Acting Edition

Ken Ludwig's Sherwood

The Adventures of Robin Hood

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SAMUEL FRENCH

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KEN LUDWIG'S SHERWOOD premiered at The Old Globe on July 22, 2017. The performance was directed by Jessica Stone, with scenic design by Tim Mackabee, costume design by Gregg Barnes, lighting design by Jason Lyons, original music and sound design by Fitz Patton, and fight direction by Jacob Grigolia-Rosenbaum. The production stage manager was Jess Slocum. The cast was as follows:

ROBIN HOOD . . . . . Daniel Reece
MAID MARIAN . . . . . Meredith Garretson
FRIAR TUCK . . . . . Andy Grotelueschen
LITTLE JOHN . . . . . Paul Whitty
DEORWYNN . . . . . Suzelle Palacios
SIR GUY OF GISBOURNE . . . . . Manoel Felciano
THE SHERIFF OF NOTTINGHAM . . . . . Kevin Cahoon
PRINCE JOHN . . . . . Michael Boatman

CHARACTERS

ROBIN HOOD

MAID MARIAN

FRIAR TUCK

LITTLE JOHN

DEORWYNN (pronounced "*Deer*-win")

SIR GUY OF GISBOURNE

THE SHERIFF OF NOTTINGHAM

PRINCE JOHN

The following characters were doubled in the original production and can be doubled in subsequent productions. Alternatively, each of these roles can be played by a separate actor:

HELOISE, **MIDWIFE**, **ROBERT**, **MASTER BLADEN**, **MASTER GODWIN**, **ALIZE**, **RODERICK**, **FAWKES**, **MARGERY**, **BLIND MAN**, **MONKS**, **TANKRED**, **FATHER GOPH**, **BAJKA**, **GÁSPÁR**, **MUCH THE MILLER**, **SIMON**, **ANSGOT**, **SOLDIERS**, **FORESTERS**, **JACQUES**, **ETIENNE**, **MATEO**, **DIEGO**, **MAXIMILIAN**, **MATTHIAS**, **ARCHERS**, and **EXECUTIONERS**.

SETTING

Sherwood Forest and the town of Nottingham, England

TIME

The year 1194

AUTHOR'S NOTES

Anyone producing this piece should bear two things in mind: First, it's a play with a very real story to tell, about courage, about finding yourself within yourself, and about showing compassion and generosity for those in our society who are most in need. As Robin puts it after Deorwynn is captured and he vows to save her, "We travel together. That's the bargain we make in life. We're here for each other. Rich, poor, English, foreign. That's our bargain for living."

Second, it's a play that thrives on theatrical invention. There's joy to be had with this kind of play in breaking theatre boundaries and in making the piece feel celebratory. Isn't that what Shakespeare's Globe in Elizabethan London was all about? In this spirit, the music, sounds, and lighting can be especially helpful in creating Sherwood Forest and the world of Nottingham. The sword fighting should be bold, exciting, and glamorous. Arrows should seem to fly around the stage; we should hear the distinctive *shoooomp* of their travel and *thunk* of their arrival. Overall, the piece should feel like a thrilling romantic adventure with a generous heart.

In the original production, Friar Tuck and the rest of the cast achieved a deliriously happy rapport with the audience, making everyone in the house feel like part of the story. One minute the audience became the denizens of Sherwood Forest, gathered to hear Robin's speech at the Great Oak. The next minute they were the Barons of the North, rising at the entrance of Prince John. Finally, in Act Two, the audience became the crowd of onlookers at the Great Archery Tournament. In these moments, the audience became ageless. Years melted away, and all was joy.

Historically, the story of Robin Hood emerged little by little from a scattering of medieval ballads in the 14th and 15th centuries. In Shakespeare's day, two Elizabethan plays by a man named Anthony Munday expanded the story. Then Sir Walter Scott added new aspects to the legend in *Ivanhoe* in 1820. Finally, the legend as we know it today was consolidated by Hollywood. There were some early silent films in the 1920s. Then came the Errol Flynn masterpiece in 1938. Since that time, there have been dozens of new iterations, the beloved Disney animation of 1973 among them.

My hope is that future producers of *Sherwood* will continue to be inspired by the story of this band of outlaws who stood for all that was honorable in life, and that, together, we can add a new chapter to this timeless legend.

ACT ONE

Scene One
Beginnings

*(Country rock music is playing during preshow. Something like "Heads Carolina, Tails California," sung by Danielle Bradbury.)**

(We hear a fanfare of trumpets, and suddenly we're in the town square in Nottingham, England in 1194. We see a scaffold and a hangman's noose, and on the scaffold stands **SIR GUY OF GISBOURNE**, *a dangerous man of unpleasant aspect, making an announcement to the hundreds of peasants, yeomen, and guards in the square. Also on the scaffold is the* **SHERIFF OF NOTTINGHAM**.*)*

*(***SIR GUY***'s announcement is a snarling, impassioned indictment of the man he hates most in the world, and the scene crackles with emotion on all sides.)*

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SIR GUY. Know all ye present that the outlaw known as Robin Hood dies this day in the year of our Lord 1194, and that for his foul transgressions against the laws of England, he shall hereby be hanged by his neck until dead! Bring forth the prisoner.

SHERIFF. Bring forth the prisoner!

(To a drumbeat, the **PRISONER** *walks onto the scaffold. He is wearing a distinctive green robe with a cowl covering his face, and he is accompanied by four* **EXECUTIONERS** *dressed in black.)*

(The **PRISONER** *shrugs off his cowl and we see* **ROBIN HOOD** *for the first time. Cries from the townspeople: "Robin!" "It's Robin!" "We love you, Robin!")*

SIR GUY. Have you anything to say for yourself?

ROBIN HOOD. Yes, I have a great deal to say for myself. That your precious Prince John has usurped the throne of our true sovereign, King Richard the Lionheart, that he has ground the good people of England under the heel of his unjust oppression, and that he is a *traitor* to the very name of –

(Whap! **SIR GUY** *slaps* **ROBIN** *across the jaw.)*

SIR GUY. Silence! For your defiance, you shall pay the price with your life, *now hang this man immediately*!

(Cries from the crowd: "No!" "Please God!" "Someone save him!" At this moment, **FRIAR TUCK** *appears. He is one of Robin's men, a gravel-voiced, tough-as-shoe-leather man of conviction and irony.)*

FRIAR TUCK. Stop!

(To the audience.)

Save you all. The name is Tuck, Friar Tuck, and we will soon discover if this fellow creature of the Almighty dies by the rope in agony, his eyes oozing yellow puss,

his body twitching in jerks and spasms, his breath gasping, with hideous gobbets of blood being vomited forth from his tightening gorge; or if he is happily saved by his merry band of accomplices, his friends like me. What do you think? Shall we take a vote?

(To a specific member of the audience.)

What do you think is going to happen? Yes you, madam. Call it out.

(If the person says he'll be saved, **FRIAR TUCK** *ad-libs, "And I suppose you also believe in the Easter Bunny..." If the person says that Robin will die,* **FRIAR TUCK** *ad-libs, "Well you're a blood-thirsty no-good, son of a...")*

Well to answer the question properly, we need to turn back time to the moment when a band of outlaws, friends – outcasts, really – joined together here in Sherwood Forest to change the world, just a mite, one inch, one-one-*hundredth* of an inch, that's all that any of us can ever hope to accomplish – but we felt the need to fight injustice and want, and to make the world more kind. As you can see,

(Indicating the gibbet.)

it was a notion not widely embraced in those days.

In truth, the story of Robin Hood began just as the ballad-monger's pen would have it:

(Reciting:)

There's many that sings o' grass, o' grass
And many that sings o' corn,
And many that sings o' Robin Hood
On the day that he was born.

(A woman's scream splits the air.)

HELOISE. *(She's really, really screaming.)* *AHHHHHHHHH!*

(We see **HELOISE OF HUNTINGDON** *on a bed, giving birth. She has a* **MIDWIFE** *with her.)*

MIDWIFE. Breathe, breathe.

HELOISE. *Aha, aha, aha, aha –*

(Her husband, **ROBERT, EARL OF HUNTINGDON**, *strides gruffly across the stage.)*

ROBERT. Come on, woman! I want my baby! I don't have all day!

HELOISE. *AHHHHHHHHHHHH!*

BABY ROBIN. *(Born this instant.) WHAAAAAAAAAA!*

MIDWIFE. It's a boy!

ROBERT. Throw him here!

(The **MIDWIFE** *throws the* **BABY** *across the clearing, and* **ROBERT** *catches him.)*

FRIAR TUCK. Those were rough times in the Middle Ages.

(Reciting:)

I took the bonny boy in me arms
And kist him tenderlie;
Said "Though I would your father hang,
Your mother's dear to me."

(A medieval schoolmaster, **MASTER GODWIN**, *appears in his gown. He is unkempt and disorganized, and carries a medieval ruler for whacking boys' knuckles.)*

MASTER GODWIN. Robin of Locksley!

FRIAR TUCK. By this time the lad was eight years old and full of the devil.

ROBIN. *(Running in.)* Yes sir, Master Godwin, sir.

MASTER GODWIN. I want no more shenanigans out of you, young reprobate. I want to hear your lessons! Now recite me the Catechism and make it flawless!

(The following six lines go rapid-fire, wholly by rote:)

What-is-the-chief-end-of-man?

ROBIN. To-know-God-who-created-every-one-of-us.

MASTER GODWIN. What-is-the-highest-good-of-man?

ROBIN. To-glorify-God-and-praise-him-forever.

MASTER GODWIN. What-reason-have-you-for-saying-so?

ROBIN. Because-you-made-me-learn-it-by-heart-and-I hated-every-single-second-of-it.

MASTER GODWIN. *Deeeetention!!*

(He chases **ROBIN** *off.)*

FRIAR TUCK. *(Reciting.)* I kist him o'er and o'er again:
"My laddie I thee claim,
It's Robin Hood in the gude green wood,
And that shall be your name."

(A medieval fencing master, **MASTER BLADEN***, appears and cries out:)*

MASTER BLADEN. Robin of Locksley!

FRIAR TUCK. And now the lad was twelve years old and the dye was cast.

ROBIN. *(Running in.)* Yes sir, Master Bladen, sir.

MASTER BLADEN. Sword exhibition! And I want to see form and balance and *equilibrium*!

*(***ROBIN** *pulls his sword and fences with the* **MASTER***. Clang! Clang! The* **MASTER** *disarms him.)*

You have got to practice more, you idle idiot! What would you do if a Saracen in the Holy Land challenged you to a duel?

ROBIN. Run?

*(***MASTER BLADEN** *whacks him.)*

Ow.

MASTER BLADEN. Longbow.

ROBIN. I-I can't yet, sir, I need more practice.

MASTER BLADEN. Longbow!

ROBIN. Sir, I'm not very good with it yet, and I could be dangerous to someone.

MASTER BLADEN. *Pick up your bow and shoot an arrow or I'll slice your ears off!*

*(***ROBIN** *notches an arrow and shoots.)*

(Shooomp! Thunk! A scream: "Ahhh!" A **PEASANT** *staggers on with an arrow in his chest.)*

FRIAR TUCK. And so it began: the dangerous, brave, fierce, romantic, rustic, bawdy, improbable, nay, disgraceful tale of Robin of Locksley, who came to be known as Robin Hood. I apologize to anyone who is not prepared to witness the moral depravity of rustic youth; remember, the exits to the theater are there and there, in case you feel the need to save yourselves.

Our tale continues when the lad is seventeen, with the sap rising in the morn and liquid dew of youth.

(The lights change and we're in:)

WAIT, THERE'S MORE!

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