

A Tale of William Tell



Stage Play Version

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Cast of Characters

Narrator

Townspeople (1-4): timid people of the town

Bailiff: an official of the Emperor with a loud, haughty, menacing voice

Soldier: member of the Emperor's army- forceful, disdainful attitude

Giorgio: frightened baker on the run from the Emperor's soldiers

William Tell: heroic archer of the town

Walter: William Tell's youngest son

Wilber: William Tell's oldest son

Governor: sent by the Emperor to control the people of the town

Woman: wife of a man who has been thrown in jail by the Governor

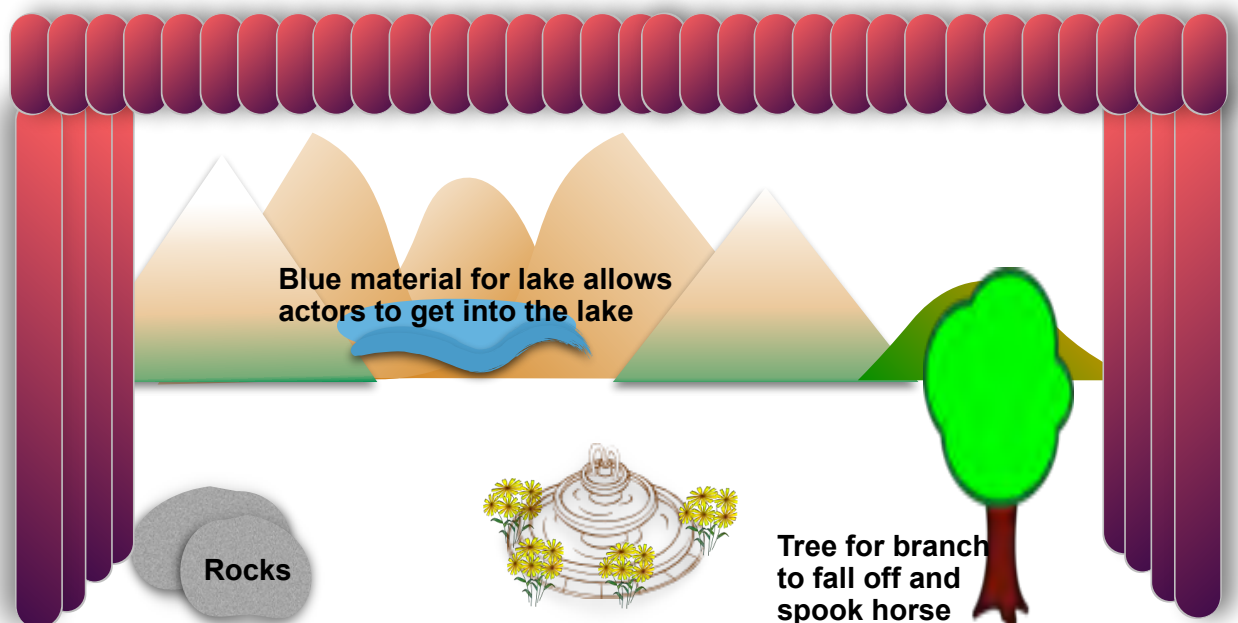
Townspeople: 6-10 people

Soldiers: 6-10 people

Props

- plastic flowers to be picked
- bow and quiver of arrows
- long pole with a swiss-style hat on the top
- paper scroll
- stick hobby horse with a large white head
- 1 large red whole apple, 1 large red apple cut in half
- papier mâché tree branch

Possible Stage Setting



A Tale of William Tell

CURTAIN RISES

on a beautiful mountain scene, bunches of flowers dot the ground, large rocks line one side of the stage and a lake can be seen near the base of the mountains.

SCENE I

During the opening narration the people of the village stroll in, some picking flowers, and gather in groups to chat.

Narrator Many years ago in a beautiful land of rocky mountain peaks, lakes, streams and grassy green pastures, there lived a sturdy, peaceable folk, people who enjoyed a quiet, happy life and got along well with each other. They would tend their cattle, pick flowers for the dinner table and gather in groups to chat about the weather. Life seemed good until one day ...

The sound of drums and marching can be heard off-stage.

6-8 soldiers march on stage and surround the people.

As the people protest, the soldiers push them together into a group centre stage.

People *(Angry voices can be heard)*

#1 What's going on?

#2 Who are they? We don't have any soldiers.

#3 We don't NEED any soldiers!

#4 *(Steps forward, yelling at soldiers)* Who are you?
What do you want?

(No response from soldier who pushes #4 back into group)

#3 *(Running toward soldier)* You can't just march into our lovely Alpen country and push us around!

(Soldier knocks him down and drags him back to the group)

All the people huddle together in fright as a foreign official strolls in and beckons to soldiers to back off.

Bailiff *(Loud, imperious voice)* I'm the Bailiff and these are the soldiers of my Emperor - now YOUR Emperor! HIS soldiers are now YOUR soldiers - well sort of. Don't despair - they're really nice guys - you'll love them ...*(Menacingly)* as long as you behave! Now move along!
Soldiers push people off stage as they protest.

People #4 No! No! We're a people of peace. We don't need soldiers!
#2 What's to happen to us now? This is terrible!
#1 *(Calling out)* William? William Tell! Where's William? He'd know what to do!
#3 Yeah, he could fire one shot from his crossbow and save us. We need a hero!

All Exit

SCENE II

Villager Giorgio runs across stage chased by a soldier. Giorgio trips and falls. The soldier stands over him with sword raised menacingly.

Soldier Get ready to meet to meet your maker, scoundrel! You can't push the Governor in the lake and get away with it!

Giorgio But it's not fair. He kidnapped my wife. Nobody has the right to carry off a man's wife... take her from house, home... family!

Soldier Well, the Governor had the right. You snivelling people need to know your place in the world — under our boots!

As the soldier raises his foot to place his boot on Giorgio's chest, he grabs the foot and throws the soldier to the ground knocking him unconscious. Giorgio hops up, runs to the lake and jumps in. Waves come up, with sounds of wind storm. Giorgio can be seen floundering in the waves.

Giorgio Help! Help! Save my soul! Help! Help!

William Tell runs in, drops bow and quiver on the ground.

Tell Hold on, I'm coming. *(Jumps in and pulls drowning man to the shore. Both lie there panting for a minute)*

My goodness Giorgio, this is no kind of weather to go for a swim.
(Both get to their feet)

Giorgio Oh William, you saved me. I was sure I was a goner! A hero again!
(Overcome, he throws his arms around William who is embarrassed and pushes him away)

Tell So, why were you in the lake?

Giorgio I had to escape the soldiers, William. That one, (*Pointing to soldier on the ground*) almost got me but I knocked him out.

Tell Why on earth were they after you - a law-abiding baker?

Giorgio Well, um, I kind of uh, ... pushed the Governor in the lake.

Tell What! YOU pushed the Governor?

Giorgio Yes, he was trying to abduct my wife Maria, take her away from me, away from my house, my home and children! It's not right. Nobody should be able to do that!

Tell Hmm ... the Governor thought he had the right... I guess he knows now. This whole situation is intolerable!

Sounds of soldiers marching in

Tell C'mon Giorgio. This is no time to be found here. We'll be back to fight another day. (*Run off stage*)

SCENE III

Soldiers and drummer march in with Bailiff carrying a hat on long pole.

Bailiff Hear ye, hear ye (*Trips over soldier lying on the ground*) Ouch! What the... lazy soldier, sleeping on the job! The Governor will have your head... when his dries out that is! (*Looks around*) Where are all the people afraid of a little wind storm? Such wimps! They NEED to be governed. (*Shouts at soldiers*) Go get the people out of their hovels. Bring them out here into the daylight. They need to see the light!

Soldiers go off and come back pushing people ahead of them.

Bailiff cont. Hear ye, hear ye. (*Unrolls scroll with decree*) Listen up, you miserable souls. By decree of the Emperor of the mountain lands, this hat on a pole is his representative. Every time you pass by this hat you must kneel before it and bow your head in reverence for your awesome all-powerful benefactor, the Emperor. Anyone failing to go on bended knee will be arrested and thrown into jail! This decree takes effect (*Pause*) NOW! On your knees you feeble people!

*Soldiers push everyone to their knees.
Bailiff turns to walk away, stops and turns back.
And by the way the dry Governor will arrive shortly!
(Exits with soldiers)*

People *(Mumbling as they exit)* Where, oh where is William Tell. He'd know what to do.

SCENE IV

William and his son Walter wander in.

Walter So Papa, how come you have such good aim?

Last few people hear Walter's voice and turn around to see William Tell.

People #1 Hey stop, everyone come back. It's William, William Tell is here! *(All return and crowd around William and Walter.)*

#2 Where've you been William? Have you heard about the hat?

Tell Hat? What hat?

Drums are heard and everyone gasps as the Bailiff returns with the hat on a pole.

Bailiff Bow! Bow! Bow to the hat!

People clear out of his way and get down on their knees as the hat passes. The Bailiff walks straight to William.

What's your problem, knave? *(Nasty tone of voice)* Hard of hearing? Blind? A little sloooooow are we? *(Yelling)* GET DOWN!

Tell I bow to no man! Why would I bow to a silly hat on a pole?

Bailiff *(Blustering)* Soldiers, arrest this man!

Soldiers march over and grab William. Walter tries to pull them off. All action stops as the sound of a trumpet fanfare is heard. The Governor (hair still dripping wet) enters on a white horse with more soldiers. He is about to take a bite out of a big red apple when he sees the mass of people.

Governor *(Imperiously)* Bailiff, what's going on here? Why aren't these people calm and under control?

Bailiff It's this man, it's his fault. He refuses to bow to the hat.

Tell I bow to no man. I'll not bow to a ridiculous hat!

People *(Taking courage from William)* That's right, we won't bow to a hat!
Release William. *(All chant a few times)* Let him go! Let him go!

Governor William Tell? THE William Tell? I've heard tell of this William Tell. *(To William)* So you're the best archer in the land. Hmmmm tell you what Tell, you prove your skill by shooting this apple off of your son's head, and I'll let you go.

Tell *(Starting to protest)* Oh no! I'm not risking Walter's life to get me off the hook.

Walter *(Bravely, with confidence)* It's o.k. Papa. You're the best shot in the world. *(Grabs apple, goes to stand in front of a tree and puts apple on his head)* I trust you completely. You can do it!

Governor There you go, Tell. I could tell that he takes after you. The young lad believes in you. Go for it! *(Pause)* As a matter of fact, let's raise the stakes a bit. Boy, go on back to the next tree.

Walter *(Looks around and points off stage)* That one? That's pretty far.

Governor nods, Walter shrugs and goes off stage.

William draws two arrows from his quiver as the crowd gasps.

William Stand very still Walter. This will just take a second.
(Draws back arrow, aims and shoots. Crowd completely silent for several seconds, until Walter shouts off stage)

Walter Yowie! *(Runs back on holding two halves of the apple)* Papa, you did it. I knew you could do it!

Crowd cheers, "Bravo William!", "What a shot!" etc.

Governor Tell me, Tell, why did you take out two arrows?

Tell To tell the truth, Governor, the second arrow was for you in case the first hit my son!

Governor *(Angrily)* You cheeky fellow! Soldiers, grab him! *(To William)* There'll be no reprieve for you after that!

Walter and People No, no, you promised. That's not fair!

All exit chasing after Governor and soldiers hauling William away.

SCENE V

Walter and his older brother Wilber stand looking out over the lake.

Walter I miss Papa. Why did they have to take him away in a boat? Couldn't they just lock him up here?

Wilber No, Walter. The Governor was afraid that we would all try to break him out, and he's the only one who makes the rest of us brave enough to fight back. So they've taken him to the Governor's fortress.

Giorgio Walter, Wilber, did you hear the news? Your Papa has escaped!

Walter & Wilber *(Excitedly)* How? What happened?

Giorgio While they were out crossing the lake, a huge storm blew up and the soldiers couldn't handle the boat. So, they untied your Papa because they knew that he could steer them out of the storm and save them from certain death.

Walter *(Swelling up with pride)* Well of course he could!

Giorgio Anyway, as soon as they were safe, William steered the boat close to shore and when the others weren't looking, he jumped out on the rocks and got away.

Walter & William *(Jumping up and down hugging each other in excitement)* Hurray! Hurray! That's our Papa. He's our hero! C'mon, let's go tell Mama and everybody.

All exit

SCENE VI

The Governor enters riding his white horse followed by soldiers and entourage. A young woman runs up in front of the horse stopping the procession. People wander back on from the opposite side of the stage.

Woman Governor! Stop, stop!

Governor *(Very angry)* Get out of my way you silly woman. How DARE you stop my procession! What do you want?

Woman My husband - you've thrown him in jail for no good reason. Please, please let him go. He's innocent.

William Tell is seen only by the audience sneaking in behind the rocks.

Governor Move out of the way woman or I'll run you down with my horse. He'll trample you flat!

Woman But he's done nothing wrong! He's just a good simple man and YOU, you're a tyrant!

Governor clicks his tongue to urge his horse on starting towards the woman to run her down.)

William *(Popping up from hiding place with bow and arrow ready to shoot and shouting at Governor)* You're a coward and a cad! And you're done! *(shoots an arrow in the air over the Governor's head)*

Governor Ahhhhhhhhh! *(As he ducks, a tree branch falls from the sky spooking the horse. The Governor screeches and clings to the mane as the horse runs off-stage)* Help! Stop horse! Save me!

People *(Cheering boisterously, chant)* William! William! William!

Soldiers start to move toward people who then turn and chase the governor's entourage and soldiers away.

Run! Run after your silly Governor. Get out of out town and don't ever come back!

Walter Papa, our hero again!

All the people dance around and sing celebrating their freedom.

Narrator And so, these sturdy and independent folk returned to their peaceful lives in their beautiful mountain homeland.

CURTAIN