

THE RAGBAG SHOES

by

Katherine Gee Perrone

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The Ragbag Shoes was first produced by Pollyanna Theatre Company in Austin TX at the Long Center for the Performing Arts' Rollins Studio Theatre in July 2017. The cast and crew were as follows:

<u>FEMALE ACTRESS #1:</u>	Uyen-Anh Dang
<u>MALE ACTOR #1:</u>	William Swift
<u>FEMALE ACTRESS #2:</u>	Bethany Harbaugh
<u>MALE ACTOR #2:</u>	Jake Salinas
<u>VERSATILE ACTOR #3:</u>	Hollis McNutt
<u>DIRECTOR:</u>	Judy Matetzschk-Campbell
<u>STAGE MANAGER:</u>	Andrew Perry
<u>SCENIC DESIGNER:</u>	Chase Staggs
<u>COSTUME DESIGNER:</u>	Colleen McCool
<u>LIGHTING DESIGNER:</u>	Natalie George
<u>SOUND DESIGNER:</u>	Andrew Perry
<u>PROP/PUPPET DESIGNER:</u>	Colleen McCool
<u>PROP ASSISTANT:</u>	Eamon Fossi
<u>STAGE CREW:</u>	Joanna Casey

Author's Note on Casting

The Cast can be as little as five actors playing multiple roles, or as large as one wishes, with individual actors cast in different stories. However it is cast, the actress who plays Iyana should play all the main characters in each story.

Suggested breakdown of casting if playing by 2F/3M or 3F/2M (with the fifth actor being either Male or Female):

FEMALE #1 (Young):

IYANA, GIRL, FLORACITA,
DECEMBER, OMUTUGWA

MALE #1 (Middle Aged):

SHOEMAKER, KING,
EAST/WEST/NORTH WIND,
KING, SUNBIRD, BIRDS

FEMALE #2 (Middle Aged):

NARRATOR, SHOES,
ADVISOR, MOTHER OF
EAST/WEST/NORTH WIND,
OLD WOMAN, JANUARY,
MISTRESS, BIRDS

MALE #2 (Young):

CHILD, VILLAGER,
SOÑANDO, SOLDIER,
CHIEF'S SON

FEMALE OR MALE ACTOR #3 (Versatile):

PARENT, VILLAGER,
BIRD, LION, CONCIERGE,
PRINCE(S), DAUGHTER,
BIRDS

Settings and Characters by Scene

Scene One

Setting:

Shoemaker's Shop in the Kingdom of Bootsmake

Characters:

NARRATOR/SHOES: This magical pair of shoes is made from rags left over from famous shoes throughout world fairy tales. Lovingly cobbled by the SHOEMAKER for his daughter IYANA, the SHOES are the NARRATOR of the stories she will travel through to learn about its magical virtues. A Puppet.

SHOEMAKER: A traveler, cobbler, and devoted father to IYANA. He has been collecting shoes since he was very young and is responsible for making the magical shoes for all the children in the Kingdom of Bootsmake.

IYANA: Ten-year-old girl who dreams of dancing in her very own pair of magic shoes. Daughter of the SHOEMAKER.

PARENT: Resident of Bootsmake. Parent to CHILD.

CHILD: Resident of Bootsmake. Son of PARENT.

Settings and Characters by Scene (Cont.)

Scene Two

Setting:

India, "The King with Stinky Feet"

Characters:

KING: Hates taking baths, impetuous, foolish, vain, but has occasional bouts of humility.

GIRL: The wise innocent who, like the child in The Emperor's New Clothes, is the only one honest enough to tell the truth and clever enough to solve the real problem.

ADVISOR: Longsuffering servant to the KING.

VILLAGERS: Subjects of the KING

Settings and Characters by Scene (Cont.)

Scene Three

Setting:

Spain, "Floracita and the Iron Boots"

Characters:

FLORACITA: A brave princess who sets out to find her long lost brother in a pair of iron boots.

EAST/WEST/NORTH WIND: Characterized by their geography, these fierce brother winds despise humans.

MOTHER OF EAST/WEST/NORTH WIND: Compassionate Grandmotherly figure who takes pity on FLORACITA and helps her in her quest.

SOÑANDO: FLORACITA's long lost brother cursed in an eternal sleep in the Sleeping Palace on the other side of the world.

BIRD: A troubadour whose song sparks FLORACITA's curiosity about her missing brother.

LION: The guard to the Sleeping Palace.

Settings and Characters by Scene (Cont.)

Scene Four

Setting:

Germany, "The Twelve Dancing Princesses"

Characters:

- DECEMBER: The youngest of the twelve princesses. Clever and compassionate.
- JANUARY: The oldest, and somewhat selfish, princess.
- KING: Frustrated father of twelve girls who is so tired of buying his daughters new shoes, he's betting potential suitors' lives on finding out the secret of their worn shoes.
- OLD WOMAN: A helpful guide who gives the SOLDIER all he needs to solve the mystery.
- SOLDIER: A retired soldier whose act of kindness gives him the opportunity to change his fortune by solving the mystery of the twelve princesses' worn shoes.
- CONCIERGE: Another longsuffering servant who has little faith in the SOLDIER's attempts.
- PRINCE: A Handsome Dunce in the Kingdom of Music and Light that JANUARY likes to dance with.
- PRINCESSES/PRINCES: Additional sister princesses and princesses represented by accordion paper dolls, puppetry, or additional actors.

Settings and Characters by Scene (Cont.)

Scene Five

Setting:

Kenya, "Omutugwa, an African Cinderella"

Characters:

- OMUTUGWA: A servant to Mistress and Daughter. Kind and compassionate despite her circumstances.
- MISTRESS: A cruel and meanspirited woman. Cares for nothing and no one but her DAUGHTER. The "Wicked Stepmother" of this African version of Cinderella.
- DAUGHTER: Ugly inside and out, a selfish, vain girl. The MISTRESS's Daughter. The "Wicked Stepsister" figure of this African version of Cinderella.
- SUNBIRD: A beautiful, bright-feathered blue and yellow bird, represented by a puppet. They return OMUTUGWA's act of kindness with magic of their own. The "Fairy Godmother" of this African version of Cinderella.
- CHIEF'S SON: The handsome "Prince" who relies on a golden slipper to find OMUTUGWA after falling in love with her at the dance.
- BIRDS: All the beautiful birds native to Kenya who help OMUTUGWA by picking the stones from the millet and making her a golden dress.

Settings and Characters by Scene (Cont.)

Scene Six

Setting:

Shoemakers Shop, "The Elves and the Shoemaker"

Characters:

SHOES, SHOEMAKER, IYANA

SAMPLE

Author's Notes for Educational or Dramaturgical Purposes

The stories told within Ragbag Shoes are adapted from folk and fairy tales from around the world with consideration for a multi-cultural experience as Iyana and the audience travel through them. The main resource used in researching this multitude of folk and fairy tales was "The Storytellers Sourcebook: A Subject, Title, and Motif Index to Folklore Collections for Children" by Margaret Read MacDonald.

There are at least five fairy tales/folk tales referenced in "The Ragbag Shoes". While these stories are older than the written word, they had to be drawn from sources that were written down. I looked at many different versions of these stories and then adapted them for the play. For additional reference, here are the retellings I referenced for my own adaptation:

1) The King with Dirty Feet (Country of Origin: India)

"The King with Dirty Feet" by Pomme Clayton from *Tales for Telling from Around the World* selected by Mary Medlicott. (pg. 10)

"The Fox and the Rooster and Other Tales" by Maggie Pearson (pg. 64-68)

2) Floracita and the Iron Shoes* (Country of Origin: Spain)

"The Sleeping Prince" by Alison Lurie from *Clever Gretchen and Other Forgotten Folktales* (pg. 74-83)

"Princess Floracita and the Iron Shoes" by John Warren Stewig (Picture Book)

*Note: Other versions of this story contain similar motifs with iron shoes/boots and a long search across the world, including the tale "East of the Sun, West of the Moon" and the Greek folktale "Master Semolina".

Author's Notes (Cont.)

- 3) The Twelve Dancing Princesses by the Brothers Grimm
(Country of Origin: Germany)

There are several different translations of this popular fairy tale, but my favorite came from "The World's Best Fairy Tales" (a Reader's Digest Anthology).

- 4) Omutugwa**, or Kenyan Cinderella (Country of Origin: Kenya, Luhya)

"Bury My Bones but Keep My Words: African Tales for Retelling" retold by Tony Fairman (pg. 142-152)

**Note: There are versions of Cinderella in almost every culture around the world. All you have to do is search "Cinderella stories from around the world" and you will find hundreds! Some of my favorite books are "Yeh-Shen" and "The Irish Cinderlad".

- 5) The Elves and the Shoemaker by Brothers Grimm (Country of Origin: Germany)

Scene One

SETTING: The SHOEMAKER's Shop.

AT RISE: NARRATOR steps into the light.

NARRATOR

Once upon a time, in the kingdom of Bootsmake, there lived a poor Shoemaker and his daughter, Iyana.

(Lights on SHOEMAKER, cobbling a pair of shoes, whistling. IYANA dances through the shop, dusting and ordering the shelves. They both wear neat, but ragged clothes.)

Though the shoemaker was poor, he was beloved by all in the kingdom. When a girl or boy turned ten years old it was the shoemaker who made their first pair of magic shoes.

IYANA

Have you finished yet, Papa?

SHOEMAKER

Almost.

(IYANA finds the large bag on the shelf labeled "Ragbag".)

IYANA

What's this?

SHOEMAKER

Hm? Oh, my Ragbag. Bits of old shoes I collected in my travels.

IYANA

Why don't you throw them out?

SHOEMAKER

There's magic in those scraps! Given by those who wore them.

(IYANA glances inside the Ragbag, mildly curious, then goes back to dancing.)

CHILD and PARENT enter.)

IYANA

What magic did you put in these shoes?

(SHOEMAKER winks and finishes the shoes with glitter. He presents the shoes to CHILD.)

CHILD

Will they make me fly? Or be invisible when I'm frightened?

IYANA

Now remember, whatever magic they possess, these shoes are who you are and where you will go. They will travel with you all your life.

SHOEMAKER

Yes, remember...

SHOEMAKER, IYANA, CHILD, & PARENT

(reciting)

"My Shoes will make the path I take. The path I choose will make my shoes."

(PARENT offers SHOEMAKER a few coins.)

PARENT

I'm sorry, it's all we have, we-

SHOEMAKER

Shhh. No matter, it's been a hard year for all of us.

(PARENT leaves with delighted CHILD.)

IYANA

What's a hard year?

SHOEMAKER

Little rain, which means little food, which means little money. And little money means no one buys shoes...

(SHOEMAKER frowns at the coins, looks at bare shelves.)

IYANA

But you make the best shoes, Papa. I just know my shoes will be the most beautiful and special in the kingdom, because my Papa is the Shoemaker! You'll make them dancing shoes, won't you?

(She begins to dance and
grabs SHOEMAKER's hand.)

Let's practice again for the ball!

SHOEMAKER

I must get back to work.

IYANA

On my shoes, Papa! Have you made them yet?

SHOEMAKER

(teasing, with a grin)

Hm, shoes? What do you mean about shoes?

IYANA

Papa, don't tease! You know tomorrow is my birthday AND the Bootsmake ball. And I will get my magic shoes. Will they be flying slippers, like the Queen's?

SHOEMAKER

(still teasing)

But my Iyana is only seven, maybe eight. You can't be ten already.

IYANA

I am nine years old and tomorrow I will be ten! You haven't forgotten?

SHOEMAKER

(smiling, earnest)

No, no... of course I haven't forgotten! Just remember, Iyana, whatever your shoes magic...

IYANA/SHOEMAKER

"My Shoes will make the path I take. The path I choose will make my shoes."

IYANA

As long as they're beautiful, Papa. Please? The most beautiful shoes in the kingdom.

SHOEMAKER

Now run along, Iyana, so I can get to work.

IYANA

I don't run! I dance!

(IYANA dances off.
SHOEMAKER looks at his
empty cupboards. He looks
at the coins.)

SHOEMAKER

Oh. It won't be enough for new material.

(SHOEMAKER scratches his
chin, sits at the table,
forlorn. A whistle. The
SHOEMAKER looks up. Music
and more whistling. Two
sparkly shoelaces first
peek out and then float out
of the ragbag. They float
up and dance, calling the
SHOEMAKER.)

Shoelaces? I haven't seen you since...

(The SHOEMAKER jumps up and
goes to the bag.)

Of course! Now why didn't I think of that!

(A cheeky whistle.
SHOEMAKER pats the
shoelaces 'thank you' and
hefts the RAGBAG and brings
it to the table. The
SHOEMAKER's eyes light up
as he inspects the scraps.
SHOEMAKER is mumbling to
himself)

Ah, I remember you, the heel from a very special pair of
boots weren't you? And the slippers, of course!

(Lights dim on SHOEMAKER.
Music plays as we hear him
working in the dark through
the night. Day arrives.
Lights on IYANA, jumping in
anticipation.)

Happy birthday, my dear Iyana!

(SHOEMAKER gives IYANA a box, and she eagerly pulls out the SHOES. The tongue is leather. The front vamp is pink satin, and the back quarter is faded gold. The shoelaces are bright green. IYANA looks at them in dismay and disappointment. Pause.)

SHOEMAKER (Cont.)

Try them on, see if they fit!

(IYANA just stares at them.)

Well?

IYANA

(heartbroken)

Papa, they're so ugly!

(IYANA starts to cry.)

SHOEMAKER

(shocked and hurt)

I- They're very special, Iyana, they come from my ragbag, and each scrap comes from a very-

IYANA

You made them from rags!?! From scraps? This was your best magic? I can't wear these to the ball... these can't be my magic shoes forever?!

SHOEMAKER

Just try them on... you might like them.

IYANA

(heartfelt)

Papa, everything we have is old. Everything I wear is rags. I wanted one new beautiful thing, like everyone else. Something that's my very own.

(She sniffs, trying to hold down more tears.)

These can't be... MY shoes. They're the oldest and ugliest shoes in the whole kingdom! I won't wear them.

(IYANA drops the SHOES.

SHOEMAKER sadly picks them

up, sets them on a table,
bows his head and exits.
IYANA sniffs, wipes the
tears from her eyes. She
scowls at the SHOES and
turns away. The SHOES tap.
One. Two. IYANA turns back
and frowns at the SHOES.)

SHOES

(in the dark)

Why are you sulking?

IYANA

Who said that?

(The SHOES tap their feet,
puppeteered by the
NARRATOR. They leap off the
table and walk to IYANA.)

SHOES

Well, I did, of course.

IYANA

You talk!

SHOES

I'm magic, aren't I? And you think I'm ugly... and old.

IYANA

Well, you are!

SHOES

Don't you know how special I am? Your father made me from very important shoes. Look inside, see that leather? That leather insole came from the first shoe ever made. My sole comes from the Iron boots that Princess Floracita used to save the sleeping prince! This satin top comes from the youngest dancing Princess, and this back here, why it's from the gold slipper Omutugwa wore to the Chief's Son's dance.

IYANA

Who?

SHOES

Who? Who!? You've never heard these stories?

(IYANA shakes her head.)

SHOES tap their foot.)

Well, well, well. If you're going to walk in these shoes-

IYANA

I won't.

SHOES

-you must learn where they come from. You can't go anywhere if you don't know where you've been. Come along then!

(The SHOES start dancing.)

IYANA

Where are we going?

SHOES

To India!

(IYANA is suddenly swept up in music and lights. A new dress/costume is wrapped around her, she becomes GIRL and is whisked offstage. From here on, SHOES narrate.)

(END OF SCENE)

Scene Two

SETTING: A village in India.

AT RISE: SHOES step forward.

SHOES

In India, before anyone wore shoes, there lived a king who hated taking baths.

(KING enters, barefoot,
followed by ADVISOR, also
barefoot.)

KING

I hate to take baths!

SHOES

He hated baths so much, he never took one... So, he smelled! Really bad.

(KING struts through the kingdom, passes servants and subjects. They smile when they see him, holding their breath but gasp for air after he passes. IYANA interrupts the story. Whenever this happens, lighting should indicate that IYANA is speaking and not the character she has become in the story.)

IYANA

(interrupting)

Shoes, why didn't anyone tell him how badly he smelled?

SHOES

Because he was the King!

IYANA

They were scared.

SHOES

(nods)

No one dared to tell the King the truth, until one day-

KING

Advisor! Today I want to visit all the villages in my kingdom!

ADVISOR

Of course, your majesty.

(ADVISOR bows. He leads the way to the Village, where VILLAGERS and GIRL await him.)

Make way! Make way, for the King!

(The KING enters and raises his arms. The ADVISOR gasps for air, the VILLAGERS hold their breath, smile and nod as the KING struts past them.)

VILLAGER 1

(through clenched teeth)

We are so happy to smell-- I mean SEE you oh King!

VILLAGER 2

(trying not to breath)

The children of the village have a gift to present you.

KING

Oh, I love gifts! What is it?

(GIRL steps forward with flowers and recoils.)

GIRL

P-hew! You smell!

(ADVISOR and VILLAGERS gasp.)

KING

Excuse me? What did she say?

VILLAGERS

Shhh!

ADVISOR

Nothing, your majesty!

GIRL

I *said*, you smell! Really bad. Why do you smell so bad?

KING

I smell?

(The KING smells his
armpits, recoils.)

Oh, I stink!

(to ADVISOR)

Why do I smell?

ADVISOR

Well, sir, you never take a bath.

KING

I hate baths!

(pause)

Oh... That's why I smell.

(pause)

I can't be a smelly King. I must take a bath. Even Kings
must do things they don't want to do.

(He claps.)

Prepare a bath at once!

ADVISOR

Prepare a bath at once!

VILLAGERS

In the river!

(ADVISOR and VILLAGERS lead
the KING to the River,
which rises to meet him.)

GIRL

To the river! Don't forget the soap!

(ADVISOR hands KING
washcloth and soap. He
scrubs from head to toe. He
rinses.)

KING

I am done with my bath!

ADVISOR

The King is done with his bath!

(The ADVISOR gives KING his robe. The KING steps out of the river.)

KING

Now, I am all clean! How do I smell now? I-

(The KING looks down at his feet, lifts them up.)

Pfft! Well, I've stepped on the riverbank and now my feet are muddy and filthy. Prepare another bath at once!

ADVISOR

Prepare another bath at once!

VILLAGERS

In the river!

GIRL

To the river!

(The KING re-enters the river, scrubs his feet.)

KING

All done!

(He steps onto the riverbank.)

All clean now-

(He lifts up his feet.)

Aww! Dirty again! It's the ground that's dirty. The ground must be washed!

ADVISOR

The ground must be washed!

(The GIRL shakes her head as others wash the ground.)

VILLAGERS

Oh dear. Oh my.

ADVISOR

Washing the ground has only turned it into mud.

KING

But I want to be a clean King, not a dirty smelly King! How can I stay clean if the ground is always dirty?

(He thinks, then:)

KING (Cont.)

I know! Cover the ground in leather, so that wherever I walk, my feet will stay clean!

ADVISOR

Cover the ground in leather!

(The KING washes in the river while the ADVISOR covers the ground.)

KING

All done!

(The VILLAGERS scramble and set down leather ahead of the KING's feet. He walks on it, happily. He passes the little GIRL.)

Thank you, my child, for being honest enough to tell me I stink. Now we will cover the entire Kingdom in leather, so that wherever I walk, my feet will stay clean!

(The ADVISOR and KING exit. The VILLAGERS and GIRL look at the leather ground sadly. IYANA interrupts.)

IYANA

WAIT! But, Shoes, that's a terrible idea! If you cover the ground in leather, nothing will grow.

SHOES

And nothing did. The King was very happy with his clean feet, but everyone else in the Kingdom grew sadder and sadder. When the King asked, no one would tell him why.

IYANA

(smiling)
Except the village girl.

SHOES

(nodding)
So, the King sought out the Girl who had the courage to tell him the truth.

(Lights shift back to story.
GIRL arrives at the palace.)

KING

Tell me, Village Girl, why is everyone in the Kingdom so sad? Isn't everyone enjoying my clean feet?

(He holds up his feet to
admire.)

GIRL

Your majesty, nothing can grow when the entire ground is covered in leather. Because nothing can grow, no one has food to eat, and we are all going hungry.

KING

Oh no! Oh dear! This is terrible! ...But how can I let the food grow and keep my feet clean?

GIRL

(smiling)
Do you have any scissors?

KING

The Village Girl wants scissors!

ADVISOR

The Village Girl wants scissors!

(The ADVISOR gives the GIRL scissors. She kneels and cuts the leather around the KING's feet. She pulls needle and thread from her sari and sews up shoes around the KING's feet.)

GIRL

There you are! Now you may walk around, wherever you like, and your feet will stay clean.

KING

Oh wow! Look at this!

(The KING stomps a bit on
the ground, walks around.)

They are very comfortable! I think these will really catch on.

KING (Cont.)

(to GIRL)

Thank you.

(The GIRL bows. The KING struts in his new shoes, admiring them. While SHOES speaks, the KING removes his shoes and sets them aside.)

SHOES

That was the very first pair of shoes. Since everyone required a pair, the leather covering the kingdom was used up quickly! Soon there were cobblers and shoemakers to make new shoes when the old ones were worn through.

(IYANA now stands at the side with the SHOES, and they watch as SHOEMAKER enters, carrying a bag slung over his shoulder. He picks up the KING's old shoes, admiring them.)

IYANA

My father found the King's shoes? The very first pair of shoes? And he gave them to... me?

(The SHOEMAKER puts the shoes in his Ragbag. He exits.)

SHOES

The leather from that first pair is the lining inside your shoes.

IYANA

But it's just a bit of leather. There wasn't any magic in the King's shoes.

SHOES

Wasn't there?

IYANA

Well, what can they do? Can they walk five paces in a single step, or find their way home if lost?

SHOES

Sometimes, the magic of a shoe come from the character of the person who wears them... or the person who made them.

IYANA

(surprised, then proudly)

Hmmm. Do you think I would have told the King he smelled?

SHOES

(laughs)

Yes, you would have. You are very honest, Iyana. Your father recognizes that magic in you.

IYANA

Honesty is a magic?

SHOES

(smiling)

You'll see. Now come with me. We are going to Spain!

(IYANA is swept up and another dress change turns her into FLORACITA.)

(END OF SCENE)