

A Few Good Years

Penny Petersen





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ArtAge Publications

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A FEW GOOD YEARS

Time & Place: An active retirement country club, anywhere, any time.

Set: *Empty stage. Scenery consists of a series of small drops which are changed according to location. There are 7 painted drops. Two unpainted drops are on the reverse of Grace's & Dolores'. Each drop is hung on two posts. Drops indicate where the action takes place. Minimal furniture (bench, 3 chairs, 2 small tables) become different set pieces). See lists and sketches at end for specifics.*

Cast of Characters: 4 Women, 4 Men, 3-6 Mimes (One acts as Narrator, others change scenery and bring props. Could be done with 3 or 4 mimes if stage hands are used to move furniture and some props.)

LIBBI: A widow

LARRY: A widower

GRACE: Libbi's daughter

DON: Libbi's son-in-law

DOLORES: Larry's daughter

STEVE: Larry's son-in-law

ACTRESS: A leading lady in the local community theatre (Gretchen)

ACTOR: A leading man in the local community theatre (Harold)

NARRATOR: One of the Mimes. Delivers prologues to Act I, Act II & Epilogue

SUMMARY: *A Few Good Years* can best be described as a 'turn-around' of the popular play *The Fantasticks* in subject matter and style. It pits two daughters against their widowed parents, Libbi and Larry. Their efforts to fix up their parents include a "chance" meeting, a fake robbery, a clown, and some bowling buddies. All result in disaster. A nightmare, an actor in drag, and Mimes add to the hilarity. In keeping with the non-realistic style, the mimes represent Fate, and influence the action. At one point, a wedding is planned until some unexpected information causes a ruckus and Larry gets cold feet. Finally, with the help of the mimes, forgiveness prevails and all is well.

NOTE: The Mimes are a 'Theatrical' convention meant to stress the non-realistic nature of the presentation. None of the characters are aware of the Mimes, but the Mimes often communicate their feelings to the audience. There is no sense of the characters noticing the Mimes. Scene changes are all done in full view of the audience with only the drops and a few pieces of furniture representing different places. SL, SC & SR must have their own area lighting as well as being used together. Also, a single spot from above is needed DL, DC & DR. Mime places a sign designating location with music behind.

NOTE: Although lighting cues are listed, the show is designed so that it could be Done in any setting & without lights. Actors simply turn their backs to indicate Non-focus. Sounds could be simplified to bells for phone etc.

Scenes are numbered for rehearsal purposes. Action is continuous.

ACT I

(NARRATOR/MIME enters & speaks to audience. Spotlight, DC. Center Drop is the show title, SL & SR drops are unpainted fabric.)

PROLOGUE - NARRATOR *(Spoken as in a Shakespeare Play)*

Just what is life? Why are we here?
What part is love? What part is fear?
What causes smiles? What brings a tear?
Things are not always as they appear.

Do we control it? Do we create?
The things we crave? The things we hate?
And when it's time to choose a mate?

Do we control? Or is it fate?

Humm, we'll see.

We'll try to tell this story true
With props and music, just for you
But settings here are mighty few
So use your imagination too.

My friends and I will just appear
With prop or hat or sound to hear
In the end, we hope it's clear
Even though we're not Shakespeare.

But, now, let's pause so you can greet
The people who you soon will meet.

(GRACE and DOLORES enter DL and pantomime a discussion about fixing up their parents. They don't notice narrator or audience.)

This is Grace and her friend Dolores. They are plotting against their parents. Oh, not in a bad way, but you'll soon see.

(MIME brings on chair SR and sets it with back to center. LIBBI enters and sits in chair reading a travel magazine.)

Here we have Libbi. She's Grace's mother. She's been widowed for seven years and spends most of her time traveling with lady friends. Grace wants her to get married again, but Libbi is too independent. Grace would like to change that.

(MIME brings on chair SL and sets it with back to center. LARRY enters carrying a saxophone or other instrument and sits in chair. He pantomimes playing.)

The musician right there? That's Larry. He's the father of Dolores. He's a widower. A bit of a ladies' man, he plays in a band and goes dancing. But he won't make a commitment. Dolores would like to change that.

(DON and STEVE enter carrying bowling bags SR They pantomime.)

These guys don't know what they're in for. Don is Grace's husband and Libbi's son-in-law. He's a frustrated husband because his wife likes to shop. Anybody know all about that? Here we have Steve. He's Dolores' husband and Larry's son-in-law. He's a pretty sensitive guy, but stern. Larry is his favorite person.

(MIMES appear dragging ACTOR and ACTRESS right down center.)

These two are actors with the local community theatre. They don't like being onstage without their costumes and make-up.

(NARRATOR-MIME gestures at MIMES who let go of actors. Actors scurry backstage. A dismissive gesture and the rest of the cast exits.)

So, we begin, the end is true
The story calls, we bid adieu.
(N/M exit. Center spot out. DR spot up.)

(DOLORES and GRACE enter DR spot. They have escaped and are talking in the restroom. They pantomime hand washing.)

Did you ask her?
DOLORES

(Not happy) Yeah.
GRACE

Well, what did she say?
DOLORES

She said, (Mimicking) "No way. I'm much too old for birth control."
GRACE

What?
DOLORES

That's her way of saying "No."
GRACE

If she'd just meet my dad! He's perfect for her.
DOLORES

GRACE

He's perfect period! If I were 20 Years older, I'd go for him.

DOLORES

You're just saying that.

GRACE

No. I mean it. We've got to get them together.

DOLORES

But how?

(MIME enters next to DOLORES and snaps fingers. No response. Snaps again then backs up, staying onstage.)

I know! We'll trick her into it.

GRACE

Trick her?

DOLORES

We'll make the meeting an accident.

GRACE

Not bad. But how would we do it?

(MIME moves next to DOLORES & motions with hand.)

DOLORES

I've got it. I'll volunteer Dad to help pack food baskets after church. You volunteer your mom. You give them something to do together, like sorting the canned goods, then, wallah! They'll have to talk. They're too polite not to.

GRACE

What if it doesn't work?

END OF FREEVIEW

You'll want to read and perform this show!