

PLAYS FOR  
**NewAudiences**

**A DIVISION OF CHILDREN'S THEATRE COMPANY  
2400 THIRD AVENUE SOUTH  
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA 55404**

# *A Little Princess*

Adapted for the Stage by  
**Ashley Griffin**

From the story by  
**Francis Hodgson Burnett**

*For everyone at the Santa Monica Playhouse, my theatrical home growing up, especially Evelyn Rudie, Chris DeCarlo, Rina Mimoun, Alex Cohen and Rachel Galper.  
From Mary-Mary – who still sees through rose colored glasses and never stopped believing.*

*And for Gabriel Barre, Malcolm Stephenson and Ray Virta.  
Who must have been Francis Hodgson Burnett's real life models for Captain Crew.*

**A Little Princess** was commissioned by Maor Performing Arts in January, 2017.  
The original production premiered in July, 2017, produced by Maor Performing Arts and directed by Rachel Klein.

Copyright © 2017

*The license issued in connection with PNA perusal scripts is a limited license and is issued for the sole purpose of reviewing the script for a potential future performance. All other rights regarding perusal scripts are expressly reserved by Plays for New Audiences, including, but not limited to, the rights to distribute, perform, copy, or alter scripts. This limited license does not convey any performance rights of any kind with this material. By accepting any perusal script(s), Licensee agrees to and is bound by these terms.*

## Cast List

### The Crewe Family

Sara Crewe  
Captain Ruby Crewe

### The Staff

Miss Minchin  
Miss Amelia  
Mme. Dufarge  
Becky

### The Students

Lavinia  
Ermengarde  
Jessie  
Gertrude  
Dolcilla  
Christel  
Kitty  
Linda  
Jennifer  
Lottie  
Susan  
Jane  
Claire  
Lily  
Diana

### Outside The School

Ms. Barrow  
Ms. Carrisford  
Ram Dass  
Mrs. Carmichael  
Deborah  
Jeanette  
Anne  
Baker  
Police Officer 1  
Police Officer 2

### Fairyland

The Princess  
The Lost Princess  
The Dragon  
The Fairy Queen  
Hunter

**NOTE:** *Other than the actor playing Sara, all actors may multiple roles. All characters can be played by actors of any gender – names/pronouns can easily be changed. The cast size is meant to be able to expand or contract depending on the needs of the production – each performer can play one role, or roles can be doubled, tripled, etc.*

Scene 1

**SARA**

Once upon a time...

*The rest of the cast enters, waiting to jump into action as characters in **SARA'S** story.*

**SARA**

...on the outskirts of fairyland, there lived a beautiful Princess who was so good and kind that everyone who knew her loved her very much.

**THE PRINCESS** *steps forward.*

**SARA**

She was a brave girl and loved to go exploring in the woods that surrounded the castle. She would have great adventures there, and climb trees, and spend all day swimming in the beautiful pools and rivers.

**FAIRY QUEEN**

But be careful,

**SARA**

Her mother told her.

**FAIRY QUEEN**

For there is a great dragon who lives on the edge of these woods. Once, many, many years ago, there was another Princess who went into the forest and never returned. They say she was captured by the wicked Dragon.

**MRS. CREWE**

Come along Sara.

**THE PRINCESS**

I promise I will!

**SARA**

The Princess said.

**MRS. CREWE**

We'll have to finish the story another time.

**SARA**

Don't you like it mother?

**MRS. CREWE**

You are the best storyteller I know. *(With a smile)* But if I'm not careful I'll sit listening to you all day and we'll miss our appointment, and then we'll both get a stern talking to from your headmistress.

*The Fairy Tale Characters disappear.*

**SARA**

*(With a laugh)* Well, we don't want that. *(A beat.)* Mamma, have you ever met a princess?

**MRS. CREWE**

Yes. I'm looking at one right now.

**SARA**

No, I mean, a REAL princess.

**MRS. CREWE**

Now you listen to me Sara Crewe. All women are princesses – not because of their wealth, or family, or where they were born, but when they work hard, and care for others. No matter where they live, or what they look like. And don't you ever forget that.

**SARA**

I love you mamma.

**MRS. CREWE**

I love you too, my little princess. Now come along. We must put on our brave faces. New schools can be awfully scary.

*They giggle and walk around to:*

**Miss Minchin's Academy**

*The school is a dark and foreboding monolith. More of a malevolent castle than warm and inviting school.*

**SARA**

London is very different from India.

**MRS. CREWE**

Yes, it is. But I wanted only the best school for you while I'm away. And this is the best.

**SARA**

Mamma, do you have to go to war? Aren't there lots of other people who can defend the crown? You're the only person I have. Couldn't they make an exception?

**MRS. CREWE**

Sara, believe me, I don't want to leave you either. But if we don't stand up and fight for what we believe in when faced with adversity, what does it matter what we believe when things are easy? How could I tell you to be brave and good if I didn't try to be brave and good myself?

**SARA**

But...it won't be for very long, will it?

**MRS. CREWE**

Not if I can help it. And I've made sure you have all the toys and books you could want. I've even gotten you a pony so you can keep up with your riding. And I've made sure our lawyer will get money to your headmistress for anything else you might want.

**SARA**

All I want is you.

**MRS. CREWE**

I know, sweetheart. I know.

*A terribly jolly woman, **AMELIA**, bursts through the door to greet them. If this is **SARA'S** new headmistress maybe things won't be so bad after all.*

**AMELIA**

Oh goodness! Welcome! You must be Captain Crewe and little Sara! Welcome! Welcome to you both! Please won't you come inside!

*She escorts them in.*

**AMELIA**

All of your beautiful things arrived this morning! Oh you must show me how to play some of those games I saw Becky unpacking once you're settled Sara, they looked positively fantabulous! I don't know if that's a real word...oh but I don't care! It sounds just how I want it to mean!

**SARA** *laughs. This woman is wonderful!*

**MISS MINCHIN O.S.**

Mrs. Crewe.

*And the room suddenly darkens. **AMELIA** looks all but terrified. **MISS MINCHIN** enters up center in a metaphoric cloud of black smoke and the other women part like the Red Sea to make way for her. **THIS** is **SARA'S** new headmistress. Things are looking far bleaker than **SARA'S** worst fears.*

**MISS MINCHIN**

And you must be little Sara. What a pretty child.

**MRS. CREWE**

Mrs. Minchin.

**AMELIA**

I was just –

**MISS MINCHIN**

*(Without looking at her)* That will be all Amelia.

*And AMELIA exits, tail between her legs. Any last remnants of joy leave with her. MISS MINCHIN glides around the room as she speaks, showing off the amenities and paying no attention to the CREWES at all.*

**MISS MINCHIN**

My sister, Amelia. *(A beat.)* We're so grateful for your endowment Mrs. Crewe. We've never had a parent donate quite so large a sum. We're so pleased to have Sara here. *(A beat.)* Now. Classes begin promptly at 7:30. Breakfast is served at 6:45. We cover all the basics, English, Math, History, Science, and of course French and Latin.

**MRS. CREWE**

Oh, well, Sara speaks fluent –

**MISS MINCHIN**

Lunch is served at noon precisely, followed by a not overly exertive session of physical exercise. The afternoon is comprised of electives in the various arts along with etiquette classes, followed by dinner at 6pm. *(A beat. Looking at SARA)* I'm afraid we don't allow jewelry.

*She goes to snatch the necklace hanging from SARA'S neck. SARA recoils.*

**MRS. CREWE**

If you please, it was a present from her father. It was the last thing he gave her before he passed away. It would mean a great deal to me, and to Sara, if you would make an exception. Just this once.

**MISS MINCHIN**

*(Looking like "exceptions" make her physically sick)* Well of course. Anything for our prize pupil. *(A beat.)* Now come along Sara. Your room is prepared, and we don't want your mother to miss her train.

**MRS. CREWE**

Excuse me. May we have a moment to say goodbye?

**MISS MINCHIN**

Of course.

*A beat.*

**MRS. CREWE**

Alone?

**MISS MINCHIN**

Whatever you wish.

**MISS MINCHIN** *exits.*

**MRS. CREWE**

I know this isn't what either of us want, darling. But you do understand, don't you? I have to do my part –

**SARA**

To fight the monsters?

**MRS. CREWE**

Yes, my love. To fight the monsters.

**SARA**

By disappearing?

**MRS. CREWE**

In a way. *(A beat.)* Do you remember what a spy does?

**SARA**

You find out secrets.

**MRS. CREWE**

Yes. Like...magic spells that can help us win the war.

**SARA**

Is it dangerous?

**MRS. CREWE**

No more dangerous than your new headmistress seems to be.

*They laugh.*

**MRS. CREWE**

I have a present for you.

*She unwraps the most beautiful doll **SARA** has ever seen. And that's saying something.*

**MRS. CREWE**

Her name is Emily. If you're ever afraid, or want to tell me something right away, you just whisper it to Emily, and she'll get the message to me.

**SARA**

But she's just a doll.

**MRS. CREWE**

Shh! Dolls get up to all sorts of things when we're not looking. *(A beat.)* And I'll get a message back – quick as lightning. So when you hug her, you'll really be hugging me.

*And suddenly tears fill both their eyes. **SARA** jumps into her mother's arms.*

**MRS. CREWE**

You be brave my little princess.

**SARA**

You be brave too.

*Lights slowly fade on them while on the other side of the stage we see:*

### Scene 2

*The **STUDENTS** of Miss Minchin's Academy march in two lines down the hall and into their classroom. **SARA** puts on her uniform and joins the other girls. **MISS MINCHIN** walks behind them. In a corner, the servant girl **BECKY** scrubs the floor. **SARA** stops walking and looks at her.*

**MISS MINCHIN**

Sara! We are not accustomed to starting classes late just to wait for one student. You are not the only girl here.

*They file into the classroom and sit down. **MISS MINCHIN** stands with **SARA** at the front of the room. **MME. DUFARGE** is asleep with her head on her desk.*

**MISS MINCHIN**

Good MORNING.



*The "morning" (as it was meant to) jolts MME. DUFARGE awake.*

**MISS MINCHIN**

Students.

**STUDENTS**

Good morning Miss Minchin.

**MISS MINCHIN**

This is our new student, Ms. Sara Crewe. Her mother is a very generous benefactress of our institution, so I know you will go out of your way to make Sara feel at home. I'm sure she'll be the most popular girl in no time.

*LAVINIA looks positively panic stricken. She's the most popular girl and doesn't want her position of power taken away.*

**MME. DUFARGE**

Ah! In France we would call it "populaire."

**MISS MINCHIN**

Sara why don't you sit here in the front. I'm sure Lavinia would be more than happy to give you her seat.

*And LAVINIA knows her fate is sealed. Trying to act like she doesn't care, she gathers her things and moves to the back of the class next to ERMENGARDE, the shyest, least popular girl in the school. Neither are happy about it. SARA sits.*

**MISS MINCHIN**

Madame Dufarge, please begin.

**MISS MINCHIN** *stands to the side, observing the lesson. NOTE: Each of the girls stands as they answer a question.*

**MME. DUFARGE**

Kitty. Today is...?

**KITTY**

Tuesday.

**MME. DUFARGE**

En Francais.

**KITTY**

*(With terrible pronunciation)* Mardi.

**MME. DUFARGE**

Very good. Ermengarde – what month is it?

**ERMENGARDE**

This month is...um...I...

**LAVINIA**

*(Referring to ERMENGARDE)* What a joke.

*All the girls laugh.* **MISS MINCHIN** *clears her throat.*

**ERMENGARDE**

I'm not...

**LAVINIA**

Can't see the answer? Even through those four eyes?

**MISS MINCHIN**

Quiet!

**ERMENGARDE**

*(Cleaning her glasses, which are now wet with tears.)* Um...I...forgot.

**MME. DUFARGE**

Ah. In France we would call it "oublié." Jane – what month is it?

**JANE**

Avril.

**MME. DUFARGE**

Good. Sara, how old are you?

**SARA**

*(A beat.)* Do I have to study French?

**MISS MINCHIN**

Sara Crew! Of all the impertinent – apologize to Madame Dufarge!

**SARA**

But I –

**MISS MINCHIN**

I will not tolerate your rudeness any longer.

**SARA**

Madame Dufarge, je regret. Mais ma mere a etait de France, et je parle la langue.

**MME. DUFAGE**

*(Lighting up with joy)* Miss Minchin! Why did you not tell me Miss Sara was fluent in French?!

**MISS MINCHIN**

Fluent?

**SARA**

I tried to tell you....

**MME. DUFAGE**

Perhaps Ms. Sara can tutor the younger students. And she might even be able to help you with your pronunciation Miss Minchin.

*The girls laugh. MISS MINCHIN storms out. MME. DUFAGE looks at the clock.*

**MME. DUFAGE**

Well, I believe that shall be all for today class. It's almost time for lunch. *(A beat.)* What's on the menu?

**CLAIRE**

French Toast.

**MME. DUFAGE**

Ah! In France we would call it..."toast."

**MME. DUFAGE exits. The girls stare at SARA. Then, all at once:**

**JESSIE**

Is it true you came from India?!

**LILY**

How can she be from India? She speaks French!

**JESSIE**

You can learn to speak French in India too.

**DOLCILLA**

Are you really getting horseback riding lessons?

**CHRISTEL**

I heard you have your very own pony!

**LINDA**

Is it true your mother owns all the diamonds in Europe?

**LOTTIE**

She must to be able to afford all those toys!

**JENNIFER**

No silly, my mother said that her mother just owns a couple of diamond mines. Her REAL money is in candy.

**LOTTIE**

Candy?

**JENNIFER**

ALL the candy! She grows it, or makes it or something, and ships it all over the world!

**LOTTIE**

Can you bring us some Sara?!

**LAVINIA**

Ha! I wouldn't ask for any if I were you. I heard her mother's not at war at all. She's in prison because someone died from eating her candy!

**SARA**

That's not -!

**SUSAN**

Is it true you can ask for absolutely anything and Miss Minchin HAS to get it for you?

**JANE**

Of course she can! Did you see everything in her room? I snuck a peek through the keyhole.

**DIANA**

Imagine having anything you wanted! *(A beat.)* I'm Diana.

**JANE**

Jane.

**SUSAN**

Susan.

**LOTTIE**

Lottie.

**JENNIFER**

Jennifer.

**LINDA**

Linda.

**CLAIRE**

Claire.

**LILY**

Lily.

**DOLCILLA**

Dolcilla.

**GERTRUDE**

Gertrude. (*Confiding*) I hate my name.

**SARA**

I like it. It's the name of a beautiful queen, you know.

**GERTRUDE**

No queen would be named Gertrude.

**SARA**

Sure she would!

**JESSIE**

She's right! It's from Shakespeare!

**GERTRUDE** *lights up.*

**LAVINIA**

I'm Lavinia. And that's Christel and Kitty. (*Mockingly*) How do you do your highness.

**DOLCILLA**

Highness?

**LAVINIA**

Sure. She's just a little princess, isn't she?

*A beat. ERMENGARDE has all but disappeared into a corner.*

SARA

(To ERMENGARDE) What's your name?

ERMENGARDE

Oh. Me? I'm Ermengarde.

*One of the girls knocks the bag out of ERMENGARDE'S hand, spilling her books everywhere.*

SARA

Oh! Let me help you!

*They pick up the books together – there are several Fairy Tale books mixed in with textbooks.*

SARA

Do you like fairy tales?

ERMENGARDE

Oh, those are...those are nothing. They're just silly. Everyone says they're for babies.

SARA

No they're not! I love fairy tales!

ERMENGARDE

You do?!

LOTTIE

You do!

LAVINIA

*(Mockingly)* You do?

SARA

Sure! My mother does too. What's your favorite?

ERMENGARDE

"Cinderella." What's yours?

SARA

"The Lost Princess."

**KITTY**

"The Lost Princess?" What's that?!

**LAVINIA** *lightly hits her – a warning to shut up.*

**SARA**

It's about a beautiful princess who was warned never to get lost in the woods near her castle because, years earlier, another princess disappeared there.

**GERTRUDE**

What happened to the other princess?

**SARA**

They said she was kidnapped by a wicked dragon!

*All the girls gasp. As SARA tells the story it comes to life around her.*

**SARA**

*(Jumping on one of the desks)* But then, one day, the beautiful Princess went riding out on the royal hunt.

**CLAIRE**

A girl out on a hunt?! She must have been awfully brave!

**SARA**

Oh, she was! And she was wonderful with a bow and arrow. But then the hunting party was attacked by a wild bear!

**JANE**

Oh no! What happened?

**HUNTER**

Save yourself your highness! We'll hold him off!

**THE PRINCESS**

No!

**SARA**

She fought the bear off and when she had lured him away from the rest of the party she darted so quickly in between the trees that the bear lost sight of her and finally went back to his home.

**DIANA**

Hooray!

**SUSAN**

But doesn't that mean...

**ERMENGARDE**

She's lost in the forest!

**THE PRINCESS**

Hello? Hello?

**THE LOST PRINCESS O.S.**

Hello? Hello?

**SARA**

She thought she could hear the echo of another girl lost in the woods.

**LILY**

The lost princess!

**SARA**

She went to see if she could help her, when suddenly...

**THE DRAGON** *appears and captures* **THE PRINCESS.**

**SARA**

The wicked dragon appeared and scooped the Princess up with one giant claw.

**LOTTIE**

Oh!

**SARA**

The Dragon was bigger than the biggest building you've ever seen. And its claw was twice the size of the Princess's whole body! The Dragon carried her away to a tall, tall tower so deep in the woods no one had ever found it, and locked the Princess up where

–

**MISS MINCHIN** *enters and stomps her foot loudly, breaking the spell of the story.*

**MISS MINCHIN**

What is going on here?

**SUSAN**



Sara was telling us a story...

**MISS MINCHIN**

I will not tolerate storytelling or make believe at this school; do you understand?

**SARA**

No stories? At a school?!

**MISS MINCHIN**

The world is a harsh, and cruel place and you must learn to deal with things as they are.

**SARA**

But stories –

**MISS MINCHIN**

Are lies. Plain and simple.

**SARA**

Haven't you ever believed in something magical? Just to make it seem real?

**MISS MINCHIN**

I'm sure that must be very easy for a girl who has everything. *(A beat.)* Now get to lunch.  
MARCH!

*The girls start to file out.*

**SARA**

*(To ERMENGARDE)* I hope we'll be friends Ermengarde.

**ERMENGARDE**

You want to be friends with me?

**SARA**

Sure! I didn't think I'd find anyone here who loved stories like I do.

**ERMENGARDE**

Can I tell you something? I was a little scared of you at first, but now...

*And without thinking, she throws her arms around SARA and gives her a big hug. Then pulls away, embarrassed.*

**ERMENGARDE**

You're not...you're not making a joke? You're not making fun of me...are you?

**SARA**

I would never do that. I don't see how anybody could.

**ERMENGARDE**

Oh, they can.

**SARA**

Could I sit with you at lunch? I don't know anyone here and...it would be nice to have lunch with a friend.

**ERMENGARDE**

Oh! You don't have to do that! I wouldn't want anyone to tease you for sitting with me.

**SARA**

Let 'em try! I'll stick the Dragon on them!

*They laugh.*

**ERMENGARDE**

I'm awfully glad you came here Sara Crewe! *(A beat.)* You must be a real life angel to be so...perfectly tempered...so nice... all the time.

**SARA**

Oh, no...*(A beat. She thinks.)* Things happen to people by accident...a lot of nice accidents have happened to me. It just happened that I always liked lessons, and books and could remember things when I learned them. It just happened that I was born with a mother who was beautiful, and nice, and clever and could give me everything I liked...Perhaps I have not really a good temper at all, but if you have everything you want and everyone is kind to you, how can you help but be good-tempered? I don't know...how I shall ever find out whether I am really a nice child or a horrid one. Perhaps I'm a hideous child and no one will ever know, just because I never have any trials.

*They smile and exit. On her way out SARA crashes into the servant girl BECKY.*

**BECKY**

Oh! Begging your pardon miss!

**SARA**

It's all right. Are you ok?

**BECKY**

I just...I heard your story and I couldn't help listening at the keyhole. I haven't heard a story in a long time.

**SARA**

You should have come in and joined us!

**BECKY**

Oh no miss! If Miss Minchin ever found out she'd throw me out on the street for sure.

**SARA**

I –

**BECKY**

I'm sorry miss, but we'll both be in trouble if anyone sees us talking. Enjoy your lunch.

**BECKY** *rushes off.*

**Purchase Perusal for Full Script**