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The Roald Dahl Foundation supports specialist paediatric Roald Dahl nurses throughout the UK caring for children with epilepsy, blood disorders and acquired brain injury. It also provides practical help for children with brain, blood and literacy problems – all causes close to Roald Dahl during his lifetime – through grants to UK hospitals and charities as well as to individual children and their families.

The Roald Dahl Museum and Story Centre, based in Great Missenden just outside London, is in the Buckinghamshire village where Roald Dahl lived and wrote. At the heart of the Museum, intended to inspire a love of reading and writing, is his unique archive of letters and manuscripts. As well as two fun-packed biographical galleries, the Museum boasts an interactive Story Centre. It is a place for the family, teachers and their pupils to explore the exciting world of creativity and literacy.

www.roalddahlfoundation.org
www.roalddahlmuseum.org

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The Roald Dahl Charitable Trust, a newly established charity supports the work of RDF and RDMSC



The BFG

(Big Friendly Giant)

by Roald Dahl

Adapted for the stage by
David Wood

Samuel French - London
New York - Toronto - Hollywood





Sophie invites her father to play the BFG

From L to R: David Burrows (Daniel), Adam Stafford (Sam), Josephine Baird (Rebecca), Janet Cost-Chrétien (Katherine), Mary-Ann Coburn (Mother), Adrian Phillips (Guy), Anthony Pedley (Father) and Fiona Grogan (Sophie)

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Please see page viii for further copyright information

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The BFG snatches Sophie from the orphanage

From L to R: Anthony Pedley (BFG) and Fiona Grogan (Sophie)

THE BFG

The BFG was first performed at Wimbledon Theatre on 19th February, 1991 and on tour, followed by a West End season for Christmas at the Aldwych Theatre. The play was presented by James Woods and Justin Savage for Clarion Productions, and Robert Cogo-Fawcett for Lyric Hammersmith Productions, by arrangement with Theatre Royal Presentations plc, with the following cast:

Actor 1 **Anthony Pedley**
Actor 2 **Mary-Ann Coburn**
Actor 3 **Fiona Grogan**
Actor 4 **Adrian Phillips**
Actor 5 **David Burrows**
Actor 6 **Adam Stafford**
Actor 7 **Janet Cost-Chrétien**
Actor 8 **Josephine Baird**

Director **David Wood**
Associate Director **Ben Forster**
Designer **Susie Caulcutt**
Lighting designer **Simon Courtenay-Taylor**
Movement **Sheila Falconer**
Music composer and supervisor **Peter Pontzen**
Musical director **Cliff Atkinson**
Puppetry consultant **Paul Aylett**
Sound designer **Mike Furness**

Cast of characters with suggested doubling

Actor 1	Dad/the BFG
Actor 2	Mum/Childchewer/Miss Plumridge/the Queen of England
Actor 3	Sophie
Actor 4	Guy (Sophie's brother)/Fleishlumpeater/Head-teacher/Mr Tibbs
Actor 5	Daniel (Sophie's friend)/Bloodbottler/Classmate/Ronald Simkins/Head of the Army
Actor 6	Sam (Sophie's friend)/Bonecruncher/Classmate/Sam Simkins/Head of the Air Force
Actor 7	Katherine (Sophie's friend)/Meatdripper/Classmate/Mary
Actor 8	Rebecca (Sophie's friend)/Gizzardgulper/Rebecca (dreamer)/Undermaid/Queen of Sweden

All the cast help set the scenes and act as puppeteers

The action of the play starts in Sophie's attic playroom/bedroom and moves to the BFG's cave in Giant Country; Dream Country and Buckingham Palace.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Photographs

The photographs in this Acting Edition are from the original production and are reproduced by permission of the photographer, Donald Cooper.

Headdress designs

The original headdress designs for the Giants are reproduced on pages 40–45 by kind permission of the designer, Susie Caulcutt.

Music

Optional incidental music, composed by Peter Pontzen for the original production, is available from Samuel French Ltd.

INTRODUCTION

The BFG is a very popular and deeply loved children's book about a twenty-four-foot-high giant and a little girl—not perhaps the most obvious subject for faithful stage adaptation.

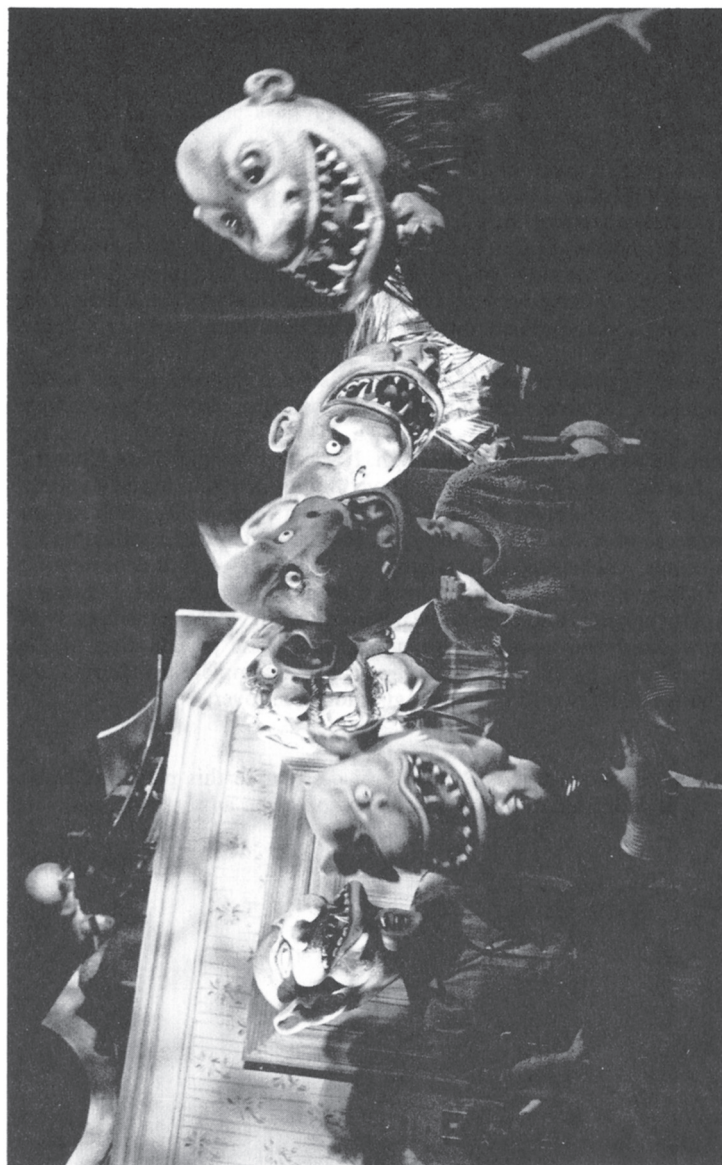
But, in the knowledge that if children themselves, in a playtime situation, wished to act out the story of *The BFG*, they would undoubtedly find an imaginative and convincing way, I decided to use that very knowledge and have a family and friends act out the story at a birthday party as a “play within a play”.

Thus, using as props objects in a playroom such as puppets, a dolls' house or a fishing net, the actors could tell the tale in an apparently improvisatory manner.

Yet this device, I felt, was not enough. It was fine for the Giant Country scenes, in which the giants could be played by human beings and the only human character (Sophie) could be played by a puppet, thus offering an effective sense of scale. But the scenes in England are mostly populated by human beings, who needed to be played by human beings, thus necessitating the Giant to be played by a giant puppet; this change of scale was, I thought, satisfyingly theatrical and offered the possibility of developing the fantasy of the “improvised” beginning into a more naturalistic presentation of the later scenes, even to the extent of introducing a complete transformation scene change as the world of the imagination took over.

By a sad coincidence, Mr Roald Dahl died while this play was being written. It is dedicated to him with great respect and admiration.

David Wood



The Giants

From L to R: Adrian Phillips, Janet Cost-Chrétien, Adam Stafford, Josephine Baird, Mary-Ann Coburn, David Burrows



Fleishlumpeater: "You is not switchfiddling us, is you?"
From L to R: David Burrows (Fleishlumpeater), Adam Stafford (Bloodbottler) Anthony Pedley (BFG)

Notes on some of the trickier props

“Sophie” doll This should be a doll version of Sophie in her nightdress, wearing glasses. It is really a puppet and could have a central rod with which to hold it and turn the head. Another rod could be attached to one wrist to give arm mobility. The suggested height is 15–18 inches; this both gives visibility and offers enough contrast in size between it and the BFG actor. Incidentally, in the original production the BFG found it most convenient to carry the “Sophie” doll, when travelling, by inserting the puppet rod in his belt, on his left hip, then covering it with his cloak.

BFG suitcase This should accommodate three dream jars (without rattling). Clips alongside the handle should accommodate the horn/trumpet, because the BFG needs to carry the suitcase *and* the horn/trumpet safely in one hand.

The Giants’ headdresses Rather than masks, which tend to muffle and distort actors’ voices, large helmets are suggested, on top of which the giants’ heads sit. The actors’ faces are therefore visible, but not very noticeable if they lower their heads a little. Designs from the original production are on pages 41–45.

Snozzcumbers Several are required, to resemble oversize, knobbly cucumbers. One should split in two, possibly using “velcro”, revealing the fleshy, pip-filled inside. The “Sophie” doll, when hiding, need not literally slip inside the snozzcumber; if slid *behind* it, the necessary illusion can be created.

Froboscottle A large green bottle with a removable stopper. It need not pour real liquid. In the original production, a battery-operated light and revolving mechanism inside created the illusion of “downward bubbles”.

Dream jars Most of the jars on the shelves in the cave can be fixed and wired with flickering lights or fibre optics. But the ones the BFG uses to catch dreams in the Dream Country scene need to have a battery-operated device whereby, when stoppered, they gradually glow in an appropriate colour.

Queen’s early-morning tea tray This has to be dropped (without breaking the crockery every performance!), but, also, the crockery and teapot need to rattle. It is suggested that items are partially attached to the tray, through a white tray cloth, and that the cup is “velcro’d” to the saucer, to allow it to be dislodged without breaking.

Giant BFG head This appears at the window and can be a large cut-out on a pole, operated by a stage manager, or a more sophisticated puppet-head.

Giant BFG puppet Sitting on a piano and chest of drawers, as in the familiar picture in the original book, this puppet could be operated from inside, or manipulated in vision from outside. The larger the better! And, obviously, the more it resembles the actor playing the BFG, the better. Many people

thought the puppet in the original production was “animatronic”, because it had head and mouth movements, plus arm movements and even leg movements (during whizzpopping!); but all these apparent sophistications were achieved by straight-forward puppetry, and operated by the BFG actor inside.

Rod puppets These are small versions of the Queen of England, Mr Tibbs, the Head of the Army, the Head of the Air Force, Mary and the Undermaid. They should be in scale with the “Sophie” doll, and operated by two rods, one central and the other attached to the wrist to enable the puppets to wave at the end.

Shadow puppets Operated on rods, these need a suitable screen and an appropriate light source from behind. In the original production the screen was a “front cloth” behind which the attic/bedroom could be re-set during the shadow puppet sequence.



The BFG shows Sophie a dream *From L to R: Anthony Pedley (BFG) and Fiona Grogan (Sophie)*



The Queen: "We have a job for you."

*From L to R: Fiona Grogan (Sophie), Mary-Ann Coburn (Queen of England),
David Burrows (Head of Army), Adam Stafford (Head of Air Force)*

ACT I

Sophie's attic playroom/bedroom

This is an exciting space with colourful toys and books on shelves, a rocking horse, a dolls' house, a toy grand piano, musical instruments including a trumpet/horn, a fishing net, a puppet booth, toy helicopters, a suitcase, a dressing-up chest, plus a rail of dressing-up clothes and masks, wigs, crown, etc. and cuddly toys. There is also a chest of drawers, a grandfather clock, Sophie's bed, a door to the landing and perhaps a door to a cupboard. A major feature of the room is a large studio window with curtains, in front of which is a platform, which can be used as a thrust stage. Small staircases lead up to it. Chairs have been placed to one side to give space for Sophie's birthday party

As the Curtain rises this is in full swing. A banner proclaims "Happy Birthday, Sophie". Hastily unwrapped presents lie around

Sophie and her friends, Daniel, Katherine, Rebecca and Sam are playing blind man's buff. Daniel is blindfolded and advances, arms outstretched, towards the others, who circle him. They giggle and shriek as he makes a few near-miss grabs. Eventually he grabs Sophie, who screams with delight

Daniel Gotcha! Now who have we got here?

Sophie (in a deep voice) It's me. Sam!

Laughter

Daniel No it's not. It's . . . Sophie!

Laughter and applause. Daniel takes off the blindfold

Sophie Very good Danny. Now, let's play Grandmother's Footsteps!

Rebecca Bags be Grandmother.

Sophie Right. Becky's Grandmother.

Rebecca turns her back as the others stand in a line

Rebecca Ready.

Sam No peeping.

They advance on tiptoe. Rebecca suddenly turns, but can't catch anyone moving. Another go. This time she catches Danny moving

Rebecca Danny.

Danny goes back to the "start". Rebecca turns her back again. All advance towards her. Katherine rushes to Rebecca and taps her on the back

(With a jump) Katherine!

Katherine OK. My turn.

She takes Rebecca's place. The others go back in line and the game starts again

Suddenly loud, booming footsteps echo from outside

All freeze in fright

Katherine What's that?

Daniel A very fat Grandmother!

They laugh nervously

Suddenly a voice booms from outside

Guy (off) Fee, fi, fo, fum. I'm coming to gobble you up!

The children scream and cluster in a group watching the door, which bursts open

Guy enters

Guy It's only me! Fooled you!

Sophie Guy! It's Guy, everyone, my boring big brother.

All relax

Guy Hi, everyone. Happy birthday, Sophie.

He produces a present from behind his back

Sophie (opening it) Thanks. (Finding a book: *The BFG*) Hey! *The BFG*! My favourite book! I've borrowed it from the library three times!

Guy You've got your very own copy now!

Rebecca What's it about?

Sophie A huge giant.

Guy (advancing on the group) Fee, fi, fo, fum!

Sophie Shut up, Guy. And thanks!

Mum and Dad enter, rather flustered

Mum Hallo, everyone.

All Hallo.

Sophie Look what Guy's given me, Mum.

Mum (not really noticing) Lovely, Sophie. Now, listen, everyone. I don't know quite how to tell you, but . . .

Dad You see, for Sophie's party we booked an entertainer . . .

The children cheer

No, no, listen. He's just phoned to say he's very sorry but he's been taken ill. A tummy bug or something.

Mum So . . . no entertainer. Sorry, folks.

Silence

WAIT, THERE'S MORE!

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