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More Adventures of Noddy

Enid Blyton

A Samuel French Acting Edition

SAMUEL FRENCH
FOUNDED 1830

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MORE ADVENTURES OF NODDY

First performed at Wimbledon Theatre on September 27th, 1995, and on tour. The play was presented by James Woods and Justin Savage for Clarion Promotions, with the following cast:

Noddy	Karen Briffett
Big Ears/Kangaroo	Jonathan Broxholme
Bumpy Dog/Monkey/ The Great Tootle	Martin Wimpress
Mr Plod	David Burrows
Tessie Bear/Tubby Bear	Alexis Beebe
Sly the Goblin/Mr Noah/ Mr Sparks	Andrew Beynon
Sam Skittle/Lion	Graham Breeze
Sally Skittle/Duck	Sara Jane Derrick

Director	**David Wood**
Associate Director	**Ben Forster**
Sets and costume designer	**Susie Caulcutt**
Incidental music composer/supervisor	**Peter Pontzen**
Choreographer	**Sheila Falconer**
Musical Director/Keyboards	**Cliff Atkinson**
Lighting designer	**Dave Horn**
Sound designer	**Mike Furness**
Noddy's aeroplane UV sequence	**Michael Brydon**

CHARACTERS

(in order of appearance)

Financial considerations limited the number of actors in the original production. Doubling and trebling was therefore employed. Other productions may prefer to use a larger cast.

Big-Ears
Whiskers (a puppet)
Noddy
Bumpy Dog
Tessie Bear
Sam Skittle
Sally Skittle
Mr Plod
Sly the Goblin
Mr Noah
Monkey
Duck
Lion
Kangaroo
Mr Sparks
Tubby Bear
The Great Tootle

Music

Music for the songs by David Wood and the incidental music, composed by Peter Pontzen for the original production, is available from Samuel French Ltd.

Cover Design

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David Wood would like to thank James Woods and Justin Savage of Clarion Promotions for commissioning this play, and Gillian Baverstock, Enid Blyton's daughter, for her constructive and generous co-operation.

SONGS

NODDY AND THE NOAH'S ARK

1. **The Funky Monkey** — Mr Noah, Noddy, Tessie Bear, Monkey
2. **Mr Noah Had an Ark** — Noddy, Duck, Lion, Tessie Bear, Bumpy Dog, Kangaroo, Mr Noah, Mr Plod

NODDY AND THE TOOTLE

3. **Noddy's Aeroplane** — Noddy and Chorus (sung or recorded as voice-over)

ACT I — **NODDY AND THE NOAH'S ARK**

SCENE 1	Big-Ears' Toadstool House
SCENE 2	The Police Station
SCENE 3	Noddy's House
SCENE 4	The Police Station
SCENE 5	Mr Noah's Ark
SCENE 6	The Dark Wood
SCENE 7	Mr Noah's Ark

ACT II — **NODDY AND THE TOOTLE**

SCENE 1	Mr Sparks' Garage
SCENE 2	A Picnic Spot
SCENE 3	Toy Town Square
SCENE 4	Noddy's House
SCENE 5	Mr Sparks' Garage
SCENE 6	The Sky (UV Sequence)
SCENE 7	Toy Town Square

The two Acts of this play may be performed separately as two one-act plays

INTRODUCTION

In 1993 I was given the opportunity to write and direct *Noddy*, the production which toured Britain for forty weeks, including a London season at the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith. I was delighted by the response to the play, from parents, teachers, playgroup leaders, theatre critics, and most important of all, the children themselves.

The play combined several stories from the original *Noddy* books, showing how Noddy arrived in Toytown, how he met his friend Big-Ears, who helped him choose his clothes and build a house, and how he acquired his famous red and yellow car. Two naughty goblins caused problems for Noddy, Mr Plod helped solve them. Whiskers, Big-Ears' cat went missing during his birthday party, the animals escaped from Noah's Ark, and a greedy witch tried to get her hands on Noddy's car. Bumpy Dog and Tessie Bear played major roles.

In 1995 Clarion Promotions invited me to write *More Adventures of Noddy*. To find ideas, I re-read the twenty-four original Noddy books, and was given access to a considerable amount of other Noddy material—compendiums of stories, stories in magazines, story strips and other spin-offs of the original series.

I decided to take some of the more theatrical ideas I discovered and to adapt them into two one-act plays, to be divided by the interval. Although most of the ideas and characters were direct from the pen of Enid Blyton, I endeavoured to craft two new stories. I was very pleased when Gillian Baverstock, Enid Blyton's daughter, endorsed the plays, saying that they remained totally faithful to the world of Noddy, as created by her mother.

This world is full of ideas which have appealed to children for nearly half a century. First of all, Noddy may be a wooden doll, but he is really a child in a world of adults (Big-Ears, Mr Plod, Mr Noah, etc.). He is a child learning how the world works, how to cope, how some people are your friends and others cannot be taken at face value; in the books, the themes of fairness/unfairness, generosity, meanness, loyalty and the encouragement of independence are rife; also, as in much of Enid Blyton's work, the theme of justice is very important. I have always believed that children are born with an innate sense of justice. "It's not fair" is a familiar cry from even the youngest children. This also suggests that deep down they know

the difference between right and wrong. Although it is always difficult to be dogmatic when discussing moral issues, children do like the rules to be clear and firm. Enid Blyton knew this, and there is never any question as to the actions of the naughty goblins; though not necessarily malicious, they are undoubtedly behaving wrongly and deserve some sort of warning or punishment.

This theme—children learning a basic code of morality—is particularly relevant in the nineties, and it is discussed in great depth by educationalists and child experts. It could well be that, in the last thirty years, our attempts to be more liberal when educating children, and perhaps not dealing with the most basic values, has led to, if not a lack of morality in young people, rather a confusion as to what is acceptable behaviour within a society. The attitudes in Noddy may be simplistic, but I don't believe they are unhealthy. And children never have difficulty in understanding their implications.

Noddy may be a "child" but he has a house of his own, a car of his own and a job (taxi driver) of his own. For children these are the external signs of growing up that they (all too soon!) aspire to. Children love making "dens" or sitting in Wendy houses, driving pedal cars or riding bikes and playing pretend games in which they are doctors, teachers, bus drivers or mothers and fathers; Noddy fulfils all these dreams for real, albeit in a fantasy world

And that fantasy world is, of course, another reason for the success of the books—a world peopled by toys, all of them alive and living in a colourful town; toy engines arriving at the toy station, teddy bears mingling with wobbly men and skittles in the Square; toy cars buying petrol from a toy garage, a Noah's Ark full of real toy animals, bouncy cuddly toys going about their daily business just like people (mainly adult people) in our "real" world.

Another appealing factor of the books is another world, an enchanted magic world of friendly brownies and unfriendly goblins lurking in the Dark Wood. Characters from the realms of traditional fairy tales and the supernatural prove an imaginative source of excitement and fascination for children.

It is my job to take these elements, all of which are truly theatrical, and mould them into the shape of a play (or, in this case, two plays), emotionally involving the young audience, encouraging them to participate, and giving them a very special experience—for many of them their first ever experience of live theatre.

Introduction

In the nineties, it is inevitable and proper that the question of political correctness be addressed when preparing plays for children. I found, when re-reading all the original Noddy books, that the modern editions have been amended to answer some of the criticisms that have in the past been levelled at Noddy.

However, I sense that if Enid Blyton were writing the stories now, she would introduce stronger female characters. This is why I have given Tessie Bear a more dominant role.

Incidentally, in answer to the question several people asked me after the first play, I was unable to use the character of Dinah Doll, from the BBC television series, because of copyright law.

I have to admit that some of Enid Blyton's writing, by today's standards, could be interpreted as rather "twee". I have tried not to be "twee" in the plays, or, indeed, patronising—the most fatal mistake a playwright can make when writing for children.

I am unable to take seriously the criticism of Big-Ears as a name for Noddy's friend and mentor. I cannot really believe that people with large ears are offended by his name. And nobody who reads all the books can honestly say that Big-Ears' relationship with Noddy is anything more than that of a kindly uncle/guardian figure.

I am glad that the mischievous golliwogs have been replaced by equally mischievous goblins. I can see that in today's multi-racial society, the golliwogs could give offence. However, I must admit to being disappointed that the golliwog who ran the Toytown garage has also disappeared. As a child, when I read the early books, this kindly character, who gives Noddy a car, was one of my favourites. Mr Sparks is an acceptable replacement, but I still miss his predecessor!

In her day, Enid Blyton was very much the *Blue Peter* voice of conscience, encouraging children to help worthy causes. For this reason, I have introduced the idea of Tessie Bear organising a collection to help save Noah's Ark.

I have been writing plays for children for over twenty-five years and take it very seriously! I want a play for children to have a proper story, which will involve the young audience and trigger their imaginations. I want them wrapped up in the action, not getting bored and restless. The challenge is to give them a magical theatre experience, the like of which they may not have had before; an experience totally different from seeing something on television or reading a book.

This challenge is in many ways much more difficult than producing a

play for adults! Particularly when Noddy, thanks to the current television series, appeals to the youngest of children! But the positive reaction the original production received from thousands of children all over the United Kingdom proved how the magic of Enid Blyton can be translated from page to stage.

David Wood

NOTES ON THE ORIGINAL PRODUCTION

Set

To faithfully follow the spirit of the Beek book illustrations, Susie Caulcutt used a series of one-dimensional flats painted to represent:

1) The Police Station
2) Mr Sparks' Garage
3) Buildings in Toy Town Square
4) A tree

Big-Ears' Toadstool House exterior could have also been made this way, but in fact we used the small revolving truck (exterior and interior) we already had from the first *Noddy* production.

These flats were able to fly into a basic set of cyclorama, cutcloth and three sets of painted legs, depicting a rural Toyland setting inspired by the book illustrations. This basic setting was also used for the Picnic Spot.

Noddy's House was three-dimensional, with enough room for an actor to sit inside, but not much larger! We used the kit version from the first *Noddy* production; this was assembled like a three-dimensional jigsaw on a castered base with curtains for a door.

Mr Noah's Ark was based on a truck with two folding "wings". Two double-hinged doors and a folding-down gangplank provided access.

The UV sequence took place in front of a black cloth. Actors dressed in black carried one-dimensional cut-outs across the stage behind the aeroplane, which was three-dimensional and entered on a castered "trolley". Noddy and Tubby Bear sat inside, then, when the black cloth was in place and the UV lighting on, they *stood*, "wearing" the aeroplane like a hobby horse. The aeroplane had a black skirt to cover the actors' legs. This gave the illusion of flight as the actors slowly walked across the stage.

We considered it important for the scene changes to be effected speedily to keep the action flowing, and the simplicity of the designs helped this.

Props

The most difficult prop is clearly Noddy's car, which really should look as much like the original in the books as possible. We were luckily able to spend a sizeable sum on a "real" car, built on the chassis of a battery-operated golf trolley. But a pedal-car could well have worked.

Whiskers the Cat was a large glove puppet with head and eye movement.

The collapsible washing-line post was built into a small castered grassy mound.

For Big-Ears' bicycle we adapted an existing lady's bicycle to look as much like the book illustration as possible.

The Great Tootle's caravan was built along the lines of an old-fashioned bathing-machine, with two wheels, hand rails to pull it, and steps leading down from the double-hinged doors. It was not too large, so that the actor could pull it across the stage in a full circle. When the doors were open for a Great Tootle performance, a bead curtain prevented the audience from seeing inside.

The tootle and Tubby Bear's peashooter need to look very similar. We tried "tin" ones, painted silver, but in the end used wood or bamboo painted white. This helped the tootle to be more visible in the UV sequence.

The UV sequence was created by a specialist. We wanted it to not be too "cartoon-like", basing designs, where possible, on the book illustrations.

Costume

All the characters in the play, except the Great Tootle, are illustrated in the *Noddy* books. Costume designers are advised to consult Enid Blyton Limited, at 40 Shaftesbury Avenue, London W1V 7DD, in order to obtain the correct information for designing appropriate costumes so the characters will look as much like the approved image as possible. But we took the decision not to hide the actors' faces (except for the four Ark animals). Thus Tessie Bear and Tubby Bear wore teddy bear head-dresses with their own faces peeping out from underneath. Bumpy-Dog had a fuller head-dress, but by keeping his head down, the actor created an effective illusion while not having his own face totally masked. The Skittles' head-dresses had holes for the actors' faces to be seen.

The Great Tootle wore an exotic costume, colourfully combining his entertainer image with his roving gypsy life.

Music

Although there are three songs in *More Adventures of Noddy* it is really a play, not a musical. But we used a considerable amount of music, not just to accompany the songs. Incidental music proved invaluable for creating tension and atmosphere and for linking scenes. Underscoring was often used. We used two keyboard synthesizers which gave richness and variety

to the score. David Wood's music for the songs and Peter Pontzen's incidental music for the original production is available from Samuel French Ltd.

We decided that the tootle music should be played by the musician and mimed by the actor. This gave us more control of the volume, and also meant we could use dramatic licence when Noddy "played" the pea-shooter—it could be the same sound as the real tootle. So a flute/whistle setting on the synthesizer was used.

Lighting

We decided to avoid black-outs whenever possible and let the action flow smoothly from scene to scene. Scenery flying in and out was often in full view or in half light.

Exciting lighting states were used for the magic spells. UV lighting was used for Noddy's flight through the sky.

Sound

Taped sound effects were used not only in obvious ways such as birdsong, owl hoots, the animal cacophony at Mr Noah's Ark, the wasp and the fast forward and fast rewind tape sounds, but also for Whiskers' miaows, Noddy's hat bell and the car's "Parp! Parp!" hooting noises. Special sounds for magic spells and Noddy's aeroplane were shared between the live synthesizer and taped effects. The song, *Noddy's Aeroplane*, was on tape.

Magic

The Great Tootle performed two magic tricks. It may be an idea to employ a magic advisor from the local Magic Circle to suggest and teach two *quick*, visual tricks. We used a specially converted "dove pan"; magic seeds from a large packet were poured into the empty pan, then the lid was placed on, a magic word spoken, the lid removed, and large feather flowers popped out. We also used a "leopard" silk, where spots visibly vanish from and reappear on a silk handkerchief.

OTHER PLAYS AND MUSICALS BY DAVID WOOD

Aladdin
Babe, the Sheep-Pig (based on the book by Dick King-Smith)
The BFG (based on the book by Roald Dahl)
Babes in the Magic Wood
Cinderella
Dick Whittington and Wondercat
Dinosaurs and all that Rubbish (based on the book by Michael Foreman)
Flibberty and the Penguin
The Gingerbread Man
Hijack Over Hygenia
The Ideal Gnome Expedition
Jack and the Giant
Jack the Lad (co-written with Dave and Toni Arthur)
Larry the Lamb in Toytown (co-written with Sheila Ruskin, adapted from the stories of S.G. Hulme-Beaman)
Meg and Mog Show (from the books by Helen Nicoll and Jan Piénkowski)
Mother Goose's Golden Christmas
Noddy (based on the stories by Enid Blyton)
Nutcracker Sweet
Old Father Time
The Old Man of Lochnagar (based on the book by HRH The Prince of Wales)
Old Mother Hubbard
The Owl and the Pussycat went to See... (co-written with Sheila Ruskin)
The Papertown Paperchase
The Pied Piper (co-written with Dave and Toni Arthur)
The Plotters of Cabbage Patch Corner
Robin Hood (co-written with Dave and Toni Arthur)
Rupert and the Green Dragon (based on the Rupert stories and characters by Mary Tourtel and Alfred Bestall)
Save the Human (based on the story by Tony Husband and David Wood)
The See-Saw Tree
The Selfish Shellfish
There Was An Old Woman...
Tickle (one act)
The Witches (based on the book by Roald Dahl)

Theatre for Children—Guide to Writing, Adapting, Directing and Acting (written with Janet Grant, published by Faber and Faber)

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