

HANSEL AND GRETEL VS. THE WITCH

Based on the opera *Hansel and Gretel*
by Engelbert Humperdinck and Adelheid Wette
and *The Original Folk and Fairytales of the Brothers Grimm*

Music by Engelbert Humperdinck
Libretto/Adaptation by Joshua Borths

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Prologue

Students enter the playing space greeted by a show curtain with "Hansel and Gretel" written in traditional fairytale lettering and "vs. The Witch" added on as if written in by hand. No other elements of the set should be visible.

The pianist plays the opening "E," letting it ring out. The voice of the baritone (Older Hansel) is heard from an unexpected place. Students look around to see where the voice is coming from and Older Hansel enters.

OLDER HANSEL

LA LA LA LA...

Talking to the kids HELLO, HOW ARE YOU TODAY?

LA LA LA LA... (NOTE: This second set of "La's" can be omitted if the singer prefers to give students time to answer the question.)

I HAVE COME TO *SING* THIS PLAY!

Hello! Welcome to our opera *Hansel and Gretel vs. The Witch*. My name's Hansel and this is the story of *my* childhood.

MY NAME'S HANSEL, YOU MIGHT KNOW ME.

I AM FROM A FAMOUS FAM'LY

'CAUSE WHEN I WAS ABOUT YOUR AGE

I GOT TRAPPED IN A CANDY CAGE...

AND WHILE YOU'LL SEE

HOW I WAS FREED,

THERE'S MUCH MORE TO MY STORY.

LEAN ON IN, IT'S TIME TO BEGIN

LEARNING HOW I BEAT THE WITCH!

How many of you have heard the story of *Hansel and Gretel*? *Students raise their hands.*

Awesome! However, I bet you don't know *this* version. You are in for a *big* surprise.

Becoming nostalgic Even though I'm now old enough to be your teacher, I remember it like it was yesterday. Today, I will guide you through my memories while also playing the role of my Dad.

Hansel and Gretel emerge from behind the set. They wave to the students.

This is my sister Gretel and that's me, Hansel, many years ago... way, way before my voice changed. (*You may need to add a line to explain pants roles in opera.*)

As for all of the other characters like Tom Thumb, the Sandman, and the Witch, well—

Young Hansel and Gretel make sounds/gesture that tell him to be quiet.

You'll just have to wait and see. So now, let's dive into my fairytale childhood and learn the true story of...

ALL

Hansel and Gretel vs. the Witch!

Scene 1

Music begins.

The scene transforms into a modest house. Gretel is holding a storybook and Young Hansel is bored and can't seem to settle down. There is a basket of unfolded laundry and a broom off to the side. Clearly, they are supposed to be doing chores, but neither Hansel nor Gretel are able to focus on it. The action described is happening simultaneously with the below narration.

OLDER HANSEL

Gretel and I grew up in a small house on the edge of a deep, dark wood. Times were hard for everyone, so when our mother died, our father couldn't find much work.

Even though we often went to bed hungry, it never stopped us from having fun—and getting into trouble... Especially when there were chores to be done.

Older Hansel exits. Gretel holds up the storybook. Younger Hansel has fun with the broom making a complete fool of himself. Keep the physical comedy going throughout this whole scene.

GRETEL

HANSEL, LITTLE BROTHER, JUST LISTEN TO ME.
I THINK IT IS ABOUT TIME YOU LEARNED HOW TO READ.
SO, COME OVER HERE AND SIT DOWN ON YOUR BUM
AS I READ THE STORY OF TOM—

HANSEL

BUT THAT STORY'S BORING!

GRETEL

THUMB!

Hansel steals the book from Gretel and begins to play keep away.

Hey! Give that back!

HANSEL

HOW ABOUT FOR ONCE WE BOTH PLAYED A COOL GAME?

GRETEL

You'll rip it!

HANSEL

I'M SORRY BUT YOUR STORIES ARE TOTALLY LAME.

INSTEAD LET'S PLAY TAG! I'LL CATCH YOU IF I CAN.
YOU WILL TRY TO RUN AND I'LL BE THE SAND—

GRETEL

BUT THAT GAME IS SO BORING!

HANSEL

MAN.

GRETEL

Let's compromise. What if... What if I read you the *story* of the Sandman?

HANSEL

Begrudgingly Okay, fine.

They sit down to read the story, but Hansel immediately becomes restless.

I CAN'T SEEM TO FOCUS WITHOUT ANY FOOD!

GRETEL

OH, I KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN. I'M HUNGRY TOO.

HANSEL

Getting lost in his imagination I WISH WE LIVED IN A CANDY HOUSE
WITH GIANT COOKIES AND TASTY TREATS!

GRETEL

NOW, HANSEL, LET'S NOT GET CARRIED AWAY.
REMEMBER WHAT DAD USED TO SAY?

Sitting down next to him "WHEN OUR MINDS BEGIN STRAY,
HELP EACH OTHER FIND THE WAY."

HANSEL

OH, GRETEL, THAT'S ALL FINE AND GRAND.
I JUST HOPE THERE'S A CUPCAKE IN THAT HELPING HAND.

Immediately, his imagination takes off again OH, GRETEL, I WANT TO FLY AWAY
INSTEAD OF STAYING HERE ALL DAY.

WHAT ADVENTURES WE'D HAVE TOGETHER
LIKE TWO REALLY AWESOME FAIRYTALE CHARACTERS... LIKE THOSE IN YOUR BOOK!

GRETEL

She is immediately sucked into this new game. OH! I KNOW WHO YOU'D BE.
YOU'RE LIKE TOM THUMB IN MY STORY!

Seeing the laundry baskets and broom BUT FIRST, WE HAVE TO WORK... OH, SO MUCH WORK!
IF DAD FINDS US PLAYING, HE WILL GO BERSERK!

HANSEL, GET UP.
WE MUST CLEAN UP!

IT'S TIME TO HURRY.
I'LL FOLD THE LAUNDRY.

YOU TAKE THIS OLD BROOM
AND ZOOM 'ROUND THE WHOLE ROOM.

HEAVE HO... TIME FOR OUR CHORES.
HEAVE HO... SWEEP UP THAT FLOOR.
I WILL WATCH FOR DAD AT THE FRONT DOOR.

Hansel grabs a sock (or other piece of clothing) from the laundry basket throws it at Gretel. They begin a laundry "snowball fight."

HANSEL

Overlapping with Gretel BLAH, BLAH I'M
BORED
SWEEPING THE FLOOR.

I STILL AM HUNGRY.
NOTHING IN MY TUMMY.

I WANT TO PLAY.
HUNGER GO AWAY!

GRETEL

STOP BEING BORED
AND SWEEP UP THE FLOOR.

I KNOW YOU'RE HUNGRY
WITH NOTHING IN YOUR TUMMY,

BUT WE CANNOT PLAY
OUR HUNGER AWAY SO...

TAKE THAT, TAKE THIS!
MY BROOM CAN'T MISS!

STOP THAT STOP THIS
LISTEN TO YOUR SIS'!

Gretel gets caught up in the game and begins throwing the clothes from her basket at Hansel.

TAKE THAT AND TAKE THIS
'CAUSE I NEVER MISS!

TAKE THAT, TAKE THIS,
CAUSE I NEVER MISS!

TAKE THAT
AND I'VE WON SIS'!

TAKE THAT, TAKE THIS
YOU'VE BEAT YOUR SIS'!

The laundry game escalates. The house is messier than when they started, but Hansel and Gretel have had so much fun that they don't seem to care. They laugh uproariously.

HANSEL

Gloating I won! I'm awesome!

GRETEL

You're *awesome*? I let you win!

HANSEL

Sure... What should we do next?

GRETEL

Looking at the laundry Well...

HANSEL

Well...Well, what?... Let's do something fun. What if we... danced? What if you taught me how to dance?! *Hansel does a funny dance move (can be anachronistic).*

GRETEL

You want to learn to dance?

HANSEL

Uh, duh! *Turning to the students* Don't you think we should dance?

GRETEL

Spinning and making lots of excited noises I love dancing! Okay, here we go!

Music begins. She gestures to the students. But you must follow me, all of you!

Contact Opera Classroom for a full perusal script/score!