

## **WCT Winter 2027 *Hansel and Gretel* Audition Packet**

Thank you for your interest in our **Winter 2027** production of *Hansel and Gretel* from the classic story by The Brothers Grimm, adapted by Vera Morris! We are thrilled to revisit this classic tale of mystery, magic and mayhem. To help you prepare for auditions, we are providing important details about the production, along with some encouragement to 'break a leg'. Please remember to HAVE FUN!

Reading through this packet and preparing in advance is **completely optional**, but we encourage those who may feel nervous about auditions or cold readings to review the material. It can also help you get ready for your character and start thinking about how you may want to portray each role. Below, you'll find a full production calendar, a synopsis of the show, a character breakdown, and audition sides (excerpts from the script used for readings during auditions).

Please note:

- **Memorization is not required.**
- **Copies of the scripts, and Madame Dido monologues, will be provided to all auditioners throughout the audition process**

### **Plot Overview:**

When Hansel and Gretel are sent into the woods, they encounter some marvelous folk — an arrogant troll who fiercely guards his little wooden bridge, a talking owl, a forest sprite, and two hobgoblins in the service of the nasty (and hilarious) witch. Tremble for Hansel as he's locked in a cage and fed nothing but fudge and cake. Cheer Gretel as she outwits the crone and sets free all the lost children who have been turned into cookies! All the moments are here, from the night spent in the woods to the discovery of the candy-coated little cottage.

### **Casting Information:**

Auditions are open to anyone ages 10-20. No experience required and there are no audition or participation fees! Casting for all characters is fluid in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, physical ability, and experience level. Walpole Children's Theatre welcomes anyone aspiring to be on stage.

We are looking for a cast of 18 to 25 performers. Unfortunately, we cannot cast everyone who auditions for this production. Casting notifications will be made in the days following auditions via phone or email.

We encourage all auditionees to bring their enthusiasm, creativity, and love for storytelling! We look forward to seeing you at auditions and can't wait to bring *Hansel and Gretel* to life together. Have fun!!

### **Our Attendance Expectations for Participating Cast Members:**

- All rehearsals are in-person
- Cast members are expected to list all rehearsal conflicts (confirmed and/anticipated) at auditions
- Missing more than 50% (90 minutes) of a scheduled rehearsal will count as an absence
- As a reminder, please see the provided calendar
- Non-emergency absences after 1/24/2027 will be subject to production team approval
- All tech rehearsals and production dates (2/16-2/28/27) are mandatory

### Hansel and Gretel Calendar

| Sunday                                                    | Monday | Tuesday                           | Wednesday                 | Thursday                    | Friday                  | Saturday |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|--------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|----------|
| <b>November 1</b><br>Auditions<br>VFW<br>Walpole<br>1-5pm | 2      | 3<br>Rehearsal<br>6:30-9pm        | 4                         | 5                           | 6                       | 7        |
| 8<br>Rehearsal<br>4-7pm                                   | 9      | 10<br>Rehearsal<br>6:30-9pm       | 11                        | 12                          | 13                      | 14       |
| 15<br>Rehearsal<br>4-7pm                                  | 16     | 17<br>Rehearsal<br>6:30-9         | 18                        | 19                          | 20                      | 21       |
| 22<br>No Rehearsal                                        | 23     | 24<br>No Rehearsal                | 25<br>Thanksgiving<br>Eve | 26<br>Thanksgiving          | 27<br>Black<br>Friday   | 28       |
| 29<br>No Rehearsal                                        | 30     | <b>December 1</b><br>No Rehearsal | 2                         | 3                           | 4                       | 5        |
| 6<br>No Rehearsal                                         | 7      | 8<br>Rehearsal<br>6:30-9pm        | 9                         | 10<br>Rehearsal<br>6:30-9pm | 11                      | 12       |
| 13<br>Rehearsal<br>4-7pm                                  | 14     | 15<br>Rehearsal<br>6:30-9pm       | 16                        | 17                          | 18                      | 19       |
| 20<br>Rehearsal<br>4-7pm                                  | 21     | 22<br>Rehearsal<br>6:30-9pm       | 23                        | 24<br>XMas Eve              | 25<br>XMas Day          | 26       |
| 27<br>No Rehearsal                                        | 28     | 29<br>No Rehearsal                | 30                        | 31<br>NYE                   | <b>January 1</b><br>NYD | 2        |

|                          |                   |                             |    |                             |    |    |
|--------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|----|-----------------------------|----|----|
| 3<br>No Rehearsal        | 4                 | 5<br>Rehearsal<br>6:30-9pm  | 6  | 7<br>Rehearsal<br>6:30-9pm  | 8  | 9  |
| 10<br>Rehearsal<br>4-7pm | 11                | 12<br>Rehearsal<br>6:30-9pm | 13 | 14<br>Fundraiser            | 15 | 16 |
| 17<br>No Rehearsal       | 18<br>MLK Jr. Day | 19<br>Rehearsal<br>6:30-9pm | 20 | 21<br>Rehearsal<br>6:30-9pm | 22 | 23 |
| 24<br>Rehearsal<br>4-7pm | 25                | 26<br>Rehearsal<br>6:30-9pm | 27 | 28                          | 29 | 30 |
| 31<br>Rehearsal<br>4-7pm | February 1        | 2<br>Rehearsal<br>6:30-9pm  | 3  | 4<br>Rehearsal<br>6:30-9pm  | 5  | 6  |

|                           |                                   |                               |                                        |                                   |                         |                                                  |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| 7<br>Rehearsal<br>4-7pm   | 8                                 | 9<br>Rehearsal<br>6:30-9pm    | 10                                     | 11                                | 12                      | 13                                               |
| 14<br>Rehearsal<br>12-3pm | 15<br>Presidents' Day<br>OFF/REST | 16<br>Tech Rehearsal<br>6-9pm | 17<br>Half Dress Rehearsal<br>6-9:30pm | 18<br>Dress Rehearsal<br>4-9:30pm | 19<br>Call-4pm Show-7pm | 20<br>Call-11am Show-2pm Show-7pm                |
| 21<br>Call-11am Show-2pm  | 22<br>OFF/REST                    | 23<br>OFF/REST                | 24<br>OFF/REST                         | 25<br>OFF/REST                    | 26<br>Call-4pm Show-7pm | 27<br>Call-11am Show-2pm Show-7pm<br>Cast Party! |
| 28<br>STRIKE              | March 1                           |                               |                                        |                                   |                         |                                                  |

### Audition Info & Links

Sunday, November 1st, 2026 at 1PM

Walpole VFW, 109 Robbins Rd, Walpole, MA 02081

**Audition Schedule:**

12:30 - 1:00 PM: Arrival & Registration

1:00 - 2:30 PM Introductions & Madame Dido

END of Primary Auditions - only a portion of auditionees will be asked to stay for callbacks

3:00 - 4:00 PM: Callbacks

Please complete the following registration form prior to auditions

[AUDITION REGISTRATION LINK](#)

**[Madame Dido Monologue](#)**

All auditionees are asked to perform a monologue, Madame Dido, in the first part of the auditions. It does not have to be memorized but that is highly encouraged to showcase their volume, diction, physicality, and character if it is memorized

Auditionees will be given an opportunity to read excerpts from the script as part of the audition. These readings, called "Sides", are included in this packet and can be reviewed before the auditions. Auditionees do not need to print the sides to bring. There will be copies of the sides will be available for auditionees to read at the auditions.

Please review the Calendar included in the Audition Packet prior to auditioning.

All conflicts need to be disclosed on the audition registration form. Attendance at rehearsals is expected.

Conflicts for Tech Week and performances are not allowed.

**Audition FAQs:****Can I stay at the auditions with my child?**

Auditions are closed to everyone except the crew and those auditioning. Parents and guardians are welcome to wait outside or leave and return between audition sections. Crew members will have phones available to arrange pickups or provide updates.

**How will I know if my child is involved in callbacks?**

Callback determinations will be made by 2:30 PM. Those asked to stay or leave can use crew phones to arrange pickup. Everyone else should expect to stay until 4:00 PM unless other arrangements have been made with the producers or directors.

**Does everyone get cast?**

Casting depends on the number of roles available and the director's vision. Not everyone who auditions may receive a role, but those not cast are encouraged to try again at future auditions or productions.

**Where are the auditions?**

Auditions will be held at VFW Walpole, Robbins Road, from 12:30 to 4:00 PM on Sunday, November 1st, 2026

### **When are rehearsals?**

Rehearsals are held on Sundays, Tuesdays throughout November, December, January and February, and some Thursdays in February 2027

### **Are rehearsals mandatory?**

Not all rehearsals are mandatory. Attendance is expected unless a conflict was previously disclosed, or the director notifies cast members of an exception or cancellation. Rehearsals during Tech Week (February 16-18) are mandatory.

### **When is the final production?**

There are seven performances between February 19-27, with tech rehearsals starting on February 16.

### **Are production weeks mandatory?**

Yes, participation is mandatory from February 16 - 28, 2027.

## **Audition Tips**

### **Volume & Pronunciation – Be Heard!**

Make sure we can hear you! Speak up, project your voice, and enunciate so your words are clear. The director may be sitting close to the stage, but we want to know you can be heard at the back of a filled auditorium. Project your voice to the back of the room.

### **Embrace the Characters**

This show is a comedy with magic and mystery. Explore the personality of the characters. The more fun you have, the more we'll enjoy watching you. Don't hold back—this is your chance to bring the scenes to life.

### **Make Us Laugh**

This story is filled with humor, so find moments to make your performance funny. Think about **timing**—a well-placed pause, reaction, or movement can make a joke land perfectly.

### **Make a Bold Choice – Stand Out**

Give us something memorable. Whether it's the way your character moves, talks, or reacts, don't be afraid to make **strong** choices. Even small details can set you apart. Take a risk and have fun with it.

## **Bring the Energy**

Even if you're playing a slow-moving character, that's still an *active* choice. Stay engaged in every moment, even when you're not speaking. React, listen, and keep the energy up. We want to see characters that feel *alive*, not just actors reciting lines.

**Final Reminder:** We're excited to see what you bring to the table, and we *want* you to succeed. Trust your instincts, commit to your choices, and let your personality shine. You've got this! 🤖✨

## **CHARACTERS**

### **Cast (18 speaking):**

Hansel – young boy, always hungry

Gretel – his sister, same age

Frederick – neighborhood boy

Susie – neighborhood girl

Johanna– neighborhood girl

Lydia – resident witch expert

Frick – goblin that serves the witch

Frack – goblin that serves the witch

Witch – not nice at all

Mother – H&G's mom

Father – H&G's dad, a woodcutter and toy maker

Troll – collects tolls from passersbys

Owl – wise and helpful

Dew Princess – sprinkles dew drops in the morning

Echo – young girl, a forest sprite

Sandman – helps children sleep

Casper – turned into gingerbread

Katrina – turned into gingerbread

## **MADAME DIDO MONOLOGUE**

Come one! Come all!

And see the great, Madame Dido\*

Jump from this 100 foot tower

Into this one foot pail of water.

Are you ready Madame Dido\*?

*"Yes, I'm ready" (said as an aside in a Madame Dido voice behind hand)*

Then on the count of three, you shall jump!

One... two...three...

Jump, Madame Dido\*, Jump!

whooooooooooooooooo- SPLAT!

*(Look of disgust in direction of Splat)*

*(Dance off stage)*

\*Dido pronunciation= Die - Doh

## Audition Sides:

#1

WITCH: Time for you to awake and start to eat. To stuff. To gorge. I've made fudge. I'm sure you like fudge. All boys like fudge. Eat fudge and grow fat.

HANSEL: *(Indifferent.)* I'm not hungry, thank you.

WITCH: Get hungry! And stay hungry! *(Menacingly.)* Otherwise, I'll take you out of that cage and put in Gretel.

HANSEL: *(Fully awake.)* All right. Give me the fudge.

WITCH: Not so fast. I want to see how you're getting on. Your finger should be nice and plump by now. If it is, we can begin the preparations for the bubbling pot pie. *(GRETEL creeps back INTO VIEW, observes.)* Show me your finger.

HANSEL: I don't want to.

WITCH: What do I care what you want or don't want to do? *(Commands.)* Show me your finger! *(Thinking fast, GRETEL picks a small twig from the ground. She moves to the cage, careful not to let the WITCH see her.)* Drat my eyes. They itch and grow dim. *(She rubs her eyes, and GRETEL stage whispers to HANSEL.)*

GRETEL: Show her this twig, Hansel. She'll think it's your finger. *(HANSEL grabs the twig.)*

WITCH: *(Stops rubbing her eyes.)* That voice? Gretel. Where are you, lollipop? *(Fast, GRETEL steps CENTER.)*

GRETEL: Here I am.

WITCH: *(Squints.)* What are you doing there, girl? I told you to go into the cottage and set the table.

GRETEL: I don't know where anything is. Your favorite cup. Your favorite plate.

WITCH: You really are a ninny. Ah, well. I'll tend to you in a moment. *(To HANSEL.)* Enough nonsense, boy. Show me your finger. *(Guardedly, HANSEL shoves the twig through the bars. The WITCH bends to it, squinting.)*

HANSEL: Here it is.

WITCH: Tsk, ts. It doesn't look plump at all. This will never do. You haven't been eating enough. *(Pokes at the twig.)* This finger is thin and boney. This is so disappointing. You're not nearly ready. Gretel, fetch the fudge!

GRETEL: Yes, ma'am. The fudge. *(GRETEL gets the pan and crosses to the cage. She starts to feed HANSEL through the bars. WITCH is thinking hard, confiding her thoughts to the AUDIENCE.)*

WITCH: I hate a bubbling pot pie when it's skimpy. Hansel won't be ready for days. Hmmmmmmm. What can I have for my dinner? Hmmmmm. Perhaps melted cheese on a cinnamon

bun. And for dessert -- *(Looks to GRETEL.)* HeeHeeHee. *(False sweetness.)* Oh, Gretel.

GRETEL: Oh, Witch.

WITCH: Be a good little girl and check on the fire. I'd do it myself, but my eyes are feeble.

GRETEL: Check on the fire?

WITCH: Yes -- check on the fire! *(Calms down.)* Open the oven door and climb in. That way you'll be able to see if the fire is all the way to the back.

GRETEL: Yes, ma'am. *(GRETEL puts the pan down on the ground by the cage and crosses to the oven. WITCH watches her like cat and mouse. GRETEL stands in front of the oven but doesn't open the door.)*

WITCH: Well, well, what are you waiting for, ninny? The door won't open by itself.

GRETEL: I'm terribly stupid.

WITCH: If you say so. Go on, go on. Open the door. A squirrel could do it.

GRETEL: I know how to open the door. It's the other part I don't understand.

WITCH: What's to understand? You open the door, and then you climb in. Hip, hop. Is that so difficult?

GRETEL: It's so confusing.

WITCH: What's confusing about it?! *(Calms down.)* Watch my lips. Concentrate. *(WITCH speaks as if she were instructing a backward pupil.)* One -- open the door. Two -- climb in.

GRETEL: That's the part that confuses me. I don't understand about climbing in.

WITCH: It's ever so easy.

GRETEL: Could you show me? *(Patience exhausted, WITCH shoves GRETEL aside.)*

WITCH: You may be a tasty gingerbread cookie, but you're a dumb one. *(Fast.)* One -- open the door. See how easy it is. *(She opens the door.)* Two -- climb in. *(Without thinking, WITCH bends over and climbs into the oven. Before she realizes what she's done, GRETEL gives her a push and slams the door shut. SOUND: THUNDEROUS BOOM, followed by a loud, dying WITCH WAIL from inside the oven. LIGHTS FLICKER. HANSEL has been watching with avid interest.)*

HANSEL: Good work, Gretel! You're so clever! Now get me out of here.

GRETEL: I don't have the key. *(From OFFSTAGE UP RIGHT and OFFSTAGE DOWN RIGHT we hear EXCITED VOICES.)*

CHILDREN: *(Terrified.)* Gingerbread Witch! *(STAGE EFFECT: LYDIA and CHILDREN "freeze" in position. Supposedly, LYDIA is continuing with her description of the WITCH and her doings. If possible, the major part of the hut is thrown into DARKNESS and a LARGE CIRCLE OF LIGHT HITS DOWN RIGHT. From OFFSTAGE, DOWN RIGHT, comes the hideous LAUGHTER of GINGERBREAD WITCH.)*

WITCH'S VOICE: *(Loud and nasty.)* HeeHeeHeeHeeHeeHeeHeeHeeHee! HaHaHaHaHaHaHaHaHaHa! HoHoHoHoHoHoHoHoHoHo! Wheeeeeeeeeee! *(As OTHERS remain frozen in position, two horrid little GOBLINS lumber IN from DOWN RIGHT and stand in the CIRCLE OF LIGHT. They are FRICK and FRACK, henchpeople to the GINGERBREAD WITCH. They, too, laugh.)*

FRICK/FRACK: HeeHeeHeeHeeHee. HeeHeeHeeHeeHee.

WITCH'S VOICE: Here I come! Ready or not. HeeHeeHeeHeeHeeHeeHee! *(IN zooms the WITCH astride her broom. What a scary sight! Long thin nose, stringy hair, pointed chin, wide-brimmed cone hat. She speaks to the broom as if it were a horse.)*

WITCH: Whoooooooooo, broom. Whoa, I say. Whoa. *(She stops. ABOUT THE GINGERBREAD WITCH: She has plenty of energy and pep. There is nothing "tottering" or "feeble" about her -- unless she chooses, when she's in the mood, to act so. She does squint because her eyes are weak. She's clever and witty and cruel and nasty and scary and sometimes -- funny. Out to AUDIENCE.)* Oh! How I love to ride my broom. I've had it for centuries, and I haven't had to replace one straw. Wheeeeeeeeeee. Over hill and dale! Over cleft and valley! Through mist and storm! HeeHeeHeeHeeHeeHeeHee! Wheeeeeeeeeee!

FRICK: HeeHeeHeeHeeHeeHeeHee!

FRACK: Wheeeeeeeeeee!

WITCH: Silence, you miserable goblins! *(WITCH raises one arm as if to strike at the GOBLINS. FRICK and FRACK cower and cover their faces with their arms.)* When I want to hear you laugh and carry on, I'll let you know. *(Menacingly.)* Understand?

FRICK: We understand, Gingerbread Witch.

FRACK: We live only to serve you, Gingerbread Witch.

FRICK: You're the boss lady.

FRACK: Command and it shall be done.

FRICK: Noble Gingerbread Witch!

FRACK: Gracious boss lady! *(It is obvious the GOBLINS are terrified of the WITCH. Arms down.)*

WITCH: Hear me well, goblins. This day many children will be going to the next town. It's Public Holiday, and the town

square will be filled with merry-makers. You, Frick, and you, Frack, will find some way to divert children to Ilsenstein Mountain. Once they are there, I will do the rest.

HaHaHaHaHaHa! HeeHeeHeeHeeHee!

FRICK: How can we divert the children?

FRACK: Children don't like us.

FRICK: They're always saying unpleasant things about goblins.

FRACK: Children can be so rude.

WITCH: *(Snarls.)* You heard me. If you fail -- I will turn you into apple muffins and feed you to the crows. HaHaHaHaHaHaHa!

*(FRICK and FRACK, horrified, cling to one another for support.)*

FRICK: *(Shaking.)* We won't fail you, Gingerbread Witch!

FRACK: *(Shaking.)* What you wish for you shall have!

WITCH: Then we understand one another. *(Snaps.)* Get busy, goblins! There's work to be done. *(She holds tight to the broomstick.)* Giddyup! HeeHeeHeeHeeHeeHeeHee!

HaHaHaHaHaHaHaHa! HoHoHoHoHoHoHoHoHoHo! Wheeeeeeeeeee! *(She zooms OFF DOWN RIGHT.)*

FRICK: We'd better not fail her!

FRACK: If we do, it's apple muffin time. *(They lope after the WITCH. STAGE LIGHTS BACK TO NORMAL. The CHILDREN are all ears, listening intently as LYDIA rambles on.)*

LYDIA: ...and with wonderful cakes and candies and tasties she tempts little children with her house for munching, crunching and chomping. *(ALL gasp.)*

JOHANNA: What -- what -- what does she do with them?

SUSIE: The children?

LYDIA: Are you sure you want to know?

OTHERS: *(Numbly nodding their heads.)* Uh-huh.

LYDIA: She puts them into a red hot oven and bakes them into -- gingerbread children. *(CHILDREN gasp.)*

SUSIE: And then?

LYDIA: And then, she eats them! *(At that, EVERYONE is standing.)*

ALL: Auuuugh!

FREDERICK: That's a stupid story. You only told us that story so we won't go to the next town.

LYDIA: Not so.

JOHANNA: You want me to spend my three coins buying something from you instead of buying something at the Public Holiday.

LYDIA: No, no. What I told you is the truth. The truth! *(Serious tone.)* Don't you recall, not too long ago, Katrina the goose

GRETEL: Of course it's true. *(Displays broom.)* This broom is almost finished.

HANSEL: I could carve much better if I weren't so hungry.

GRETEL: Work harder, Hansel. You won't be so hungry then.

HANSEL: That makes no sense, Gretel. No sense at all. *(He puts aside the block of wood and carving knife.)* We've got this fine pitcher of fresh milk Frau Rosmer brought us. I bet it tastes sweet. *(He grabs the pitcher.)*

GRETEL: *(Jumps to her feet.)* No, Hansel, no. Mother is going to make a nice pudding. You mustn't drink so much as a drop. This new broom is to pay Frau Rosmer for the milk.

HANSEL: A few gulps won't spoil the pudding.

GRETEL: Don't be a little pig, brother.

HANSEL: But, Gretel, we've had nothing to eat but thin soup for a whole week. I'd rather be a little pig than a starving boy.

GRETEL: I have some bread. I've been saving it. *(She puts down the broom and produces a small piece of bread from the pocket of her dress.)* I'll share it with you. You won't be hungry anymore. *(She breaks the bread in two, crosses to HANSEL and gives him half. He immediately tears at it.)* Mother is sure she'll be able to sell her wedding ring. And Father has gone to the Public Holiday in the next town. He's bound to sell some toys. We'll have lots to eat. You'll see.

HANSEL: I wish we weren't poor.

GRETEL: We are poor -- there's no denying that. *(HANSEL coughs.)*

HANSEL: The bread has stuck in my throat. It's so old and dry.

GRETEL: I'll get you a cup of water. *(She starts to EXIT DOWN LEFT.)*

HANSEL: No need. This milk will do the trick. *(He grabs the pitcher and takes several thirsty gulps. GRETEL is horrified.)*

GRETEL: Hansel -- the pudding!

HANSEL: There's plenty left. *(GRETEL moves back to the table and takes the pitcher. Checks the level.)*

GRETEL: You drank almost half.

HANSEL: *(Rubs his midsection.)* I'm still hungry.

GRETEL: *(Worried.)* I don't know what Mother will say. *(Moves to DOWN LEFT stool with pitcher.)* I'll put this over here where I can keep an eye on it while I work. *(She puts the pitcher on the floor by the stool. VOICES from OFFSTAGE UP RIGHT, excited and loud.)*

FREDERICK'S VOICE: Hansel! Gretel!

SUSIE'S VOICE: Are you home?

JOHANNA'S VOICE: Time for a holiday!

GRETEL: *(Turns UP RIGHT.)* It's Frederick! And Susie! And Johanna! *(FREDERICK, SUSIE and JOHANNA APPEAR at the entrance to the hut. About the same age as HANSEL and GRETEL.)*

FREDERICK: Hello, Hansel! Gretel!

SUSIE: Are you going to the Public Holiday?

JOHANNA: It's going to be great fun.

GRETEL: Father's gone, but we have to stay home.

HANSEL: I'm to carve wood, and Gretel is to make brooms.

SUSIE: Where's your mother?

HANSEL: Gone to sell -- *(GRETEL doesn't want the OTHERS to know her MOTHER is forced to sell her wedding ring. She cuts HANSEL off.)*

GRETEL: -- some brooms. She's gone to sell brooms. At the crossroads. Come in, come in. Don't stand in the doorway looking like scarecrows. *(The YOUNGSTERS ENTER, quite at home.)*

FREDERICK: We can't stay. It's a long walk to the next town. *(As the dialogue plays, FREDERICK crosses to the stool at the fireplace, sits. SUSIE crosses to the DOWN LEFT stool, sits. GRETEL stands beside her. JOHANNA sits at the table with HANSEL.)*

JOHANNA: There's going to be music and dancing and clowns.

SUSIE: And a puppet show!

FREDERICK: And a strong man lifting great weights over his head. His name is Hercules.

HANSEL: That does sound exciting! Can't we go, Gretel?

GRETEL: What would Mother say if we disobeyed her? You're to carve toys, and I'm to make brooms.

SUSIE: That doesn't sound like much fun to me.

JOHANNA: Last year at the Public Holiday they had a man who could swallow a sword.

FREDERICK: And a goat that could do sums. They had a dancing bear, too.

SUSIE: They'll all be back this year.

HANSEL: *(More and more excited.)* A dancing bear! Oh, Gretel, we've got to go. If Mother wants to punish me -- well -- I'll just take my punishment.

GRETEL: You won't have to take your punishment because you're not going.

HANSEL: *(Stands.)* I will if I want to.

GRETEL: *(Arms akimbo, defiant.)* You're not going to the Public Holiday and neither am I.

HANSEL: Am too!

GRETEL: Am not!

For preview only<sup>2</sup>

For preview only<sup>3</sup>

BOTH: Ho! Ho! The Gingerbread Witch will be pleased! Be pleased! The Gingerbread Witch will be pleased.

FRACK: They must be dull children to be fooled by such a trick.

FRICK: Not at all. It's getting late. They're tired. They've played long and hard at the Public Holiday, and their eyes are ready for the Sandman. They stumble along.

FRACK: The important thing is that they stumble on to the Witch's Compound.

FRICK: That's up to us. We dare not fail.

FRACK: Remember, Frick, if we fail it won't be gingerbread for us. It'll be apple muffins.

BOTH (Horried.) Apple muffin goblins. *(We hear the OFFSTAGE VOICES of FREDERICK, JOHANNA and SUSIE. They can either ENTER through the AUDIENCE and move up onto the FORESTAGE/STAGE or ENTER from LEFT.)*

FREDERICK'S VOICE: Nothing looks familiar.

JOHANNA'S VOICE: Are you sure we're on the right path?

SUSIE'S VOICE: I'm so sleepy. I can barely keep my eyes open. *(FRICK and FRACK react to the VOICES.)*

FRACK: It's them! The children.

FRICK: What did I tell you. Coming this way, coming this way.

FRACK: They mustn't see us.

FRICK: Hide. *(FRICK and FRACK quickly EXIT RIGHT. Or they might hide "in the forest." A moment passes, and FREDERICK ENTERS, followed by JOHANNA and SUSIE. They look exhausted. JOHANNA carries a large stuffed doll.)*

FREDERICK: It must be the twilight. Shadows make everything look different.

SUSIE: (Yawns.) I'm so sleepy.

JOHANNA: We must have walked ten leagues.

SUSIE: More. My shoes tell me so.

FREDERICK: I admit we've walked and walked and walked.

SUSIE: We should have been back in our village long ago.

JOHANNA: We're lost.

FREDERICK: Don't be silly. We're not lost. We followed the sign, didn't we? This -- Way -- Home.

JOHANNA: I still say we're lost. Maybe there's someone in the forest who can help us. *(She turns LEFT and RIGHT, calls out.)* Hello! Hello! Anybody there? *(Pause. Then.)*

ECHO'S VOICE: *(From OFFSTAGE, repeating. See PRODUCTION NOTES.)* Hello... Hello... anybody there...

JOHANNA: Did you hear that? Someone's nearby. Saved! *(Calls out again.)* Hello! Hello!

ECHO'S VOICE: *(Repeating in echo fashion.)* Hello... hello...

JOHANNA: *(Yells.)* We're lost!

ECHO'S VOICE: We're lost... lost... lost...

SUSIE: *(Calls.)* Where are you?

ECHO'S VOICE: Where are you... you... you...

FREDERICK: There's nobody nearby. All you're hearing is an echo.

JOHANNA/SUSIE: *(Disappointed.)* An echo?

FREDERICK: *(Confirms.)* An echo. Watch and listen. *(He cups his hand to his mouth and yells.)* Echo... echo... echo...! *(ALL listen. Pause.)*

JOHANNA: I don't hear anything.

FREDERICK: You will. *(He cups his ear, listens. JOHANNA and SUSIE do the same. Nothing. Calls again.)* Little Echo... Echo... Echo... How are you? *(Again, ALL listen. Nothing.)* That is surely the strangest echo I never heard. *(JOHANNA and SUSIE uncup their ears.)*

JOHANNA: But we did hear something, Frederick. *(Worried.)* Didn't we?

FREDERICK: I think this forest is haunted.

JOHANNA/SUSIE: Haunted!

FREDERICK: *(Tenses.)* I just remembered something.

JOHANNA/SUSIE: What?

FREDERICK: What Lydia said about that Gingerbread Witch. What if it's true? *(JOHANNA and SUSIE are horrified.)*

JOHANNA: Don't think about it!

SUSIE: Don't talk about it! *(From OFFSTAGE LEFT we hear the grumpy VOICE of GUNTHER THE TROLL. Or, if a female is portraying the creature -- GRETA THE TROLL.)*

TROLL'S VOICE: *(From OFFSTAGE LEFT.)* A sorry state of affairs, I must say, when a respectable troll is done out of his (her) toll. Tsk, ts. Bah, bah. Knock, knock. Knack, knack. What's the forest coming to?

JOHANNA: *(Shaking.)* What's that?

SUSIE: *(Shaking.)* Who's that?

FREDERICK: *(Moves to protect JOHANNA and SUSIE.)* I don't think it's the echo. *(TROLL ENTERS. A foul-tempered individual. Long, bushy beard and/or hair, dressed in rags. He carries a cudgel. CHILDREN react.)*

TROLL: Aha! There you are. Thought you'd get away, did you? I repeat -- a sorry state of affairs, I must say, when a respectable troll is done out of his toll. Tsk, ts. Bah, bah. Knock, knock. Knack, knack. What's the forest coming to? *(The CHILDREN are both scared and fascinated. Loudly.)* I said

-- what's the forest coming to?! (CHILDREN step back.) Why are you staring?

FREDERICK: Oh, forgive us, sir (madam). It's just that we've never seen a troll before.

SUSIE: (Timidly.) We've heard about them, of course.

TROLL: Of course. Who hasn't?

JOHANNA: We hope you're friendly. Are you?

TROLL: Tsk, tsk. Bah, bah. Knock, knock. Knack, knack. I can't waste time in silly chatter. My name is Gunther (Greta), and I want my toll.

FREDERICK: Toll? We don't know what you're talking about.

TROLL: (Points OFFSTAGE LEFT or into AUDIENCE, wherever CHILDREN entered from at beginning of scene.) You see that bridge? That bridge you crossed? (CHILDREN look.)

CHILDREN: Yes.

TROLL: Even stupid children ought to know the rules of the deep forest. From the way it's built, you can see it's a troll bridge.

FREDERICK: A toll bridge?

TROLL: (Angrily stomping his foot.) No, not a toll bridge. A troll bridge. You pay the toll to the troll. That's why I'm here. You crossed my bridge, and you didn't pay the toll. I ask you -- is that considerate?

SUSIE: We didn't see you on the bridge.

TROLL: (Irritated.) Of course you didn't see me on the bridge. A troll lives under the bridge. Don't you children know anything at all?

JOHANNA: We're lost.

SUSIE: We know that.

TROLL: What's that to me? Come on, pay up.

FREDERICK: We don't have any money.

SUSIE: We spent what we had at the Public Holiday.

TROLL: Pay me! Pay me! I won't be denied. (Stomps and stomps. Spots the stuffed doll. Points.) What's that?

JOHANNA: I won this. I had the winning raffle ticket.

TROLL: Well, it's mine now. You can't have something for nothing. Spoiled brats. (He grabs the stuffed doll from JOHANNA.)

FREDERICK: Hey! You can't do that.

TROLL: It doesn't do to cheat a troll. If you cross that bridge again, you must pay another toll.

SUSIE: You certainly are a nasty little person.

TROLL: No fooling? (He starts to EXIT, holding out the doll in front of him. He's unimpressed with his loot.) What am I going to do with this thing? (He is OUT.)

FREDERICK: (Calls after him.) Herr Troll... Gunther... could you tell us how to get out of this deep forest?

TROLL'S VOICE: (From OFFSTAGE.) Tsk, tsk. Bah, bah. Knock, knock. Knack, knack.

JOHANNA: He wasn't much help. (FRICK, unseen, RETURNS and quickly sits on the ground, STAGE RIGHT. He has his back to the AUDIENCE and holds the sign high with the lettering facing front.)

SUSIE: What are we going to do, Frederick?

FREDERICK: I don't know which way to go. (FRACK sticks his head IN from OFFSTAGE.)

FRACK: Read the sign! (Fast, he WITHDRAWS. CHILDREN turn to the VOICE.)

JOHANNA: I thought I heard someone.

FREDERICK: So did I.

SUSIE: It must have been that strange echo. (Sees the sign.) Look! (CHILDREN look. They don't notice FRICK.)

CHILDREN: (Reading in unison.) This -- Way -- Home.

FREDERICK: There! What did I tell you? There's nothing to worry about now. We'll be home within the hour. (FREDERICK points in the same direction the arrow is indicating. Moves OFF. JOHANNA and SUSIE follow.)

End of Scene Two