

PIED AND PIPING

By Jerry Rabushka

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PIED AND PIPING*A Ten Minute Comedic Monologue***By Jerry Rabushka**

SYNOPSIS: A twist on the familiar tale of The Pied Piper of Hamelin. A city isn't plagued with rats, but with unruly children. The Townspeople come up with an ingenious plan to get the piper to lead the children away, but it backfires in hilarious fashion. Lots of silly poetry and some jabs at modern education make this tale relevant and fun. Because... you still have to pay the piper.

TIME: Present day.

SETTING: An unnamed city.

CAST OF CHARACTERS*(1 either)*

NARRATOR (m/f)..... An unnamed speaker from an unnamed city, telling a tale of the city's dealing with the Pied Piper of Hamelin. Can be played as various ages. The "mayors" can be performed and referred to as male or female.

SETTING: Bare stage, but a small set could evoke a town square, a schoolroom, or a simple living area.

COSTUMING: Present day, but something that evokes medieval history could be fun too.

SOUND: (optional) Use a little flute or pipe melody for when the speaker talks about the pied piper playing music—or have a live performer on stage or backstage if you like.

DIRECTOR'S NOTES: This play slowly turns the tables on the familiar tale, and much of the humor will come from the various surprises throughout the monologue. It could be most effective by not giving away this information too quickly. It also gives the performer a chance to play some characters, such as the mayors, larger than life, and go big on the poetry.

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NARRATOR: (*Start off almost a bit “scholastic.”*) The Pied Piper of Hamelin. Almost everyone knows the story, but if you don’t, I’ll give you a quick recap. The city of Hamelin was plagued by rats, maybe even rats with the plague, so they hired a piper who claimed that through the execution of a certain flute melody, he could charm those rats right out of town. The often-imitated-never-duplicated colorful young piper had under his fingers a certain tune that rats and other rodents just couldn’t resist. But once he charmed the rats off-site, the city paid him much less than it originally agreed to, and as punishment, he returned with his pipe, this time taking the town’s 130 children out with him, presumably never to be seen again.

“That’ll show ‘em,” he said. (*Sadly.*) And the city remained childless (*Perking up.*) while everyone went to restaurants and movies in peace.

Well, word got out about the piper, and it turned out he was creating a very lucrative business for himself. See, the rats had to go somewhere, so when he piped them out of one city he led them to the next. Every time they invaded a new town, city leaders had to call the piper to drive them out. Everyone paid him quite well, since no one wanted to lose their children.

Well, except... (*Pause, almost embarrassed, but not quite.*) we did. We were desperate to get rid of the little darlings, thanks largely to what can loosely be referred to as our modern educational system and some back and forth voting for certain school board members. Discipline switched back from giving them straight A’s simply for showing up to then forcing those coddled brats to self-educate under the iron fist of doctrine and dogma. The kids became unmanageable in the classroom and at home, sunup to sundown, our city was overrun with humorless incorrigible children lording it over frustrated and desperate so-called adults.

But people knew about the pied piper and what happened in Hamelin, so our city leaders reflected on what a great opportunity it would be.

"First, he'll get rid of the rats," said the mayor. "Then, when we stiff him on the rats, he'll come back for the kids. We'll get them both out of our hair, and it won't cost a dime!"

It turns out for a little extra, the piper would not only take out the rats, but he'd get rid of rodents of all kinds. And we had plenty. Our city was besieged by rats, mice, rabbits, possums, opossums, chinchillas, and squirrels. To name a few. I mean, three chinchillas are cute, but three thousand on your front lawn? Down with cute—time for the flute.

It was a fabulous spring day, as the piper, who hadn't yet learned to ask for payment in advance, came dancing in with his pipe-tastic melody. He came in with his colorful attire—after all, being pried means being colorful—and called out the creatures—not out of the woodlands, but out of the restaurants, the garbage dumpsters, and finally... the teachers' lounge.

(As the PIPER, chanting a poem or spell.)

Come ye rabbits, come ye rats,
Come prairie dog and squirrel.
Come ye four-leg'd bric-a-brac
We're going for a whirl.

We all watched and danced as he played his merry tune, and all the critters followed as the piper guided them... out... around... down the road... to an unsuspecting city where they would violate all the animal control ordinances put in place to keep out the plague.

When the piper came back, he recited his invoice:

Come ye mayor, come accounting
In all thy finest pageantry.
Come ye pay me, don't delay me
Or I bring you tragedy

The mayor was waiting exactly for this moment. Came he forth and said, "Pay you, sir, to play the flute?
Where did that idea take root?

I could get a kid in band
To do it for a pat on the hand.

(Commanding, with grand hand gestures.) Take your pipe and begone!"

The piper couldn't believe the rhyme. "Are you gol-durned serious?"
Of course I can't repeat his language here, but I could have if the last school board was in office.

And the mayor said, *(With a nasty laugh.)*

"Away with thee, you vicious viper.

We're not going to pay the piper!"

Then he threw a few dollars on the floor. *(Pantomiming tossing the money, mocking.)* "I guess I missed your tip jar," he said.

We didn't mind, because we knew eventually the young man would come back for the kids, and what a wonderful world it would be after that.

A week went by. No rats, but the children were driving us crazy!

Two weeks, then three, and we thought, well, maybe he forgot? Our plan wasn't working.

But finally, the piper came back to wreak a horrible revenge. We were so excited when we heard the little melody and saw the young man dancing his way up the road. The parents and teachers got the kids ready for their next adventure.

(Calling to children in different voices.)

"Get ready, Hector, we're going out to play!"

"Agatha, it's time for ballet!

(Calling loud.) "Field trip! Everyone on the bus!"

But then... we couldn't believe our eyes. He wasn't taking children out—he was bringing children in.

Apparently, the upkeep and maintenance for the children of Hamelin was getting out of hand, and the piper had to do something about it. Plus, being locked in a cave for the last year and a half turned them into misbehaving unruly brats. When the piper got wind of our plan—and we still don't know who leaked it—he turned the tables on us, giving us even more children that we didn't like and didn't know what to do with.

We instantly had a teacher shortage, not to mention a juvenile officer shortage, and the only person truly happy about it was the manager at Chuck E Cheese.

We got in touch with the city of Hamelin, but they had started on a new crop of babies by now, with plans to raise them well behaved, mannerly, and respectful. No older siblings to fight with or lead them astray, just good teaching and engaged parents, a fantasy our city left behind years ago. And we said, "We've got your long-lost children, and would love to reunite them with their families." It was like finding the answer to 130 milk cartons all at once!

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