

CINDERGIRL

AN AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION PLAY IN ONE ACT

By **Stephen Hotchner**

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By Stephen Hotchner

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(2 MEN, 5 WOMEN)

PENNY	The fairy godmother. (47 lines)
CINDERELLA	Called the Cindergirl by her sisters. (30 lines)
STEPMOTHER	Cinderella's stepmother. (78 lines)
BRUNHILDA	One of Cinderella's stepsisters. (56 lines)
MATILDA	One of Cinderella's stepsisters. (53 lines)
LAWRENCE	The king. (49 lines)
EDWARD	The prince. (57 lines)

Members of the audience play the following characters:

GRUNHILDA
COMFORT HELPERS
MICE
ATTENDANTS
TRUMPET PLAYER
VIOLIN PLAYERS
THE STEPMOTHER'S MIRROR

SETTING

You will need:

- Two chairs
- A very whimsical backdrop for the house.
- A throne for the ball and any sort of decorations.

The actors pantomime:

- The coach

- The coach in which the stepmother and her daughters pursue Cinderella home from the ball

PROPS

- Whatever Penny the Godmother has in her bag, including wand etc.
- Slippers, of course, for the Prince.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The kiss at the end of the play is optional, though eighth grade actors managed to pull off the kiss in our production.

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ACT ONE, SCENE 1

AT RISE:

CINDERELLA is sprawled on her back hugging pillows and a stuffed animal. Down left of CINDERELLA is a pile of ash. Scattered around the stage are large pumpkins and vegetables. Seated down stage is PENNY, the fairy godmother, her head in her hands. She is rocking back and forth and moaning.

PENNY: Oh woe is me. Oh disaster. I'm going to lose my wand and get struck by a thunderbolt. Why, why did I ever want to become a Fairy Godmother? I can't control my feelings. I get my spells backwards when I get upset. Look, look what I've done? I turned that evil stepmother's servants into vegetables. *(She points at Cinderella, then goes to an ash heap.)*

This ash heap was Cinderella's meanest stepsister, Grunhilda. Just before you came, she and her two whiny sisters were being so mean to Cinderella, I - - I couldn't stand it. Those three snobby brats made her clean that fireplace three times. Three times. *(Holds up bowl filled with very large cherries.)* Do you see these cherries? Those stepsisters threw these cherries back into the fireplace three times. It's all so sad, so depressing. All Cinderella wanted to do was to go to the ball and wear this *(Runs to shelf and picks up dress.)* dress. And they turn her into a Cinderblock. So I GOT MAD. AND I'M GLAD. *(Voices off stage.)*

BRUNHILDA: I'm telling you, Mama, there was a terrible stroke of lightning, and Grunhilda turned into an ash heap.

MATILDA: You have to believe us, Mother.

The STEPMOTHER, a tall, masterful nightmare of a person, sweeps into the room followed by the STEPSISTERS, BRUNHILDA and MATILDA. The STEPMOTHER holds herself very tall, spine erect, nose a bit up. Her daughters imitate her to the letter.

PENNY: Luckily, I can make myself invisible to these awful people, or I'd have to turn them into ash heaps. I don't want to lose my temper like that again. Whenever I show my feelings, anyone can see me. *(As PENNY chatters, STEPSISTERS kick CINDERELLA awake.)* I'll hide behind you. *(Picks a child in the audience to hide behind.)*

BRUNHILDA: Wake up, Cinderblock.

MATILDA: *(She is not as good at being mean. Actually, she is not mean at all.)* Wake up . . . you . . . oh, please just wake up.

CINDERELLA gets up very shakily.

BRUNHILDA: Tell Mother there was a stroke of lightning and how you fainted and the servants turned into those vegetables.

CINDERELLA shakes her head.

BRUNHILDA: Mother, Cinderella's acting stupid again. Get her to talk.

STEPMOTHER: Cinderella.

CINDERELLA folds her hands and looks down at the floor.

STEPMOTHER: I'm afraid that fireplace is dirty again. I'm afraid you haven't done your chores. And you know what that means, don't you?

CINDERELLA nods sadly.

STEPMOTHER: Brunhilda's right. You really are very stupid.

PENNY: I'm getting very angry. And if I get too angry, they'll see me, and Cinderella will never get to the ball. *(To children in the audience.)* You and you, hold my hands, and if you see me getting upset, pat my hands. Thank you. That was very soothing.

STEPMOTHER: Girls, get me that sponge.

STEPSISTERS: Yes, Mother.

STEPSISTERS fight to get sponge. BRUNHILDA wins.

MATILDA: You're such a bully.

BRUNHILDA: Just because you're weak doesn't mean I'm a bully.

Here you are, Mother, nice and wet.

STEPMOTHER: Now, Cinderella, that is a very filthy fireplace.

PENNY: Oh, I'm so angry. *(To children holding her hands.)* Thank you.

STEPMOTHER: When we come back from the ball, I want that fireplace and those dishes in that sink to shine. Do you understand?

CINDERELLA nods and again does not look at STEPMOTHER.

PENNY: I can't stand it. *(To children.)* Thank you. You really do have such a soothing touch.

STEPMOTHER: *(To STEPSISTERS.)* Girls, where is your sister?

MATILDA: But we told you, Mother. There was a terrible stroke of lightning, and then Cinderella fainted, and then the servants turned into large vegetables, and then Grunhilda turned into an ash heap. *(Points to ash heap.)* That was Grunhilda. Poor Grunhilda. *(Gets down on her knees and pats ash heap.)*

STEPMOTHER: Poor dear, you always had such a vivid imagination. Tell me the truth, Brunhilda.

BRUNHILDA: *(Looks quickly at MATILDA, who looks back helplessly.)* Well, she . . . she's not here because she started to shrink.

STEPMOTHER: Are you both sick in the head?

BRUNHILDA: I mean, she's got the dreadful shrinking sickness. You know what I mean, Mother.

STEPMOTHER: Either both of you are telling me lies or there really was a witch here.

MATILDA: That's right. There was a witch who came to the door selling strange pills, and Grunhilda ate them. Then came the stroke of lightning.

STEPMOTHER: Shut up. I'm thinking. (*STEPMOTHER begins to pace back and forth. STEPSISTERS freeze.*)

PENNY: Brunhilda just gave me an idea. I need one of you to become the new Grunhilda. (*Rushes to a box filled with various props.*) Yes, you. (*Speaking to a girl in the audience.*) Here's your wig. And your dress. Stick up your nose and walk with me. You look wonderful. Remember, Grunhilda's very snobby. You're going to have to go off with those horrible people and go to the ball with them. But I'll be with you every second. I promise.

Can you do it? Can you be brave? I knew you could. Stay by my side, you brave girl. (*Goes to the audience.*) The rest of you must help Cinderella get to the ball when I leave with the new Grunhilda. Can you help? (*Waits for audience response.*) Thank you, you're all such a comfort. (*Pointing to children in the audience.*) I'll need you and you and you and oh yes, you, to be mice. Squeak, please. (*Waits for children to squeak. Goes to prop box and takes out mice ears. Puts them on the four children.*) Very good. Hide over here. Don't come to Cinderella until she wishes for a friend. Repeat after me: I won't come to Cinderella until she wishes for a friend.

PENNY waits as the MICE repeat the phrase.

PENNY: Good luck. I really don't know what's going to happen here. I'm very upset. This was not how I planned it. The coach, the pumpkin, and those horrible vegetables . . . Oh, never mind. I just hope I don't lose my license. Uh oh. Here she comes. Stick your nose up in the air, dear. That's how she'll recognize you. She has the snobbiest daughters in the kingdom.

STEPMOTHER: Grunhilda, is that you?

PENNY: (*To the new GRUNHILDA.*) Nod your head.

Child nods head.

STEPMOTHER: Why are you so short?

PENNY: (*Whispers to the new GRUNHILDA.*) Tell her you swallowed a shrinking pill.

CHILD repeats after PENNY.

STEPMOTHER: You swallowed a what pill? Come again.

PENNY: Don't be afraid. I'm here and she can't see me, the big bully.

BRUNHILDA: (*Comes to new GRUNHILDA's aid.*) She said she swallowed a shrinking pill.

STEPMOTHER: Who gave you this terrible shrinking pill? Answer me.

PENNY: Tell her you met a witch with buckteeth.

CHILD repeats after PENNY.

STEPMOTHER: I'm really having trouble understanding you, Grunhilda. Speak up. All my daughters speak up and enunciate.

PENNY: Be brave. She can't hurt you as long as I'm here. Tell her again. I met a witch with crooked teeth.

CHILD repeats after PENNY.

STEPMOTHER: You met a witch with wicked teeth, and she put you under a shrinking spell?

BRUNHILDA: She said, Mother, she met a witch with buckteeth who gave her a shrinking pill.

STEPMOTHER: I'm very disappointed in you, Grunhilda. How many times have I told you never to talk to strangers who are obviously witches, and how many times have I told you never to accept pills from witches with crooked teeth?

MATILDA: (*Under her breath.*) Try never.

BRUNHILDA: (*To MATILDA.*) How dare you contradict Mother. Mother is a saint. And a socialite.

MATILDA: What an impressive vocabulary. What is a socialite?

BRUNHILDA: A person who is invited to all the best parties, which is why we're about to go the ball and have a chance to marry the prince. Because mother is a socialite.

MATILDA: You're a nitwit.

BRUNHILDA: I'm going to strangle you. (*Rushes at MATILDA, who charges at BRUNHILDA.*)

STEPMOTHER: (*Pats the new GRUNHILDA on her head as though she were a dog.*) Girls, stop fighting or you won't go to the ball. (*STEPSISTERS separate. STEPMOTHER kneels down to talk to the new GRUNHILDA.*) Well, I'm glad you're back, even if you are short. Come with me, girls, it's time to put on our faces, get into smashing new outfits and get ourselves to King Lawrence's ball. In style.

STEPMOTHER sweeps out of the room with BRUNHILDA and MATILDA following her.

BRUNHILDA: Yes, Mother.

MATILDA: Coming, Mother. (*MATILDA sticks her tongue out at her sister. She exists.*)

PENNY: (*To the new GRUNHILDA.*) Yes, Mother. Coming, Mother. Those two sisters are the worst. Especially the one with the long blonde wig. We'd better go, or she'll suspect something. Don't worry, I'll be right by your side. (*PENNY takes the new GRUNHILDA's hand. They exit.*)

CINDERELLA sinks into a heap. She holds her head in her hands and sighs.

CINDERELLA: *(To the audience.)* Sigh with me. *(Audience responds.)* Once more. *(Audience responds.)* Thank you. I feel a little better. What am I to do? Just once in my life, I wanted to go to a fine ball and put on a clean lovely dress and feel beautiful. Instead, look at me. I'm a cinderheap. I'm just a cindergirl. That wacky fairy godmother of mine turned my stepmother's servants into vegetables so they can't help me. She turned the coachmen and his coach into pumpkins. I couldn't get to the ball if I wanted to. *(Gets up, goes over to the prop box and grabs a wet sponge and bowl. She starts to scrub the floor, then throws the sponge down.)* I won't do it. I won't clean this house again. Those bullies will just mess it up when they return. What am I to do? My fairy godmother has gone to the ball with my sisters and the new Grunhilda, and I'm alone, so terribly alone.

BRUNHILDA: *(From offstage.)* I look more beautiful than you.

MATILDA: *(From offstage.)* Excuse me. If anyone looks beautiful, it's me. Isn't that true, Mother?

STEPMOTHER: *(From offstage.)* Oh girls, stop arguing. My headache's coming back. I think Grunhilda looks positively stunning, myself.

The STEPMOTHER sweeps back into the room followed by BRUNHILDA and MATILDA. Last of all come PENNY and the new GRUNHILDA.

CINDERELLA: They're coming back. This is the end. *(To audience.)* Farewell. It was nice talking to you. *(She collapses in a heap again, her head in her hands.)*

The STEPMOTHER sees CINDERELLA and comes to a stop on a dime. MATILDA runs into BRUNHILDA.

BRUNHILDA: You clumsy ox.

MATILDA: Don't you call me a clumsy ox. Did I know Mother was going to put on the brakes?

STEPMOTHER: Quiet, my lovelies. And you do look lovely.

CINDERELLA: *(To audience.)* How did they get their make up on that fast? What does it matter? I'm doomed. Don't watch. This is going to get very ugly.

PENNY: *(To the children in the audience.)* My comfort helpers. Please come up and hold my hand. *(To the new GRUNHILDA.)* New Grunhilda, be brave. I am getting very angry. *(As children hold her hand. The new GRUNHILDA will probably join in.)* And if I get angry, I'll let loose a lightning bolt, and I might miss and hit Cinderella, because I don't have control of my spells when I'm upset. Worst of all, I'll lose my invisible status, and those human horrors will see me. Yes, keep patting my hand. Thank you, thank you, thank you. You can return to your seats.

STEPMOTHER: There she is. You dirty, unkempt . . .

BRUNHILDA: Unkempt . . . What does that mean?

MATILDA: Didn't you study your vocabulary lessons at school?

STEPMOTHER: Girls, do you see that bucket filled with sponges?

BRUNHILDA: I see it, Mother.

STEPMOTHER: Get it, angel. And bring it to me.

The STEPSISTERS rush toward the bucket. They struggle to get it into their hands.

BRUNHILDA: Let go. I got here first.

MATILDA: The bucket is mine.

They both drag the bucket back to the STEPMOTHER.

STEPMOTHER: Put the bucket in my hands, girls.

The STEPSISTERS put the bucket in the STEPMOTHER's hands. The STEPMOTHER dumps the bucket over CINDERELLA's head.

STEPMOTHER: When we return from the ball, I say when, I want to see every one of those sponges filled with the dirt you've sponged off our floors and mantelpieces . . .

BRUNHILDA: And closet shelves . . .

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MATILDA: And, and . . . Just do it, Cindy.

BRUNHILDA: Cindy?

MATILDA: Cinderella and I talk sometimes.

BRUNHILDA: You talk to that cinderheap? You talk to a cindergirl.

MATILDA: Just once in awhile.

STEPMOTHER: Time to go, girls.

BRUNHILDA AND MATILDA: Yes, Mother.

STEPMOTHER: To the ball, girls. Goodbye, Cinderella.

BRUNHILDA AND MATILDA: Goodbye, Cinderella.

CINDERELLA: If only . . . I wish . . . (*Looks directly at the four children playing the MICE.*) I wish I had a friend. Your ears look like mice ears. Are you mice? Please come and help me. You and you and you and you, take a sponge and help me clean this floor. (*MICE do so.*) Thank you. Maybe I can get to the ball. Mice, please get that dress and help me get it on.

MICE help CINDERELLA get into the dress. CINDERELLA helps if the MICE have trouble helping her get into the dress.

CINDERELLA: *(To two children in the audience.)* Would you and you be my mirror? *(She looks "into" the MIRROR. To one child in audience.)* Do I look pretty? Thank you. *(To MIRROR.)* Go back to your seats. What good does it do? I have no coach, no horses. Unless . . . *(Looks at the MICE.)* Unless you mice can be my coach. I'll open the door, *(Pantomimes.)* get into the carriage, and sit. *(Pantomimes.)* But I have no horses to pull us to the ball. Wait. *(To audience.)* Be my horses. Make the sound of the horses' hooves. Like this. *(Slaps her thighs. Audience responds.)* The wild ride to the King's royal ball begins. Slowly at first. We're going down the path to the mountain, then up, up, up, and down to the castle. Hurry, hurry. Faster, faster. *(Slaps thighs to the rhythm of the lines.)* Be careful, mice, don't tip the carriage. Faster, horses, we've got to get there before the ball ends. Ride, horses, ride. Pull, carriage, pull. The moon is full, and the night air is cold. The wind blows hard and chills our faces to the bone. The stars wheel past. Uh oh, here comes a ditch in the middle of the road. Ride and lift us into the air. Get Cinderella to the ball, horses and mice. Make my wish come true.

BLACKOUT.

ACT ONE, SCENE 2

AT RISE:

The palace of KING LAWRENCE the Third. PRINCE EDWARD enters, followed by his frantic father, KING LAWRENCE.

KING: Please.

EDWARD: No.

KING: Son.

EDWARD: I said no, double no, triple no. I won't come to the ball.

KING: If only your mother was alive to help me.

EDWARD: I would tell my mother the same thing. I won't make a fool of myself in front of all these pretentious, stuck up, snobby people who come to the ball for one reason: to impress you so they can win a position at court.

KING: You have to pick a wife.

EDWARD: I will never marry. Not today, not tomorrow, not in the future, not even when time comes to an end will I, Prince Edward, marry someone I've never met.

KING: Do you care about your father?

EDWARD: (*Smiles.*) Of course I do. You're my dear old Dad. You're the best.

KING: Do we do fun things together?

EDWARD: We go hunting every Wednesday, and watch knights kill themselves on Thursdays, and best of all, on Fridays we dive off cliffs into the old swimming hole.

KING: Then how can you refuse me this one small favor?

EDWARD: Because, Father, most women are boring, tedious, rude, smell from too much perfume, and they wear dresses the size of sailboats. I will never marry a member of the female species, because I will never meet a female I like. I loath the whole bunch. They're nothing but she-wolves.

KING: At least make an appearance.

EDWARD: Oh, Father. Is it really so important?

KING: The stability of my kingdom depends on this ball. The best families will be there.

EDWARD: And the worst.

KING: All I'm asking is that you walk up and down and pretend to look at the lovely ladies and gentlemen for two minutes. Two minutes.

EDWARD: Two minutes?

KING: No longer.

EDWARD: And the trumpet player will not blow more than three seconds when I make my entrance?

KING: I promise.

EDWARD: And I can be rude to the arrogant, bully all the bullies, and eject any lady whose perfume I consider toxic?

KING: (*Looking up.*) Gertude, why did you die of the plague? Why did you leave me with such a precocious, difficult son? (*EDWARD stares at his father.*) Yes, yes, you can be as rude and horrible as you like as long as you make an appearance.

EDWARD: Then I'll go and transform myself into the royal prince. However, first I'll do laps in the swimming hole. (*Exits.*)

PENNY enters with the new GRUNHILDA.

PENNY: Relax, dear. You can go back to your seat. You've done very well. They'll never notice your absence at the ball. I'll put an oblivion spell on their mean, petty brains. That will make them forget. Thank you. (*To herself.*) I think it will be hours before the stepmother and her daughters arrive. (*To audience.*) I used my broom to get the new Grunhilda and myself here first.

KING: (*Sits down.*) Gertude, our son barely listens to me. He has to choose a wife from one of the ladies here tonight or the people will get very angry. They'll depose me. No more King Lawrence the Third. I'll live the rest of my days in a dark dungeon because my impossible son won't pick a wife.

PENNY: Poor King Lawrence. He looks very upset. I'll do a wake up and sing happy spell. (*Waves her wand. To audience.*) Make the sound of birds. (*Audience cheeps.*) Thank you. That ought to cheer the King up. (*KING collapses.*) That wasn't supposed to happen. What have I done now? Uh oh. Where are the attendants, the servants? I've turned them into . . . birds? That wasn't how the wake up and sing happy songs spell was supposed to go. Quick. (*To audience.*) All of you are going to have to be attendants at the ball. (*Picks three children.*) When the stepmother and stepsisters get here, you and you and you will have to go behind them holding up their dresses so they don't trip over themselves. Thank you. No, no, this can't be happening. Where, oh where are all the lovely ladies and gentleman arriving at the ball? (*To audience.*) I need all of you to become the lovely ladies and gentleman arriving at the ball. (*To members of the audience.*) Lovely ladies, stick up your noses like this. And gentlemen. Put on your ties, please, and button your cuffs. (*Shows gentlemen how to tie ties and button cuffs.*) Thank you. Everything will be all right.

BRUNHILDA: (*Offstage.*) I'm going to enter the ballroom first.

MATILDA: (*Offstage.*) No, I will. Get out of my way.

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STEPMOTHER: Stop squabbling, girls. Your mother will enter first, then you follow, Brunhilda, and last of all you, Matilda.

Enter the STEPMOTHER, followed by BRUNHILDA and MATILDA. They are covered with jewels, bracelets and their dresses trail behind them.

PENNY: Attendants, quickly. Hold up their dresses as they walk around. *(Children respond. To two new children in the audience.)* Would you and you come up and stand by the king when he wakes up? He's always talking to his attendants. All you have to do is listen and nod and say, "Yes, your majesty," when he asks you questions.

STEPMOTHER: *(Goes to the edge of the stage and looks out at audience.)* Come here, girls. *(STEPSISTERS join her at the lip of the stage.)* This is our moment. Look out there. Do you see anyone as beautiful as yourselves?

BRUNHILDA: No, Mother. I'm more beautiful than any lady here.

STEPMOTHER: Exactly.

MATILDA: I think there are a lot of pretty ladies out there.

BRUNHILDA: Oh, shut up. You never listen to Mother.

STEPMOTHER: *(Taking out lipstick and putting it on her lips.)* Quiet, girls. I just got rid of my migraine. And who is the most stunning lady here?

BRUNHILDA: Me?

MATILDA: I don't think that was the right answer. You are, Mother.

BRUNHILDA: Oh, yes. Your beauty stands out like . . . like . . .

MATILDA: A precious jewel.

STEPMOTHER: I do feel like a rare diamond tonight. Am I shining, girls?

BRUNHILDA: Yes, you are, Mother. You're all shiny. You're so shiny I can hardly look at you.

MATILDA: Every step you take is a lesson in manners to the other ladies.

BRUNHILDA: I hate you.

STEPMOTHER: Now, now, my lovely daughters. Don't get all cross because you have an exceptionally beautiful mother. You won't mind, will you, if the prince chooses me?

BRUNHILDA: I was hoping he'd choose me.

MATILDA: I won't mind, Mother. I hope he does choose you.

BRUNHILDA: You always have the right answers.

MATILDA: Don't worry, dearest sister. Mommy loves you. Even if you're not too bright.

BRUNHILDA: *(Rushes at MATILDA, who hides behind her mother.)*
I'm going to tear that wig off you and stuff it in the garbage can.

STEPMOTHER: I have a headache. I feel a migraine developing like a storm cloud. If you two don't stop, I will bang your heads together. From this moment on, the two of you will not argue. You will not bicker. You will not fight. You will conduct yourselves like perfect angels until the prince comes and picks me to be his wife. Otherwise, I will disinherit you and give all my money to Cinderella. Do you understand, girls? Do you understand, my angels?

BRUNHILDA: I'm sorry, Mother. Matilda, you're my sister, and I want the prince to pick you.

MATILDA: Thank you. I wish the same for you, dearest sister.
(Sticks out her tongue when the STEPMOTHER isn't looking.)

STEPMOTHER: That's the spirit, girls. My headache is diminishing.

PENNY: *(To ATTENDANTS who've been holding the STEPMOTHER and STEPSISTERS' dresses.)* Thank you. You can go back to your seats. *(Children respond.)* The King is waking up. Attendants, get ready.

KING: *(Wakes up and sees ATTENDANTS. He smiles.)* I'm so glad you're here. I was afraid all my servants and attendants had run away because my son is so difficult. You understand Edward doesn't mean to be so haughty? *(Children respond. PENNY will help them say, "Yes, your majesty." if they forget.)* Walk with me. Do you think Edward will come out of his room to choose one of these lovely ladies for his wife? *(Children respond.)* That's very comforting. I have such wonderful attendants. Would you please go out there and ask Prince Edward to come out? *(He points to an exit. Children respond. Again, PENNY will help them fetch the PRINCE if they're lost, which they won't be.)* Yes, right there. *(Points to exit.)* Please tell him he has to come out soon.

PENNY leads ATTENDANTS off for a moment, then back on.

PENNY: He'll be out soon, your majesty. We hope.

KING: *(To the ATTENDANTS.)* Where is my trumpet player? I need my trumpet player to start the ball and announce the coming of my son, Prince Edward the First. Do you know where my trumpet player is, attendants?

PENNY: Just tell the King, "No, your majesty."

Children respond.

KING: What loyal attendants you are. Where oh where is my trumpet player?

PENNY runs to her prop box, takes out a toy trumpet and hands it to a person in the audience.

PENNY: When the King asks you to play, blow that trumpet as hard as you can.

KING: Play, trumpet player, play.

Child or adult plays some awful version of a trumpet. PENNY applauds.

PENNY: Well, it wasn't any worse than the last trumpet player's music.

KING: *(To ATTENDANTS.)* Don't worry, dear attendants. My ears hurt, too. You can go back to your seats. *(Children respond.)* Trumpet player, will you please announce the entrance of the prince?

PENNY: Just shout, "Here comes Prince Edward!"

TRUMPET PLAYER: Here comes Prince Edward!

EDWARD enters, stops and looks out at the audience.

PENNY: Ladies and gentlemen, stick up your noses. *(Picks at least three girls and boys.)* Come up here and show the prince your breeding. Noses. Ties.

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