, but you've messed what up?

SLY MCSNEAKERSON: The whole thing! This wasn't how it was supposed to go.

MOTHER GOOSE: I'm terribly sorry, sir, but I have absolutely no clue as to what you are talking about.

SLY MCSNEAKERSON: My entrance, my introduction, my monologue...the whole bit! It's completely fallen apart now, and it's all because I'm such a klutz!

MOTHER GOOSE: What exactly was supposed to have taken place?

SLY MCSNEAKERSON: Well, we've gotten past the whole opening scene and introduction thing, right?

MOTHER GOOSE: Well, I suppose we have.

SLY MCSNEAKERSON: Then that means my part is next.

MOTHER GOOSE: Come again?

SLY MCSNEAKERSON: I come in all dressed up in my kidnapper costume. I saunter slowly to the edge of the stage. I introduce myself to the audience, explain that I'm here to kidnap you and that the great search for Mother Goose can begin.

MOTHER GOOSE: Oh, I see.

SLY MCSNEAKERSON: But all of that is ruined now. I've lost the element of surprise.

MOTHER GOOSE: Well, now...that is quite a dilemma you have found yourself in, sir.

SLY MCSNEAKERSON: Yeah, tell me about it.

MOTHER GOOSE: Hmmm...I've got a splendid idea!

SLY MCSNEAKERSON: And what's that, Goosey Momma?

MOTHER GOOSE: How about you go back and make your entrance again, and I'll act surprised when you make your move to kidnap me. How does that sound?

SLY MCSNEAKERSON: I like the way you think... *(Points to audience.)* ...but what about all of them?

MOTHER GOOSE: Oh, well, yes. Let's see... *(Approaches the audience. To audience.)* What do you all think, my little darlings? Can you all be wonderful little dears and act

surprised when he re-enters? *(Waits for audience response.)*

Splendid! *(To Sly.)* Very well, give it another shot, good sir.

SLY MCSNEAKERSON: I suppose it's worth a shot. *(Scurries offstage. Pause. Sly sneaks quietly on opposite Mother Goose. He slowly works his way up to the audience. He lets out an evil cackle. To audience.)* I am the evil Sly McSneakerson! I am here to kidnap the great Mother Goose. She will become my prisoner, and I will use her to gain supreme control over all of her nursery rhymes! None other than Mother Goose herself will supply me with all I need in order to become Father Rhymers and replace her. Soon I'll be the most famous and most important person in all of literature...forever! *(Cackles as he approaches Mother Goose.)* Now, Mother Goose, you shall be my prisoner!

(Sly cackles, picks up Mother Goose, and throws her over his shoulder. Note: If this is not possible, he can pull/push her off. Mother Goose lets out a piercing shriek. Mother Goose struggles as Sly starts to haul her off.)

MOTHER GOOSE: *(Slapping him, shouts.)* Let me go, good sir!

I say, put me down this instant! This is a very terrible thing you are doing to me, Mister...uh...what's your name again?

SLY MCSNEAKERSON: Sly McSneakerson.

MOTHER GOOSE: Sly Mc-SNEAK-er-son? *(Giggles.)*

SLY MCSNEAKERSON: No! Sly McSneakerson.

MOTHER GOOSE: Yeah...Sly Mc-SNEAK-er-son.

(Mother Goose giggles. Annoyed, Sly puts Mother Goose down or he stops escorting her off.)

SLY MCSNEAKERSON: No, no, no! It's Sly McSneakerson.

MOTHER GOOSE: That's what I said...Sly Mc-SNEAK-er-son. *(Giggles.)*

SLY MCSNEAKERSON: No, it's not! How insulting! You realize that there's a difference between making fun of

someone and being just downright mean? And messing up a person's name to their face is one of the meanest things a person can do. It's Sly McSneakerson!

MOTHER GOOSE: Oh, dear! I'm terribly sorry I offended you, but certainly it can be no worse than kidnapping me, right?

(Sly ponders this.)

SLY MCSNEAKERSON: No! That's not the same at all. So there!

(Mother Goose puts her arms up as if preparing to be carried off. Sly snatches her up or starts to escort her off.)

MOTHER GOOSE: All right, here we go then.

SLY MCSNEAKERSON: Yeah! And the name's Sly McSneakerson! *(Mother Goose giggles.)* Don't you forget it!

(Sly puts a ransom note on the top of Gary's bedpost. Cackling, Sly scurries off with Mother Goose. Blackout.)

SCENE 2

(AT RISE: Gary's bedroom, the next morning. Gary is sleeping in his bed. The alarm next to his bed goes off. Gary wakes up, yawns, stretches, and gets out of bed.)

GARY: Good morning, Mother. *(No response. Louder.)* I said, good morning, Mother. *(No response. Calls.)* Mother, are you there? *(Gary scurries around calling for Mother Goose. Realizing she's not there, he stands next to his bed. He begins pacing slowly around his bedroom. To audience.)* I can't find my mother. Do you have any idea where she went? *(Waits for audience response.)* Did she go out for a swim at the pond? *(Waits for audience response.)* No?! Then did she go scope out the migration trail we'll be taking? *(Waits for audience response.)* No?! I don't know where she is! There's something very fishy going on around here. *(Discovers the ransom note on his bedpost and picks it up. Reads.)* "Gary, I have kidnapped your mother. If you wish to see your mother again, then you'd better cooperate with my rules. As my prisoner, she will not be released until I am finished completing my project. While you wait for me to return Mother Goose, remember this: No police! Enjoy spending time with all of your nursery-rhyme pals for the last time! Regards, Sly McSneakerson." Oh, no! This can't be happening! This is awful! My mother, Mother Goose, has been kidnapped! What am I supposed to do? *(To audience.)* What do you think I should do? *(Waits for audience response.)* No way! I couldn't possibly go find my mother by myself! I'm just a plain little gander! *(Gets an idea.)* Oh, wait! What if I went to Nursery Rhyme Land and looked for my mother? What if I was the one who figured out what's going on? What if I became the hero and used all of my friends in Nursery Rhyme Land to help me? That's what I'm going to do! I'm going to find my place in this world.

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I'm going to do something big! I'm going to save the day!
I'm going find my mother! I'm going to bring her back!
And Nursery Rhyme Land will always be the best place on
earth!

(Blackout.)

Scene 3

(AT RISE: Nursery Rhyme Land, Little Bo-Peep's sheep pasture. There is a stool with a shepherd's crook/staff leaning against it. On the stool is a long grey fake beard. Gary enters.)

GARY: *(To audience.)* Hello, again! I'm on my way to saving the day today. I'm going to find my mother and bring her home for good. This Sly McSneakerson doesn't know who he's messing with! Now, here's the deal. I'm working my way through Nursery Rhyme Land. I need to chat with some of the most famous nursery-rhyme characters to find out if they know anything about Mother Goose's kidnapping. If anyone will know how to find Sly McSneakerson, it'll be the nursery rhyme characters he's trying to destroy. Here's where you guys come in. I can't chat with any of the nursery rhyme characters unless you help me find them. The secret is that we won't be able to see any of the characters unless we all say their nursery rhyme out loud together. I'll pull down a screen that has the words to the nursery rhyme, and we can all say the words together. Everybody understand? *(Waits for audience response.)* Great! Okay, we're here at Little Bo-Peep's field. Who here has heard of Little Bo-Peep? *(Waits for audience response.)* That's super! She is quite the popular character. She's one of my mother's most famous creations. Is everybody ready to say her rhyme to get her to come out? *(Waits for audience response.)* Great! Okay, here we go, guys! *(Scurries back to the center wall of the setting and pulls down a sheet that has the Little Bo-Peep nursery rhyme on it. He prompts the audience when to start. With audience, reads.)*

"Little Bo-Peep has lost her sheep,
And cannot tell where to find them;
Leave them alone, and they'll come home,

And bring their tails behind them." *(To audience.)* Great job, everyone!

(Little Bo-Peep enters.)

BO-PEEP: This is the worst! Just the worst!

GARY: Hey there, Bo-Peep!

BO-PEEP: I can't believe it! I just can't believe it!

GARY: What's going on?

BO-PEEP: I can never catch a break! Never, ever get a break!

GARY: Something wrong, Bo-Peep?

BO-PEEP: *(Flabbergasted.)* Something wrong?! Is there something wrong?!

GARY: Stupid question?

BO-PEEP: What do *you* think?

GARY: I'll think whatever doesn't get me beat up.

BO-PEEP: Good answer. Very good answer.

GARY: So, what's the deal?

BO-PEEP: The deal? What's the deal?! Do I have to spell it out for you, Mr. Gander?

GARY: Spelling isn't my strong suit.

(Gary awkwardly laughs. Bo-Peep steps closer to him.)

BO-PEEP: Take a look around, Gary. What do you see?

GARY: *(Looking around.)* Um...uh...

BO-PEEP: What do you see, Gary?

GARY: I don't see anything.

BO-PEEP: That's right! And what do you suppose is missing?

GARY: Um...uh...

BO-PEEP: Think of my nursery rhyme, Mr. Gander.

GARY: Uh... *(Realizes.)* Oh, yeah! Sheep! That's what's missing...your sheep! Man, do I feel stupid. *(Awkwardly laughs.)*

BO-PEEP: Very good, Gary! You're on to something now. My sheep! My sheep are missing...again! *(Flops down on the*

ground, crying. Melodramatic.) That's all I'm known
for...being the worst shepherd in the world!

[END OF FREEVIEW]