SCRIPT SAMPLE

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ROBIN HOOD

The Legend. Re-written.

by Carl Grose

SAMUEL FRENCH

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ROBIN HOOD was commissioned by and first performed at Regent's Park Open Air Theatre, London on 23 June 2023. The cast was as follows:

MARIAN ..... Ellen Robertson
WOODNUT ..... Dumile Lindiwe Sibanda
THE BALLADEER /JENNY MUCH .....Nandi Bhebhe
LITTLE JOAN..... Charlotte Beaumont
MARY TUCK..... Elexi Walker
WILL SCATLOCKE..... Samuel Gosrani
BOB MUCH ..... Dave Fishley
BALDWYN ..... Alex Mugnaioni
SIMPKINS..... Katherine Manners
THE KING..... Paul Hunter
BETTY .....Stephanie Marion Fayerman
GISBURNE .....Ira Mandela Siobhan
BRASSWILT / ROBIN HOOD 1 / GUARD / VILLAGER.....TJ Holmes
BRICKBROKE / ROBIN HOOD 2 / GUARD / VILLAGER.. Shaun Yusuf McKee
BONEWEATHER / ROBIN HOOD 3 / GUARD / VILLAGER .....
.....Simon Oskarsson

MUSICIANS..... Amena Alicia El-kindy, Taya Ming, Marta Miranda

CREATIVE TEAM
DIRECTOR ..... Melly Still
COMPOSER, MUSICAL SUPERVISOR & ADDITIONAL LYRICS.....
.....Jenny Moore
SET DESIGNER .....Chiara Stephenson
COSTUME DESIGNER .....Samuel Wyer
LIGHTING DESIGNER .....Zoe Spurr
SOUND DESIGNER .....Emma Laxton
MOVEMENT DIRECTOR .....Mike Ashcroft
ILLUSION DESIGNER ..... John Bulleid
MUSICAL DIRECTOR ..... Joley Cragg
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR .....Poppy Franziska
ASSOCIATE SET DESIGNER .....Mauricio Elorriaga, Olivia Walters
PROPS SUPERVISOR..... Poppy Morris for Propworks
COSTUME SUPERVISOR.....Sabia Smith
CASTING DIRECTOR ..... Polly Jerrold

VOICE & TEXT DIRECTOR . . . . . Jeanette Nelson
DRAMATURG . . . . . Deirdre O'Halloran
SEASON ASSOCIATE: INTIMACY SUPPORT . . . . . Ingrid Mackinnon

COMPANY STAGE MANAGER . . . . . Lou Ballard
DEPUTY STAGE MANAGER . . . . . Sophia "Saf" Horrocks
ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER . . . . . Roma Radford
PRODUCTION MANAGER . . . . . Chris Easton

REGENT'S PARK OPEN AIR THEATRE

Established in 1932, the multi-award-winning Regent's Park Open Air Theatre is one of the largest independent, not-for-profit producing theatres in London. Situated in the beautiful surroundings of a Royal Park, the theatre plays a unique role in the UK's cultural landscape and has a worldwide reputation for creating popular, enriching and unexpected theatre that provides a lens into the here and now.

Led by Joint Chief Executives Timothy Sheader (Artistic Director) and James Pidgeon (Executive Director), the theatre welcomes over 140,000 visitors every year. Recent productions include *Lord of the Flies*, *The Seagull*, *Peter Pan*, *Henry V*, *On The Town*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *As You Like It*, *Little Shop of Horrors*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Evita*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Carousel*, *Legally Blonde*, *101 Dalmatians*, *Antigone* and *Once On This Island*.

Co-productions include *The Turn of the Screw* and *Hansel and Gretel* (with English National Opera; *Running Wild* (with Chichester Festival Theatre) and *Anansi the Spider* (with Unicorn Theatre). Productions have transferred to the West End and North America, where the theatre's Olivier and Evening Standard award-winning *Jesus Christ*

Superstar is currently touring. A UK tour of *Jesus Christ Superstar* will commence in September 2023.

In 2023, Regent's Park Open Air Theatre presented two new commissioned works: an adaptation of Ben Okri's new fairytale *Every Leaf A Hallelujah*, adapted by Chinonyerem Odimba for everyone aged 4+, and a thrilling new take on the classic tale, *Robin Hood: The Legend. Rewritten.* by Carl Grose. The theatre also produced work for children and families throughout the entirety of the 2023 season, including *The Tempest* re-imagined for everyone aged six and over in a co-production with the Unicorn Theatre.

For more information, visit openairtheatre.com.

CHARACTERS

MARIAN
WOODNUT
THE BALLADEER / JENNY MUCH
LITTLE JOAN
MARY TUCK
WILL SCATLOCKE
BOB MUCH
BALDWYN
SIMPKINS
THE KING
BETTY
GISBURNE
THREE ROBIN HOODS
BARONS BONEWEATHER, BRASSWILT & BRICKBROKE

And, where we can:

VILLAGERS
THE SHERIFF'S MEN
A CHEST FULL OF SEVERED FINGERS

TIME AND SETTING

The play is set somewhere between Mediaeval and Contemporary. This is not a historical retelling. It exists in its own folk tale world. We're not in Sherwood. We're in the ancient Green Wood of Old England.

There are several locations – the castle, the village, the forest, the underground – that sometimes play concurrently. There are hard cuts and fast edits. Like in a film. Your playing space, and hence your stage design, should be fluid and fleet and fast. Scene changes will kill the flow.

A Note on The Balladeer

The balladeer was a stable of the Robin Hood form back in the day. It's how these tales were originally communicated, stories told through songs called ballads. I've used that convention here, but how you want her to communicate her text (be it sung, spoken, sung-spoken or a mix of all three) is entirely up to you.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

There's so much of the Robin Hood legend that still delights us to this day. We love the cunning, cleverness and courage of the outsiders in the woods as they over-throw the powers-that-be. Who doesn't love the idea of robbing of the rich to give to the poor (except the rich)? We love the adventure, the romance, the iconic characters and moments... all of this is contained within in epic fashion. The only element that seemed slightly hackneyed in approaching this new version was the dear old man himself.

And so, I've retold the story, but without him. Kind of. There's still a flash of green tights (how could there not be?) but he isn't the main character by any stretch. Here, he's relegated to the side-lines and made to watch (indeed, he even learns a thing or two). The main character is a young girl called Woodnut. The story is experienced through her eyes and it's hoped she brings a fresh perspective to the tale.

There's still the dastardly sheriff, Marian, Tuck and Will Scarlet, but no Nottingham, Sherwood or Prince John. This is a subversive origin story, what 'actually happened' before the Elizabethan playwright Anthony Munday turned Hood from working class hero to disinherited earl and Disney turned him into a talking fox. This is a folktale for our times. There's no historical connections at all. But it does, I hope, provide a wildly thrilling contemporary take on the story. It's about England. It questions who owns this land and who owns this country's myths, stories and culture. The quick answer is... we all do.

This is the story of the fight to get them back.

Whether you're reading it, or mounting a new production, I hope you have fun.

And let those arrows fly!

Carl Grose

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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PART ONE

(Before us, an England of two halves; a kingdom divided.)

(From the top down, the **KING** *sits in a castle turret, on his throne. He drowsily sips tea from a cup.* **BALDWYN***, the sheriff, bows and prepares a decree for the* **KING***. Elsewhere, his wife* **MARIAN** *sits, drinking from a goblet and* **SIMPKINS***, Baldwyn's no-nonsense assistant, hovers nearby. Below, in the village, we find an assortment of beleaguered souls including* **BETTY***, the village elder,* **BOB MUCH***, the miller, who slowly turns a handle to grind the wheat he hasn't got, and his daughter,* **WOODNUT***, a child of ten, who sweeps.)*

(Enter the **BALLADEER** *from the forest. She is our storyteller.)*

BALLADEER. So, you get the picture?

Does this look familiar?

A kingdom cracked

Right down the centre…

Another dawn, another day

For this broke-down village

Between palace and forest

Where they're scared the sheriff's men

Might come again…

Woodsmoke and fear hang in the air

Eyes cast down to the hard stony ground

And whilst the rich and royal up there thrive –

BALDWYN. Your majesty...

KING. I'm sure I don't know what I'm signing half the time, Anthony.

(The **KING** *signs a decree.)*

BALLADEER. These poor souls hang by their nails to survive!

EVERYONE. Another dawn, another day

Another dawn, another –

*(***BALDWYN** *and* **SIMPKINS** *enter the village. She blows a horrible horn. Everyone stops, fearful.)*

SIMPKINS. Stop singing, you lot! Sheriff Baldwyn has something to say!

BALDWYN. *(Holds up the papers.)* I have here a new law, the royal signature freshly upon it. All will make their contribution to the royal coffers today. Failure to pay will result in severe punishment. No excuses, no exceptions. Thank you, Simpkins.

(A ripple of dismay goes through the **VILLAGERS**. **SIMPKINS** *starts going from door to door, collecting from those who have nothing. Two of the* **SHERIFF'S MEN** *[brutes with bats] join her.)*

SIMPKINS. Knock, knock! Tax please? Thank you.

Knock, knock! Tax please? Thank you...

*(***WOODNUT** *watches on.)*

Knock, knock! Tax please?

*(***BETTY***, a village elder, answers the door.)*

BETTY. Hello dear.

SIMPKINS. Tax please.

BETTY. I got nuthin for you, I'm afraid.

SIMPKINS. The king demands one quarter of your earnings, old woman.

BETTY. Then the King can take one quarter of bugger all.

SIMPKINS. *(Shouts.)* Take her away!

(Poor **BETTY** *is dragged off – but not without a fight.)*

BALDWYN. An example must be made! Good work, Simpkins. Next?

SIMPKINS. Knock, knock. Tax please?

*(***WOODNUT** *runs home to her father,* **BOB***.)*

WOODNUT. Sheriff's come for his taxes! What we gonna do, dad?

BOB. We've nuthin to give them. What can we do?

WOODNUT. We better think of summin quick cus they'll drag us to the Hanging Post for scaldings and gougings and God knows what else. They've already taken poor old Betty.

(Beat.)

If mum were here she'd stand and fight.

BOB. As she did in life, Woodnut. And look where that got her.

SIMPKINS. *(Outside.)* Knock, knock! Tax please!

WOODNUT. What should we do? Dad?

(But **BOB** *is in a daze.* **WOODNUT** *realises she's on her own.)*

BALLADEER. She's about to face the enemy

And these goading beasts have jagged teeth

Lash down that wayward tongue, girl

And pretend you feel no grief…

SIMPKINS. BOOMBOOMBOOM! Much the miller? Open up!

*(***WOODNUT** *appears at the door.)*

Tax!

WOODNUT. My father's been struck down by a terrible sadness.

SIMPKINS. Then go fetch your mother and she can pay me.

WOODNUT. My mother is dead. That's why he's in such deep despair.

SIMPKINS. So how do you intend to pay?

WOODNUT. Dad'll teach me the ropes soon enough. Then I can work. Then I can pay. I just need more time.

SIMPKINS. More time?!

BALDWYN. Problem, Simpkins?

SIMPKINS. It's the old 'dead mother' routine, sir.

BALDWYN. Allow me…

(He barges his way in. **WOODNUT** *stares daggers at the sheriff.* **BALDWYN** *scopes the place out, glancing at* **BOB**.*)*

Tell me child, when did your mother die?

WOODNUT. When you gave the order to storm our village.

BALDWYN. Ah. Last week.

WOODNUT. She was struck by an arrow fired by one of your men.

BALDWYN. If she was one of those hooligans attacking the palace, she got what was coming to her.

WOODNUT. She was protecting the forest and you killed her for it.

BALDWYN. That is a very serious accusation, child.

WOODNUT. S'a very serious crime, sheriff.

BALDWYN. Slander is against the law.

WOODNUT. What isn't, these days?

BALDWYN. O, I can think of a few more things yet.

(To **SIMPKINS**.*)* Take her to the Hanging Post and cut out her tongue.

*(***WOODNUT** *is seized.)*

BOB. Wait. I'll pay.

BALDWYN. Ah! There we are, you see, Simpkins? The melancholy miller has miraculously located the king's payment, which means you get to keep your tongue, little adder!

*(***BALDWYN** *watches a broken* **BOB** *open his satchel to find money.* **WOODNUT** *goes to him.)*

SIMPKINS. Masterfully done, sir. Textbook extraction.

BALDWYN. Apply pressure where it hurts, Simpkins. They soon reveal themselves for the crooks they are. We make a good team, you and I.

BOB. *(Whispers.)* Woodnut? You must run.

WOODNUT. Run? But where's the money?

BOB. Head for the forest. Find your mother's grave. Remember what she taught you? About how to find your way in the woods?

WOODNUT. *(Remembers.)* Tickle for trout, flint for fire...

BOB. Take this.

(He hands her the satchel of things, but not before taking something for himself.)

WOODNUT. Mum's forest things?

BOB. She'd want you to have them. Now, run –

WOODNUT. Shall I meet you there?

BOB. And don't look back.

WOODNUT. But dad... I'll meet you there?

BALDWYN. Come on, Much. Give us what we're owed.

BOB. *(Steeling himself.)* With pleasure...

*(***BOB** *reveals he has a knife and swings for* **BALDWYN**.*)*

SIMPKINS. Look out, sir!

*(***SIMPKINS** *throws herself in the way of the blade. In a mad flurry,* **BOB** *slashes her cheek in the chaos. Sheriff's men roughly disarm* **BOB** *and force him to his knees.)*

BALDWYN. Attempted murder on an officer of the crown? That's a hanging offence, man.

*(***SIMPKINS** *twists Bob's arm behind his back.)*

WOODNUT. No!

BOB. Woodnut! Run!

*(***WOODNUT** *tears out of the house and heads for the forest.)*

BALDWYN. Let her go. The forest will devour her.

BOB. She knows how to befriend wolves.

BALDWYN. O, there's worse than wolves in those woods, miller. She won't last five minutes when the outlaws catch a whiff of her tender young flesh…the desperate, the deranged, the dregs of humanity.

*(***BOB** *tries to go for him again, but he's pinned.)*

SIMPKINS. Take him away!

(Before **BOB** *can protest he is dragged out.)*

BALDWYN. Blamed me for killing her mother? Whatever next, Simpkins? How's the cheek?

SIMPKINS. Just a scratch, sir.

BALDWYN. *(To the* **VILLAGERS**.*)* It pains me to uphold such penalties but an example must be made!

(To the village.)

The king's peace be with you!

(Suddenly, music crashes in [Erich Korngold's soaring strings] and –)

(Enter **ROBIN HOOD**.*)*

(He's your classic Errol Flynn type. Feather in cap. Green tights. Arms akimbo.)

ROBIN HOOD. Have no fear, poor villagers, you need not hang your heads! I am here! Robin Hood! The outlaw king! Lord of the Wood! Protector of the poor! Scourge of the greedy!

BALLADEER. Sorry. Can I help you?

ROBIN HOOD. Why no, goodly maid, tis I who have come to help *you*.

(Sings.)

THE NOBLEST HERO, THE LORD OF THE WOOD
I'M ROBIN, I'M ROBIN, I'M ROBIN THE –

BALLADEER. Actually, we're doing something slightly different today.

ROBIN HOOD. Different?

BALLADEER. We're telling the *true* story.

ROBIN HOOD. And there is none truer than I! Where is my bow? My quiver? My quarterstaff? They should be here… Little John, that trickster!

BALLADEER. What I mean is, we don't need you today. Put your feet up, take a seat and enjoy from there.

ROBIN HOOD. Look here, if you don't let me do my job, I shall be forced to settle this through brute strength and may the best man win! Huzzah!

(Sings.)

FAL-LA-LA! FOLL-DEE-DOO-DAY! FOLL-DEE-DAY-DOO!
FAL-LA-LA, LA, LA! WAH-HAY, NONNY-NOO!
OF ALL ENGLISH LEGENDS THAT EVER WERE TOLD
THE GREATEST OF ALL WAS OF ROBIN THE –

(The Balladeer's band creep in with a sack and try to bag him. **ROBIN HOOD** *is chased off.)*

(Forest.)

*(***WOODNUT** *tears through the trees and emerges into clearing where her mother's grave lies. It is a broken mill stone with a heart scratched into it.* **WOODNUT** *falls down before it, breathless and scared.)*

BALLADEER. This shady glade

Her mother's favourite place

This humble grave

A cracked millstone to mark

The ground where she lay

Bones and roots, bones and earth

Yield, child – here in the wood's heart

Yield, child…

(Somewhere, a strange bird cries. **WOODNUT** *looks about the place.)*

WOODNUT. *(Remembering her lessons.)* Yield before Nature, she will respect you

Take too much, she will bite back

Don't drink water from still silent pools

(She starts to build a small fire.)

Always build shelter facing windward

Deadwood moss makes the best pillows

Dry sticks, never wet

Always carry –

(She looks in the bag and finds –)

Flint and steel!

(She strikes it. First, nothing. She tries again – sparks! She starts a little fire.)

Beware the ivory funnel mushroom

Be patient for the trout in the stream…

Trout!

(A trout swims by. **WOODNUT** *careful dips her hands in the water and gently tickles it…)*

Tickle, tickle, tickle…

(She whips out the trout, but it flips everywhere, jumps back in the stream. The trout makes a 'spolsh!'.)

Fine! Wasn't hungry away!

(The trout swims away.)

(She stares into the fire.)

Basterd sheriff. You ain't takin my dad too. I won't let ya.

(She goes through the bag and finds a pot of something.)

I know you said this would only work once, mum, if ever things got proper bad…

BALLADEER. This enchanted spot

All shimmer and hush

Where time has no place

A place between places

A place of great ancientness

Where the skin between worlds is thin

Where she came to drink Nature in…

(As the song is sung, **WOODNUT** *throws a pinch of powder into the fire. The flames smoke green. She daubs a thumb print of ash between her eyes. She looks about the forest. Over the fire, she stands, closes her eyes and casts a spell.)*