



Wind in the Willows

by Kenneth Grahame

adapted for the stage by
Alan Bennett

Audition Pack

Hi Everyone,

On Monday 2nd June in the Ask Centre at 7.30 there's a presentation workshop to introduce the characters and their physical aspects. By the end of this session you need to decide which character you want to prepare for audition and Jill will create an audition timetable for each person taking part the following Monday.

Auditions will take place on Monday 9th June in the Ask Centre at 7.30.
Here is a list of the characters in the play.

MAIN ANIMALS:

MOLE (male/female)
RAT (male, solo singing)
TOAD (male, solo singing)
BADGER (male/female)

THE FOLLOWING ANIMALS MAY BE INTERCHANGEABLE:

OTTER (male)
PORTLY, OTTER'S SON OR DAUGHTER
RABBIT ROBERT (male)
RABBIT ROSE (female)
FIELDMICE CHOIR (singing) x 3 or 4
ALBERT THE HORSE (male/female)
VARIOUS HEDGEHOGS
VARIOUS SQUIRRELS

WILD WOOD ANIMALS:

CHIEF WEASEL
WEASEL NORMAN
GERALD FERRET
FOX
2 STOAT GUARDS

SPEAKING HUMANS (INTERCHANGEABLE) :

PARKINSON
RUPERT
MONICA
MAGISTRATE
CLERK OF THE COURT
POLICEMAN
GAOLER'S DAUGHTER
WASHERWOMAN
GUARD
TRAIN DRIVER
TICKET CLERK
BARGEWOMAN (solo singing)
GYPSY

FOR THE AUDITIONS YOU CAN PREPARE SPEECHES FOR EITHER ONE OF THE FOUR MAIN ANIMAL PARTS, THE HORSE OR THE CHIEF WEASEL OR ONE OF THE HUMAN PARTS TO SWAP WITH THE SMALLER ANIMAL PARTS. YOU WON'T NEED TO PREPARE SPEECHES FOR THE SMALLER ANIMAL PARTS.

MOLE

Because Mole lives mostly underground, (s)he is an outsider above ground, learning about the social mores and customs in the world. Mole is a wiry, quick, nervous creature, given to excitement that sometimes leads him/her into trouble. (S)he is also quick to understand others, which makes him/her a compassionate friend. (S)he is easily liked by others, even when it complicates their lives. (S)he also acts as a mediator between other characters who are more given to extremes. To some creatures Mole is green but that's simply down to inexperience in life above ground. Mole has very few possessions and forgets where his/her underground home is until discovered by accident.

p.54 From "What's what. No, it's only the wind in the willows..."
to p.55 "Oh, Ratty, it was *home*."

RAT

Rat is a creature of the river, devoted to finding adventure. A suave and sophisticated character, he is the first creature to meet Mole and he is far more worldly than his underground friend. A capable and practical creature, Rat is a valuable mentor for the Mole. But he is also a poet and can be impulsive, so Rat also benefits from the Mole's company and advice. Rat's quarters become the headquarters for the animals to plan out their attack on the nasty rodents when they take over Toad Hall. Rat sings solo on the big chorus song, Duck's Ditty, so he needs to have a good singing voice. His home underground is furnished and very practical with signs of his love of water.

p.6. From: "What is it, old chap?"
to p.7. "Sometimes we need reminding about that, don't we?"

TOAD

An arrogant, boastful figure with money to burn and an obsession for the latest fad, Toad represents the neighbourhood's landed gentry with his large estate, inherited capital, and love of expensive toys. He is self-centred and takes his friends and comfortable life for granted but he is also a great charmer and many animals are fond of his eccentricities. He is not unlovable but Toad serves as his own antagonist and creates situations that endanger himself and others. In doing so, he damages the community's reputation and frustrates his friends. His journey is a steep arc of self-discovery but does he benefit from it by the end? Toad's singing doesn't have to be tuneful, he can speak/shout the words of his song in a pompous, self-important way.

p. 47. From "I could have been an actor..."
to "I'm the only one who's really grown up."
p. 62. From "Poor Toad." to "I can't bear it."

BADGER

A seemingly fearsome inhabitant of the Wild Wood, Badger does not enjoy socializing, so we see less of him/her in groups than the other characters. But his/her thoughtful speech carries weight with friends, and Badger's stature strikes fear in the hearts of enemies. This gives him/her a top spot in the play's social order. (S)he is slow to act but is decisive when (s)he makes up his/her mind. Badger is very much respected by the other animals and shows

a practical kindness to fellow creatures even though some of them fear him/her. His/her den is inside the Wild Wood. (S)he is not to be trifled with.

p.86. From "Shut up, the lot of you..."

to end of page:

"...with no guns, pistols or anything."

THE FOLLOWING ANIMALS MAY BE INTERCHANGEABLE:

ALBERT/ALBERTINE THE HORSE

Albert is the only animal in the play who is domesticised and serving others. (S)he starts off as the horse drawing Toad's caravan. Bennett writes the horse as a Brummie but (s)he doesn't need to have that accent. (S)he is a source of slapstick comedy, with characters smacking his/her bum all the time. (S)he is the only character near to the kind of stock character you find in pantomime. (S)he will need to wear a horse's head but doesn't need the pantomime four legs. (S)he pulls the caravan on two legs, not four. (S)he ends up being sold by Toad to a Gypsy, making his/her own escape but you always feel the horse an animal only at home among humans, liking their sophisticated ways and their food.

p.71 From "After the caravan incident..."

to "I will introduce you."

OTTER

Otter is not a huge part but a great source of comedy. Together with his son, Portly, they go splashing about in the river, dressed in swimsuits. They are key to establishing the fun side of the riverbank and will be choreographed in an opening sequence to a recorded song, "Splashing about on the River." When not called for scenes, the Otter and Portly can swap about as other animals.

RABBITS

Hare-brained creatures of the meadow and the Wild Wood, Rabbits are numerous but lack common sense. They are unable to make any impact upon their community and are not taken seriously by the other animals. In this way, they are a source of comedy when other animals ignore their wishes and this is evident in the first scene of the play when they try unsuccessfully to make Mole obey them. Rabbit characters can be interchangeable with other animals throughout the play.

WEASELS

Weasels are predatory creatures of the Wild Wood. All main characters fear the weasels, but the weasels' defeat at the play's end shows that their fearsome reputation is not based in reality. They are nasty in nature and not to be trusted. They gang up with other fierce animals on Mole who is rescued by Ratty. Inquisitive at all times, they pop up like spies listening in on the conversations of other creatures. When Toad has his road accident they are the first to steal his possessions and they are gang leaders of the animals taking over Toad Hall when Toad is in prison. Weasels can be interchangeable with other characters.

CHIEF WEASEL

This is the only long speech for Wild Wood characters. He/she is the head of the pack and leads their hunting cry against Toad. His speech shows him as an opportunist, a thief and a downright bully.

From p.94 "He talks too loud..." to "property at a knockdown price."

STOATS AND FERRETS

More predatory creatures of the Wild Wood. While the other characters treat the stoats with quiet respect, they are easily led and team up with the ferrets and weasels to prey on the good and the vulnerable. The fact that they are vanquished by the 'good' animals shows that they act on bluff and deceit more than force and strength. Stoats and ferrets are lawless and vicious in nature. They are the dark side of the play, never to be trusted but can be gullible and easily led. Stoats and Ferrets can be interchangeable with other characters. All animals of the Wild Wood are very active creatures, darting and charging about with energy.

KEY HUMAN CHARACTERS IN THE ANIMAL WORLD

JAILER'S DAUGHTER*

A compassionate young woman, she is a victim of Toad's charm who helps him escape from jail. The Jailer's Daughter feels sorry for the Toad, she might even fancy him a bit but by helping him she encourages his bad behaviour. Along with her aunt, she helps him escape, even though this poses a risk to her family.

WASHER WOMAN*

The Washer Woman is in charge of all the prisoners' washing and she executes her system of moving all her bundles down the slide and into a wash hole next to Toad's cell. Once bribed, she agrees to allow Toad to wear her clothes for his escape but she resents being made a fool and is a tough cookie in her job. She wears many layers of clothing unwashed and stripping her down for Toad's disguise is a very comical moment.

* The following excerpt is to audition Jailer's Daughter and Washerwoman

p.65 From 'Listen Toad. You're very rich and Aunty's very poor.'
to p. 67. "...remember the humble gaoler's daughter who took a fancy to you."

BARGE WOMAN

The Barge Woman is a tough, realistic character on the canal who helps the Toad escape the police. She quickly realizes the Washerwoman is actually the Toad in disguise and tricks him into revealing his true nature. She represents how Toad could lose his reputation if he continues his bad behaviour. She has a solo song when Toad is hopeless at doing the washing. A good singing voice is required for this character and she reprises this song for the fête at Toad Hall.

From p.72. "Nice morning, ma'am."
to p.73 "It's a laundress's banquet."

TRAIN DRIVER

A train engineer who helps Toad escape jail. Believing Toad to be a washerwoman, the Engine Driver feels sorry for him and takes him aboard even though Toad can't pay for his ticket. Together they outrun a train car loaded with authority figures. The Engine Driver represents a working-class fellow who resents people in authority. Rough and a bit gruff, he likes to show off his male prowess.

P.69 From "Funny. We're the last train running..."

to p.70 "Toodloo, Toad. Now I'm going to lead them a right dance."

THE MAGISTRATE

(S)he is the judge of Toad's misdemeanours and sends him to prison for twenty years. Of course, once (s)he realises who Toad really is and how much his lavish lifestyle can be enjoyed by others, the Magistrate soon shows snobbishness and a liking for the finer things in life, turning soft on a first sentence of Toad. (S)he represents the hypocrisy of the authoritative world and shows how rules and sentences can be bent for the rich and powerful.

From p.50 "Stop it, stop it."

to p.51. "He must never ever drive."

GYPSY

A wandering entertainer who also helps Toad escape. The gypsy doesn't care about Toad's disguise and bargains with him for his horse. The gypsy is able to buy the horse for a very low price, but the Toad believes the deal was good. Gypsy can be male or female. You won't need to prep material for this character at auditions.

Once we know our cast numbers after the auditions you may be required to play various parts, animal and human.

Good luck, everyone! Looking forward to seeing you!

Richard (Director)