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SF PERUSALS

The Mirrorman

by Brian Way

Edited with notes by Margaret Faulkes

THE MIRRORMAN was first published by Theatre Centre, Ltd., London, England in 1964. It was written and directed by the author for presentation to children in schools and was toured throughout the British Isles for a year. The script was first published by Young Audience Scripts, Edmonton, Canada.

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THE MIRRORMAN
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THE MIRRORMAN

Characters (in order of appearance):
TOYMAN
MIRRORMAN, his reflection
BEAUTY, a doll-that-can-walk-and-talk
WITCH

The scene throughout is the Toyman's workshop.

Type of Participation: Whole audience.

Running time: 50 minutes.

PRODUCTION NOTES

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION: Intimate staging is a necessary condition for the best results in audience participation: the whole room becomes the 'theatre', the actors and audience sharing the same space and the same experiences. The closer the children are to the action, the more genuine their involvement; intimacy thus determines a limited audience - the smaller the better.

CHILDREN OF THIS AGE RANGE (5-8 years) are not yet 'conditioned' to adult theatre behavior; their spontaneous response is triggered by emotional and physical reactions to the characters and action in the play. The genuine quality of such reaction is directly related to the genuine quality of the acting. Caricatures, unbelievable behavior or phony emotions will be recognized by the young audience for what they are.

INTEGRATED PARTICIPATION involving **IMPROVISATIONS:** The play is intended as an experience of live theatre for children, and as such is structured with the characters and their story in mind. Participation is integrated in that action of the play could not continue if the audience did not help the characters at key moments. At such moments, improvisation is required of the characters and of the audience. The structure of the play controls these moments and at other times participation should neither be sought nor encouraged other than through normal sympathetic contact between actor and audience.

CREATIVE DRAMA: While links with educational concepts in Creative Drama are inherent, the play is not intended as an opportunity for spontaneous, uncontrolled creative drama activities to develop. These are best encouraged after the play has ended. Nevertheless, center staging, fluid action and participation relate directly to the kind of creative drama encouraged with elementary age group children, and the directors are referred to the author's text on drama in education: DEVELOPMENT THROUGH DRAMA by Brian Way.

NOTES ON PARTICIPATION ARE GIVEN AT THE END OF THE PLAY.

STAGING THE PLAY

The following notes pertain to the original production of the play which was directed by the author. They are intended as information.

SETTING: A hall/gymnasium using an oval acting area with the audience seated on the floor. Note: the acting area, entrances etc. may be indicated by masking tape or chalk.

LIGHTING: It has been well established that children of this age range have no need of lighting; indeed, lighting can provide a barrier and, if changes occur, interrupt concentration. Daylight, or the normal overhead lighting is all that is necessary.

COSTUMES: Children of this age enjoy strong, primary colors. Costumes should be simple and believable. "Cartoon" clothes imply caricatures. In the original production, a "timeless" quality was effected:

TOYMAN and MIRRORMAN: dark brown breeches, stockings, shoes; gold colored shirt, red neckerchief; grey wig and steel-rimmed reading glasses.

BEAUTY: A two colored blue/pink denim dress, white knee socks.

WITCH: A dark green midi-length dress, with a border of orange lightning flashes; a close concept of witch rather than the traditional tall hat - hump backed - black robed type.

OLD LADY (Witch): A hat and large shawl. Note: this did not completely cover her witch's costume.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The characters of TOYMAN and MIRRORMAN first appeared in a play entitled "The Storytellers" by Brian Way. Reference to their original meeting was made by Mirrorman and Toyman in the first version of The Mirrorman but proved to be confusing for actors/audience and is omitted in this edition of the play.

THE MIRRORMAN

We are in the Toyman's workshop at one end of which is a full-length mirror; suddenly the Toyman runs in, bubbling with delight and excitement, calling to us, the audience, as he enters.

TOYMAN — Listen, everybody, I've done it, I've done it, I'VE DONE IT! I've finished making the most beautiful doll I've ever seen. And d'you know what? She can walk - yes, she can; she can really walk. And she can talk. Think how wonderful that is - she can actually talk! And do you know what I've called her? Do you? (1)* No, of course you don't know. How can you when I haven't told you yet? Well, I'll tell you now. I've called her - Beauty. Beauty. Isn't that a beautiful name for a beautiful doll? Beauty. Ooooh, but you must see Beauty walk. It really is amazing how she does it. All she has to do is listen carefully until she hears this: POM-POM-POM-POM-POM-POM-POM- and at once she starts walking. Would you like to see her do it? Would you? All right, then. But will you help me with the Pom-pom-pom-pom-pom-pom-pom? Will you? All right. Let's try it. (2)

With the Pom-pom-pom-pom-pom-pom-poms, Beauty enters, walking to the beat of the voices, behind the audience and into the acting area. Toyman's voice brings the poms to a stop.

TOYMAN — There - you see. Isn't it wonderful? Thank you for helping with the poms. It makes me a bit hoarse if I have to do it on my own all the time. Now listen - just you listen to this. *(He turns all his concentration on Beauty.)* Hello, Beauty. *(No reaction so he tries again.)* Hello, Beauty. *(She turns her head and smiles at him.)* Hello.

Beauty, because she is a doll, speaks rather stiffly at first...

BEAUTY — Hel-lo.

TOYMAN — *(Gently)* Again. *(No reaction.)* Again.

BEAUTY — A-gain.

TOYMAN — *(Warmly amused and patient.)* No, no, no, no, not "again". Say "hello" again.

BEAUTY — Hel-lo a-gain.

TOYMAN — *(Chuckling both at the mistake and the triumph.)* Well, well, yes, yes - yes, I suppose that is what I asked you to say. *(To audience)* It's very difficult for her, isn't it? But she's doing well. Jolly well, I think. Oooooh, Beauty. You can say hello to all my friends. Go on - they're delighted to meet you.

BEAUTY — Hel-lo - to - all - my - friends.

TOYMAN — Well done, well done, Beauty. *(To audience)* She really is learning very fast. Soon she'll be able to talk all on her own - think how exciting that'll be. I know - let's try walking once more: then you can sit

**Numbers in parentheses refer to participation notes at the end of the play.*

down and have a rest over here while I get ready. Come on - let's try.(3) Pom-pom-pom-pom-pom-pom-pom-pom-pom-pom. *(Beauty stops in front of the hinged box.)* Now, all we need is an Oooooofff Plonk and she'll be able to sit down. Let's try it (4) OOOOOoofff Plonk. *(And Beauty sits)* There we are. See - it does work. All right, Beauty, my beauty, you sit there and have a rest and think about more words while I get tidied up. I shan't be long.

BEAUTY — Don't - be - long.

TOYMAN — No, no, no, no. I shan't be long. All right now?

BEAUTY — All - right - now. Thank-you.

TOYMAN — *(Tickled all over with delight-to audience)* Isn't she beautiful? Oooh - my book. I must get my book. I won't be a moment.

And he rushes off to get his book.

BEAUTY — *(To audience)* Where - has - he - gone?

Answers of varying kinds may come (5) in which case she can discuss the matter until the Toyman returns with his book. It is an enormous book with a big label on it saying: INSTRUCTIONS — WHO? WHEN? WHAT?

TOYMAN — Here we are.

BEAUTY — Hel-lo. Where - have - you - been?

TOYMAN — I've been to get my book. Oh, now, come on Beauty, you're supposed to be having a rest. Now off you go to sleep. Off to sleep. That's it, fast asleep...fast asleep.

And she goes to sleep.

TOYMAN — She needs the rest, you know. Too much excitement - well, you know. Now, where are we? (6) Oh, yes, the book. Of course, of course.

For all his years experience the Toyman has never ever fully mastered the arts and needs of bookmanship; He doesn't really like it and, though he appreciates the basic needs, he's always glad to forget about it. Over the years, this has brought about a kind of absent-mindedness every time he has anything to do with the book. So now he peers at its front cover, almost as though he were reminding himself about it.

TOYMAN — The book. *(Reading)* INSTRUCTIONS; WHO? WHAT? WHEN? *(To Audience)* It has to be, you know. If I didn't have this book I should get in such a muddle. I'd make all the wrong things and send them to the wrong people at the wrong time and the wrong address - oh, it really would be just about as higgledy as piggledy could get. But this gets it all sorted out. It tells me exactly **what** to make, **who** to make it for, and **when** I promised it would be ready by. So let's see who I made Beauty for, then I'll know where to take her. *(Looking away from the book*

with a moment of sadness) Not that I want to take her anywhere. Not really. I'm so thrilled about her that I'd like to keep her all to myself. Still. *(Cheering up again)* No point in thinking like that. I wouldn't be a very good toymaker if I kept all the toys just to myself. So, let's see. *(Reading)* "Doll that goes ma-ma", "Doll that stands on one leg", "Doll that has hiccoughs" *(Chuckling)* - that was a very tricky one to make, I can tell you - *(Reading again)* "Doll that giggles", - ah, here we are - "Doll that walks and talks" - page ten. Let's see now. Page 10. (7) Page 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10. *(Looking down the page)* Doll that can walk - and - talk. Here it is. What! What's this? No name!! Oh dear, what have I done now? No name! No - ah! Now I remember. I was standing in the shop when in walks this old lady. *(He acts both roles as if it were in the present)* "Good morning" says she. "Good morning" says I. "Could I", says she, "have a doll that walks and talks?" "Well," says I, "I'm afraid you can't because I haven't made one." "Well," says she, "would you please make one for me. I'll call for it on - *(And the Toyman gives whatever is today's date)*". "What name?" says I. And by the time I've found my book she's gone. Disappeared altogether. Just like that. Poof! Gone! Hey - just a minute - what was that date again? (8) *(He repeats today's date).* Why - that's today! Hooo - what good luck I've finished it in time. Well, I'd better get tidied up in case she comes. No good looking untidy when a customer arrives.

He goes to the mirror and, as he reaches it, so too does the Mirrorman who, of course, is very similar to the Toyman in such externals as clothes and so on. He is not so, however, in temperament (nor necessarily very exactly so in physique); he can be and often is a cantankerous old so and so, but at the same time is extremely likeable so that we, the audience, are anxious and willing to help him when he needs our help. As the Toyman arrives at the mirror he is carrying his big book, and the Mirrorman is carrying a similar book labelled in the same manner. Straightway the Toyman puts down his book on the box which supports the mirror. Since the Mirrorman is his reflection he does exactly the same and proceeds to make identical movements at the identical moment as Toyman begins to tidy himself up, humming and chatting to himself as he does so.

TOYMAN — Oh, I don't think I look so bad. No worse than usual, anyway. Tidy the eyebrows . . . that's it . . . smooth down the hair . . . there and there . . . and - oh dear! This mirror does get dirty; doesn't seem to make any difference how often I clean it - the next second it's all dirty again. Never mind. Do it again. *(He takes a dusting cloth from his pocket, with which he now cleans the mirror)* . . . . . There. That's better. *(He shakes the dust away)* Much better. For a little while anyway. Oh dear! I'm going to sneeze . . . ah - ah-ah-ah-ah-ah-tishoo. *(The Mirrorman sneezes too)* . . . ah-ah-ah-ah-ah-ah-ah-ah-tishoo . . . ah-ah-ah-ah - ah *(And he just manages to stop the third sneeze - but the Mirrorman does sneeze. Toyman is astonished and swings round to look at him.*

then - to audience) That's funny! Did he sneeze when I didn't? (9) I think he did, you know. *(He looks again but all seems well.)* I wonder what he's up to? I'll soon find out.

He begins a sequence of movements, some of them slow and calculated, some fast and sudden. The Mirrorman keeps exactly with him at first. Then Toyman crouches down behind his book, ready to bob up, but before he does, Mirrorman calls out from behind his book-

MIRROR — Help!

Toyman is astonished and remains very still. Then slowly and a little fearfully peers over the top of his book - Mirrorman does the same.

TOYMAN — Oh dear, I don't like this a bit.

And rather involuntarily, prompted more by fear than cunning, he begins a sequence of very quick and agile movements until the Mirrorman can't stand it any more.

MIRROR — Stop, stop, stop, stop, STOP.

Toyman drops to the floor in an astonished heap.

TOYMAN — Well, I never did.

MIRROR — No, and I never did neither. Bobbing up and down, backwards and forwards . . .

TOYMAN — Well, you see -

MIRROR — From side to side round and round . .

TOYMAN — Well, it's -

MIRROR — Once and for all will you kindly note I am not a jack-in-the-box.

TOYMAN — But I didn't realize. Otherwise -

MIRROR — Did you or did you not hear me call "Help"?

TOYMAN — Oh, so it was you.

MIRROR — Of course it was me, silly. Who else could it have been?

TOYMAN — That's what I wondered.

MIRROR — I've been trying to attract your attention for days.

TOYMAN — Have you? I didn't know.

MIRROR — Of course you didn't know. You wouldn't pay any attention. Didn't matter what I did - tap on the mirror, breathe on it and make my side all cloudy - even throw dust on it - you take no notice at all.

TOYMAN — When have you done all those things?

MIRROR — All sorts of times - when you've been wandering about the shop, and when you've been writing in your book - even when you've been having a snooze. And all you do is mutter to yourself "that's funny - do I hear noises?" and then take no more notice.

TOYMAN — But you never said anything when I was standing in front of the mirror.

MIRROR — Of course I didn't silly. I'm not allowed to. It's one of the rules. *(Opening up his book)* It says so here - where are we? Ah - here we are. Rule 7: "In front of the mirror you must only do and say what the other person does and says." See! That's rule 7.

TOYMAN — Then are you breaking the rule now?

MIRROR — No, of course not, silly. Otherwise I wouldn't do it. Listen - there's another rule about breaking the rule - *(He looks it up because he is becoming a bit flustered himself about the logic of all this)* - it's all quite clear really. Here, listen. "This rule can only be broken if and when you really need help." See?

TOYMAN — Yes, I see. I'm sorry.

MIRROR — Good, that's settled. Now -

TOYMAN — But what sort of help do you need?

MIRROR — Time enough to tell you that when I've come through the mirror.

TOYMAN — Are - are you going to come through the mirror?

MIRROR — Of course I am, silly. You can't be much help if you're in that room and I'm in this, can you?

TOYMAN — No, I suppose not.

MIRROR — Come on, then, I'm ready. *(He stands with his hands flat against the mirror. Pause.)* Come on then.

TOYMAN — What?

MIRROR — *(Becoming rather cantakerous)* What do you mean "what"?

TOYMAN — Well - er - what?

MIRROR — I can't just wander through the mirror like water down a drain. It's very difficult business and I have to have help with it.

TOYMAN — Yes, but what do you want me to do?

MIRROR — Well, you have to - you have to keep on and on - no. It's not that. That's for something else. Oh dear - you've got me all muddled. Wait a minute. *(He opens his book)* Let's see. *(Reading)* "Instructions - for getting through mirrors. Page one thousand two hundred and thirty-four". We'd better get it right. It's very difficult you know. Here we are -

page one two three four. "Instructions for getting through mirrors: Take more than 100 *(Or whatever number is in the audience)* voices and make them go Hummmmmmmmmmm".

TOYMAN — So we all help with the hum.

MIRROR — If there are more than 100 of you - yes please.

TOYMAN — Oh, I'm sure we're more than a hundred, aren't we? (10) Good. Now, you get ready and -

MIRROR — *(Impatiently)* I **am** ready.

TOYMAN — All right, all right, all right. there's no need to be cross.

MIRROR — I am not cross - I am urgent.

TOYMAN — *(A bit irritated himself)* All right then.

MIRROR — All right, I'm ready.

TOYMAN — Now - hummmmmmmmmmmmm (11).

As we all hum, the Mirrorman slowly oozes his way through the mirror. Note - he has emphasized that this is a difficult business. Beauty wakes up with the hum.

TOYMAN — There! You've done it. you've done it.

MIRROR — *(Pleased)* Of course I've done it. *(To audience)* Thanks very much.

Suddenly Mirrorman remembers something terribly important -

MIRROR — *(With consternation)* Oh no! No, No!

TOYMAN — What's the matter?

MIRROR — I've forgotten the most important thing of all - my book! I've forgotten my book. I must go back for it! Oh, dear, I hope I'm not too late. Ohhh - LOOK!!! -

And we all look where he is pointing - through the mirror. . .and there is the Witch moving slowly and stealthily towards where he left his book.

MIRROR — Oh no, no, no. Help me everybody. Quickly.

TOYMAN — What do we do?

MIRROR — Wish. Wish with all your might that she doesn't reach the book. Quickly - wish - wish . . . (12)

We all wish with all our might - and as the influence of the wish reaches her, the Witch finds it more and more difficult to move towards the book, struggle as she may to do so. Her fingers nearly reach it...

MIRROR — Harder - wish harder - wish - wish -

And as we wish harder, so we slowly drive the Witch away from the book, still reaching out towards it . . . till suddenly she gives up and turns and runs away.

MIRROR — Oh, gosh, that was a near thing. Thanks everyone. Now, there's no time to lose. Help me back through the mirror so that I can fetch it.

TOYMAN — Are you ready?

MIRROR — *(Standing with his hands flat against the mirror)* Yes, yes, I'm ready.

TOYMAN — Now - the hum (13)

Again we all hum - and the Mirrorman goes back through the mirror, picks up his book, turns and with the hum comes back through - just in time -

TOYMAN — Look out!

Mirrorman leaps down from the mirror box just as the Witch again appears - she goes swiftly to where the book was - searches distractedly for it - can't find it and suddenly looks up through the mirror . . .

WITCH — It will soon be mine - it will soon be mine -

She turns and disappears swiftly.

BEAUTY — I - don't - like - her - one - little - bit.

MIRROR — Who said that?

TOYMAN — Oh! This is my new doll. Beauty. I've just finished making her and . . .

BEAUTY — How - do - you - do?

MIRROR — Ah, yes, I've watched you making her. How do you do? Very clever of you.

TOYMAN — Watched me?

MIRROR — Of course I've watched you. When I've not been busy somewhere else.

TOYMAN — Somewhere else? Do you mean you go to other places besides here?

MIRROR — Of course I do, silly. I cover the whole of this block. That's why I have to take the book wherever I go. You can't be too careful. If I let it out of my sight for one minute, anything might happen.

TOYMAN — But your book's exactly like my book. *(He fetches his own)*

MIRROR — Naturally - when I'm working with you. But only on the outside even then. The inside's quite different.

TOYMAN — Really?

MIRROR — Of course. It has all my spells and my magic and my instructions in it. That's why the Witch wants to get it. But we're going to stop her - we've got to stop her. If we don't stop her -

TOYMAN — So that's what you were calling help about.

MIRROR — What else? I tell you if we don't stop her, then - then -

TOYMAN — Then what?

MIRROR — I don't know "then what". But it'll be terrible, I tell you, terrible -

TOYMAN — All right, all right - stop going on about it. You'll give us the creeps. We'll all help you, but it'll have to wait a bit.

MIRROR — But we can't wait.

TOYMAN — We'll have to wait.

MIRROR — No, no, NO.

TOYMAN — Yes, yes, YES.

MIRROR — Why?

TOYMAN — Because - well, for the very simple reason that I have my work to do.

MIRROR — You can take a day off.

TOYMAN — Yes, but not today. I have a customer coming today - any minute in fact.

MIRROR — Who?

TOYMAN — I - I don't know her name. But she's coming in to collect Beauty, and we'll have to wait for her.

BEAUTY — I don't mind waiting till tommorrow. *(Her speech becomes more fluent from now on, retaining a staccato quality.)*

TOYMAN — That's very kind of you Beauty. But it's out of the question. I never let a customer down once I've given my promise.

BEAUTY — Listen!

As we all listen we hear knocking in the shop outside.

MIRROR — Maybe that's your customer now. I hope so - then we can get on with things.

BEAUTY — Oh, but please, I don't want to go yet. I want to stay and help.

TOYMAN — Well, you may have to go, Beauty.

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