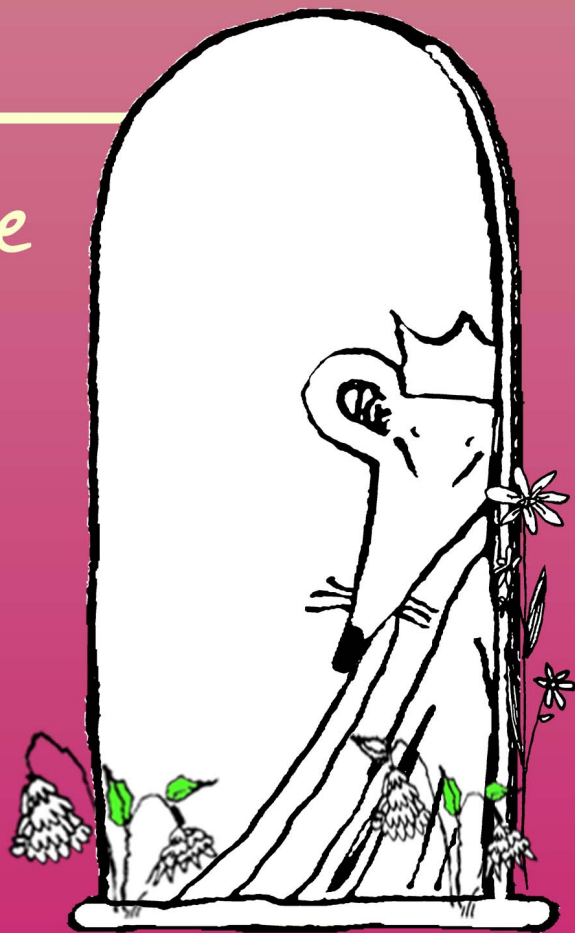
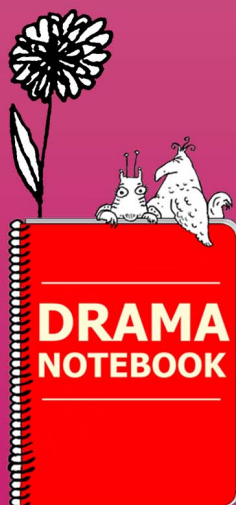


THE PRINCESS WHO COULDN'T LAUGH

By Debra Cole



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About the Author...

Debra A. Cole is a celebrated humanities teacher, youth theatre director, and children's playwright with degrees in journalism, art history, and elementary education. She understands the needs of young performers and their directors and creates pieces that encourage engaging discussion, creative thought, and quirky playfulness. Her goal is that young performers discover the power and delight that theatre brings to actors and audiences alike.



Visit her website:

www.debraacole-playwright.com

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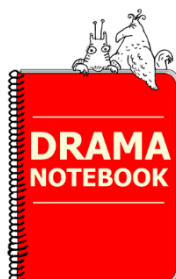
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About the play...

A king is searching for someone, anyone, who can make his daughter Princess Sombina laugh for she is under a spell and sadness is slowly killing her. Many in the kingdom have tried, but only one poor farmer will find a way to the princess's funny bone.



The Princess Who Couldn't Laugh

Based on a Norwegian Folktale

By Debra A. Cole

CHARACTERS

PRINCESS SOMBINA — (F) sad and sickly from a spell- she waits for someone to finally make her laugh

FRANKLIN — (M) simple farm boy who dreams of going on a quest

KING — (M) loving father who calls out for help

GOOSE LADY — (F) owner of a magical goose

MILK MAID — (F) curious - carries milk pail

CHIMNEY SWEEP — (M/F) adventurous - carries chimney broom

BAKER — (M/F) hungry - carries various breads in basket

DOG — (M/F) playful - loves the Conga

PIPER — (M/F) enjoys sharing his/her instrument



The Princess Who Couldn't Laugh

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(The action takes place in fairytale times in a royal chamber and on a country road.)

(Lights come up on a royal chamber. In bed lies the sad and sickly Princess Sombina. She is propped up in bed by glorious and decorative pillows. The royal bedroom includes a window. The set should be slightly off center to leave room for an area for the woods and under the window later in scenes. Enter the King stage right.)

SCENE 1

KING

Dear Princess Sombina, this must stop. The royal doctor was very clear. Laughter is the only medicine that will make you better from this awful spell.

PRINCESS SOMBINA

It's no use, father. No one can make me laugh.

KING

What about that clown you saw last Monday?

PRINCESS SOMBINA

A disaster. It took until yesterday to remove all the glitter she threw around the room.

KING

The court jester? He really is a funny fellow.

PRINCESS SOMBINA

(sarcastically) Surely you jest! Don't you remember, father, the court jester made fun of your false teeth. You were not amused.

KING

Oh, that's right. (adjusts teeth in mouth) I must get things darn things fixed. (comes back to subject at hand) I do remember an interesting little troll, did he not even come close to amusing you, daughter? Perhaps he ticked your funny bone just a little?

PRINCESS SOMBINA

That strange little man tickled me all right.... (uncomfortably - then reach to tickle her own knee) but there is nothing funny about my kneecaps.

KING

What about that bearded lady? She had a full beard and mustache! She surely made you giggle just a little bit?

PRINCESS SOMBINA

Facial hair is not funny to a princess, father.

KING

Do not give up hope, dear child. I have put another call out to the entire kingdom. I am confident that someone is up to the task.

PRINCESS SOMBINA

But, father, I worry that if I don't laugh soon, the spell will be complete, and I will perish.

KING

We have to believe we can be successful. We need someone smart - someone clever - and very, VERY funny.

(lights out)

SCENE 2

(Lights come up on a country road. Goose Lady is carrying her pet goose and she meets up with Franklin. Franklin is carrying a fish.)

GOOSE LADY

(seeing Franklin walking toward her) Greetings, lad. Are you off to the castle like everyone else? That fish is not going to do the trick.

FRANKLIN

Castle? Why is everyone going to the castle?

GOOSE LADY

How have you not heard about the challenge? Princess Sombina is under a curse that will kill her if she does not laugh soon. Everyone has been trying, but still, nothing. Whoever makes her laugh will receive their heart's desire. You should give it a try, kid!

FRANKLIN

Me? (thinks about it) Well, I have always wanted to go on a quest. Maybe this is my big moment. There is only one problem. I'm not that funny.

GOOSE LADY

My goose can solve that. Are you open to trading your fish for my goose? It is a good trade, and I promise this goose will help you be funny.

FRANKLIN

A goose will make me funny? What is the catch?

GOOSE LADY

The catch is that to everyone you meet, you will need to say the following words, "My goose is friendly, soft and strong, touch her feathers and come along."

FRANKLIN

Why? What will happen?

GOOSE LADY

(hands goose quickly to Franklin and begins walking off stage right) You will see. Head to Princess Sombina. You will be successful. What is your name, boy? I want to know that it was you that broke the spell when I hear the tale of the victory!

FRANKLIN

Franklin.

GOOSE LADY

Franklin. Good luck, Franklin.

(Lights out)

SCENE 3

(Lights come up with Franklin holding his goose as he continues through the woods. Enter stage right a Milk Maid holding a pail of milk)

MILK MAID

My, what a beautiful goose. May I pet it?

FRANKLIN

I don't know. It's a new goose to me, but it MAY have some strange magic attached to it.

MILK MAID

Oh, I don't mind. I love geese!

FRANKLIN

Okay, "My goose is friendly, soft and strong, touch her feathers and come along."

(Milk Maid reaches out to pet the goose only to find that her hand is stuck to it's feathers.)

MILK MAID

What kind of trick is this? My hand is stuck.

FRANKLIN

I warned you. I am on a quest to make Princess Sombina laugh. It looks like you are now joining me for the journey!

MILK MAID

(sarcastically) Like I have a choice...

(Both Franklin and the Milk Maid take two steps when Chimney Sweep enters stage right and sees the duo.)

CHIMNEY SWEEP

Well, what do we have here? A young lad with his lady...and a goose?

MILK MAID

Oh, no Chimney Sweep, I am not his lady. I am a milk maid. All I wanted to do was pet his goose, when THIS happened.

FRANKLIN

I am on a quest! I am off to make Princess Sombina laugh.

CHIMNEY SWEEP

Well, that IS quite a beautiful goose. May I pet her?

FRANKLIN

I must warn you, stranger. You may not like the results.

MILK MAID

You should listen to him. You've been warned.

CHIMNEY SWEEP

A warning, oh, now I MUST give her a pet.

FRANKLIN

"My goose is friendly, soft and strong, touch her feathers and come along."

(Chimney Sweep reaches out to touch the goose and finds his/her hand magically zooming to connect to the Milk Maid)

MILK MAID

Hey, get your hands off me!

CHIMNEY SWEEP

It's not me, lady! It's the goose!

FRANKLIN

The goose is magic. We warned you. It looks like you are now coming with us on my quest.

CHIMNEY SWEEP

A quest? QUESTS ARE AMAZING! Count me in!

MILK MAID

Once again.....not really a choice...

(Both Franklin, Milk Maid, and Chimney Sweep take two steps when Baker enters stage right and sees the trio. Baker carries a basket full of bread.)

BAKER

Look at this! A party in the woods!

CHIMNEY SWEEP

This is a party all right.

MILK MAID

Yes, a party that any curious soul is invited to!

BAKER

Is that a goose I see? Yummmm.....goose would taste great with my freshly baked bread.

CHIMNEY SWEEP

Good luck cooking this one. It's magic.

BAKER

A magic goose? May I pet it?

FRANKLIN

Well, you asked. "My goose is friendly, soft and strong, touch her feathers and come along."

BAKER

Come along? Sounds interesting to me.

(Baker reaches out and pets the goose and is immediately thrown back to connect to the Chimney Sweep)

Woah! That is some powerful magic! I'm stuck. (trying to pull away but unsuccessful) I'm really stuck! AMAZING! What happens now?

FRANKLIN

Well, you are now a part of my quest to make Princess Sombina laugh.

BAKER

I've always wanted to visit the castle. Let's go!

(Both Franklin, Milk Maid, Chimney Sweep, and Baker take two steps when Dog enters stage right and sees the group. Dog is trotting and barking happily when it sees everyone.)

DOG

Woof! Conga! (starts to dance the conga and sings the beats) I love the Conga!

BAKER

Not a Conga! We're on a quest!

DOG

A quest? A quest for bones?

MILK MAID

No! A quest for laughter!

DOG

I love laughter! What do I need to do to join the fun?

FRANKLIN

"My goose is friendly, soft and strong, touch her feathers and come along."

BAKER

Touch the goose? Does it bite?

FRANKLIN

It hasn't yet. Its magic does something else. Be warned...

DOG

(interrupting) I'm in.

(Dog reaches out and pets the goose and is immediately thrown back to connect to the Baker)

SO COOL! I'm stuck! We could Conga all day! I'll teach you all.

Step, step, step, RIGHT. Step, step, step, LEFT. Let's try it on the way to this guy's quest!

FRANKLIN

Franklin. My name is Franklin.

MILK MAID

Okay, Franklin. Let's Conga!

(The group Congas two rounds when Piper enters stage right to find the group mid dance)

PIPER

Dancing? I'm a piper! You need music!

DOG

YES! You would be the perfect addition to our group!

PIPER

How do I join?

BAKER

Easy. Talk to Franklin. (points to Franklin)

FRANKLIN

"My goose is friendly, soft and strong, touch her feathers and come along."

PIPER

If that's what it takes to join the group, touch away I will.

(Piper reaches out and touches the goose. Piper twirls to the back of the line.)

WHAT A HOOT! I am ready to pipe your Conga.....well....I guess it's OUR Conga now! Let's go!

(The group Congas off stage and Franklin speaks.)

FRANKLIN

To the castle! To the Princess! If this doesn't make her laugh, nothing will!

(lights out)

SCENE 4

(Lights come up back in the royal bedroom with Princess Sombina lying in bed. The window is open, and she is looking worse than before.)

PRINCESS SOMBINA

(deep breath) Fresh air! (another deep breath) Without laughter, these may be my final breaths before the spell takes its final hold.

(The Conga line of characters enter stage right to the area outside of the window. The piper plays the tune and the group congas behind Franklin and his magical goose.)

What is that sound? Who dares make so much noise outside of my sick bed window?

(Princess Sombina moves slowly toward the window to look out.)

What an odd group of fellows. What a strange dance. A boy - a milk maid - a chimney sweep - a baker - a dog - and a piper. Where did they all come from?

FRANKLIN

(calling up to Princess Sombina while the group continues to Conga while still doing the Conga) Princess Sombina, we come to bring you joy and make you laugh.

(Just as Franklin is calling out to Princess Sombina, the King enters the courtyard furious with the noise)

KING

HOW DARE YOU DISTURB THE PRINCESS! THIS RACKET IS OUTRAGEOUS!

(group continues to Conga)

FRANKLIN

We don't want to disturb the princess. We want to make her laugh. That was the challenge as I understood it!

KING

THIS IS NOTHING FUNNY ABOUT THIS NOISE!

(As the King yells, Franklin suddenly stops and the entire group behind him runs into him, sending Franklin into the KING. The goose should drop. Milk should fly. Break should fly. Chimney Sweep brushes should fly. The Dog should crash and roll while howling, and the Piper's flute should fly after making a horrible noise. As Franklin hits the KING, out flies the false teeth of the KING.)

(gumming the words) MY TEETH! MY TEETH ARE GONE! HOW DARE YOU!

(As the group looks worried, above through the window, Princess Sombina begins to laugh. The laugh should start small and grow into a gut busting laugh that makes everyone below smile.)

KING

(elated) My daughter! YOU LAUGHED! The spell is broken!

MILK MAID

You did it, Franklin!

CHIMNEY SWEEP

You made the princess laugh!

KING

You did my boy! BRAVO! (scurrying to grab false teeth and put them back in his mouth) How can I repay you?

PRINCESS SOMBINA

(fully healthy and happy - calling down to the group below) Give him whatever he desires, father. I've never felt so good as I do right now. Laughter was clearly the BEST medicine for this spell.

KING

What do you want, Franklin? ...It is Franklin, correct?

MILK MAID

(blushes a bit) Yes, his name is Franklin, and he is wonderful. (blinks her lashes at Franklin)

(Franklin blushes and turns to the King.)

FRANKLIN

Yes, your highness. As for what I want, I am a simple farmer. I could not have made the princess laugh without all of these people I met along the path in the woods. Could I request that you give them all employment? I sure you could use milk, chimney sweeping, bread, music, and a loyal dog in your palace. And as for me, I catch fish. Maybe I could help with providing food to the kingdom.

KING

It's a deal! I love milk, bread, a warm fireplace that functions, music, a loving dog, and fish. But I do have the need for one more person.

FRANKLIN

Anything. Of what services are you in need, your highness?

KING

A dentist. These teeth need to finally stay in!

(The King's false teeth pop out again and everyone laughs)

(lights out)

CURTAIN



Discussion Questions

"The Princess Who Couldn't Laugh" is an original piece based on a Norwegian Folktale. Norwegian folktales are often set in majestic landscape of towering mountains and dense forests and filled with humor, mischief, and sometimes surprisingly cruel twists of fate. This story employs humor.

Ask!

What makes you laugh?

What is a Conga line? Gather a group and try it!

The magic phrase that Franklin learns from the Goose Lady is, "My goose is friendly, soft and strong, touch her feathers and come along." Create your own rhyming phrase if he had been carrying a dog.



Director/Production Notes

Casting

This is a very physical play, so casting young actors who trust one another is key to the show's success.

Characterization

Here are some director's tips that you can share with your cast members.

Princess Sombina – Sad and sickly, this princess is in crisis due to this spell. Laughter is the only thing that will make her better.

Franklin - This young man is ready for adventure. Bright-eyed and eager, every step of the journey is exciting.

King – This king needs help. He loves his daughter and just wants her to feel better. He is to be played as helpless and a bit bumbling.

Goose Lady - There should be a glimmer in her eyes, for she carries that magical goose.

Milk Maid - Sweet, innocent, and willing to take a chance, she is shocked when something goes wrong despite the warning.

Chimney Sweep - Life is often darn in those chimneys, so a QUEST is just what this sweep is after.

Baker - Life is one big party for this baker. Adventure is marvelous, and this one is no different.

Dog - This dog is a little simple. Play him/her as excited about everything.

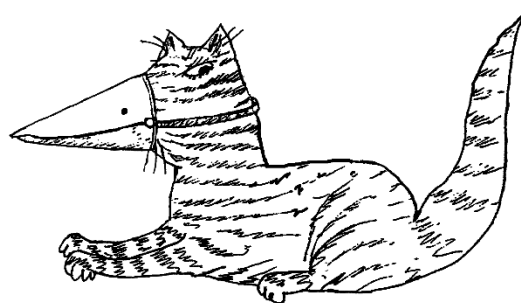
Piper - This musician is fun-loving and ready with music.

Costumes

Key costume pieces and props will make each of these characters shine. The most important prop will be the false teeth that need to fly out of the King's mouth. Other than that, simple clothing or more elaborate fairy tale costuming will work.

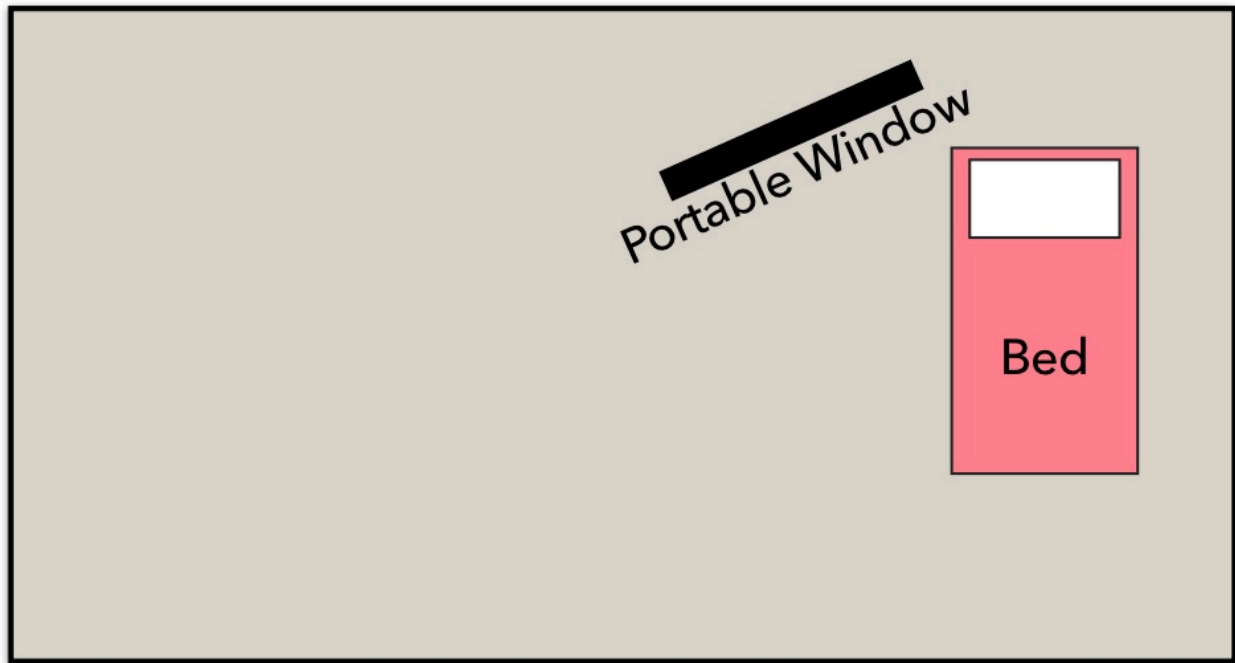
Set

The play requires no set - just set pieces and props.



Staging

Royal Chamber



Audience

Country Road (NO STAGING NECESSARY)

Curtain Call

With a small ensemble cast, curtain call is clean and easy with everyone gathering center stage and bowing as one. It takes the whole team to make this piece work, so the bows should celebrate that collaboration.

Need another play?



Have a play to share?

