

HAPPILY EVER AFTER: FAIRY TALES FOR EVERY CHILD

Synopses

JACK AND THE BEANSTALK

Everybody knows how Jack braved a giant's wrath to ease his mother's plight. In this version, written by African-American writer Gordon Lewis ("In Living Color"), Jack is black, the Giant can rap, and Jack trades his cow to HARRY BELAFONTE, the Magic Man. TONE LOC does a star turn as the greedy Giant, singing joys of "livin' large" to his wife, played by JACKEE HARRY ("227"). PAULETTA WASHINGTON and WAYNE COLLINS are Momma and Jack, who also sing a heartfelt duet in this tall tale about a boy who dared to dream big dreams.

RUMPLESTILTSKIN

Everyone remembers the tale of this strange little man who spun straw into gold. This version, as told by African-American screenwriter Gerard Brown ("Juice"), gives Rumpelstiltskin, played by ROBERT TOWNSEND ("Hollywood Shuffle"), a Jamaican accent, dreadlocks and a hip reggae song, written by black songwriter Anija Shockley, who is just one of many contributors giving this quirky tale its colorful Caribbean style. The tale also stars DENZEL WASHINGTON ("Philadelphia"), JASMINE GUY ("A Different World"), ROSCOE LEE BROWNE and SHERMAN HEMSLEY ("Amen").

RAPUNZEL

WHOOPI GOLDBERG really lets her hair down as Zenobia, the Voodoo Diva, who keeps Rapunzel locked in a high tower with only her braid for a ladder. In this familiar tale, recreated by Gerard Brown in a bayou setting, TISHA CAMPBELL ("Martin") plays the lonely Rapunzel, who is kept isolated until a handsome prince comes to her rescue. Delivering a rollicking New Orleans-style song, Goldberg sets the tone for this novel retelling. The woodcutter, Rapunzel's father, is played by MESCHACH TAYLOR ("Dave's World") and HAZELLE is his wife.

THE FROG PRINCE

In this oft-told story of broken promises and discovered friendship, SINBAD plays the lonely little frog who longs for the love of a princess, played by CREE SUMMER ("A Different World"). The not-yet-handsome frog sings a heartfelt rhythm-and-blues jam, affirming that his true love will show up some day and break the evil spell that landed him in the swamp. With DANNY GLOVER as the king, and cameos by JAY JOHNSON, TOMMY DAVIDSON ("In Living Color"), LEVAR BURTON ("Star Trek: The Next Generation"), JAY LENO and BRANFORD MARSALIS, this colorful yarn features a landscape created by screenwriter Daryl Nickens ("House Party II").

SLEEPING BEAUTY

The antics of comedian PAUL RODRIGUEZ as Jesse the Jester, combined with the performances of RICARDO MONTALBAN ("Fantasy Island") and LUCIE ARNAZ as king and queen, are just some of the Latin elements that spice up Puerto Rican writer Raoul Gonzales' Hispanic retelling of the famous tale. CARMEN ZAPATA as the Good Fairy assists the rescue of Sleeping Beauty by the dynamic duo of the Prince, played by JACOB VARGAS ("Mi Vida Loca") and his sidekick Pancho, played by CARLOS MENCIA (HBO's "Loco Slam"). Tito Larriva and Charlie Midnight have created a salsa number for real-life diva JULIA MIGENES ("Carmen"), who plays Evelina, the evil fairy.

THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES

With the assistance of Japanese consultant Akiko Fujitaki, writer Doug Molitor creates an Asian fairy-tale setting complete with silk robes and cherry blossom trees. Japanese-American lyricist and performance artist Nobuko Miyamoto and Grammy-nominated Japanese/Chinese-American music producer Derek

Nakamoto composed the song "Fabric of Dreams." GEDDE WATANABE ("Gremlins 2") gives vanity a new name before receiving his comeuppance from conniving weavers GEORGE TAKAI ("Star Trek") and DENICE KUMAGAI.

HANSEL AND GRETEL

Cuban-born writer John Piroman artfully draws upon his heritage in this Hispanic retelling of the famous tale. The witch is performed by Oscar nominee ROSIE PEREZ ("Fearless"), heading a cast including CHEECH MARIN ("Rude Awakening") and LIZ TORRES, with CHRISTOPHER MONTOYA and CHRISSY PADILLA playing "Hanselito" and "Gretelita." An original rumba song entitled "Los Niños Deliciosos" was composed and performed by Tito Larriva and Charlie Midnight.

LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD

Chinese-American writer Michael Din retells this tale with images from his family heritage of t'ai chi, won ton and herbal remedies. The cast includes the Tony-winning talents of B.D. WONG ("And the Band Played On") as the Wolf, and VU MAI ("The Joy Luck Club") playing Little Red Riding Hood. Chinese-American composer and lyricist Diane Louie draw upon the Chinese music of her upbringing to create the duet "A Wonderful Road."

CINDERELLA

DAPHNE ZUNIGA ("Melrose Place") plays a Latino princess who, after a night of swirling gaily to mariachi music, dashes out of the fiesta, leaving a glass slipper behind. Joe Menendez, a Cuban-American writer, embellishes the lovely tale with the texture and music of his Hispanic culture. In this version, iguanas become footmen, and jalepeños, tomatoes, and avocados become Cinderella's carriage. RAQUEL WELCH plays the stepmother, with SONIA BRAGA ("Moon Over Parador") and NELLY GALAN as the not-so-nice stepsisters. EDWARD JAMES OLMOS and JIMMY SMITS also star.

SNOW WHITE

This beloved tale takes on a very new twist as it enters the Native American world of writer Doug Molitor. Using a beautiful and authentic Southwestern environment, and the voices of Native Americans GRAHAM GREENE ("Dances with Wolves") and folksinger BUFFY SAINTE-MARIE, the new version of this classic tale includes seven little men who mine turquoise, an enchanted world of spirits, and two original songs written and performed by SAINTE-MARIE.

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

Gordon Lewis ("In Living Color") uses humor and pathos to retell this famous story of the beast, played by GREGORY HINES ("The Cotton Club"), who wants to be loved for his inner beauty. He sets his version in Africa, where the rich and varied terrain becomes a character in itself. With a bittersweet love song, the beast reveals his longing to impress, and of course, eventually win over his true love, Beauty, played by VANESSA WILLIAMS, who sings her own ballad. DEBBIE ALLEN plays Precious and PAUL WINFIELD plays Beauty's father.

THE PRINCESS AND THE PEA

Korean-American writer Susan Kim recreates this tale in a palatial setting with Korean and other Asian influences. MARGARET CHO ("All-American Girl") plays the Queen, a royalty connoisseur who places a delicate snowpea under a very tender princess' bed. Eleven not-quite-royal princesses provide additional entertainment.

THE VALIANT LITTLE TAILOR

African-American writer Daryl Nickens brings this yarn about an adventurous tailor to new life in an African setting. Bongo, the pint-sized, needle-pulling hero, played by DAVID ALAN GRIER ("In Living Color"), vanquishes giants -- among them MARK CURRY ("Hangin' with Mr. Cooper") -- outsmarts an unfriendly king, and wins the heart of a princess (DAWNN LEWIS), using his ingenuity as his only tool. JAMES EARL JONES ("The Lion King") lends his voice to the role of KING DAKKAR, who does not look forward to having Bongo as a son-in-law.