

# PLAYS FOR YOUNG PERFORMERS

BY  
**JOSH MATHIESON**

a collection of literary adaptations for large casts of  
secondary school-aged young performers

[JOSHMATHIESON.CO.UK](http://JOSHMATHIESON.CO.UK)

01 THE PLAYS



**GULLIVER'S TRAVELS**  
*based on the novel by  
Jonathan Swift*



**THE HOUSE AT THE  
CENTRE OF THE WORLD**  
*the lesser-known tales  
of the Brothers' Grimm*



**THE ODYSSEY**  
*based on Homer's  
Greek epic*



**THE HUNTING  
OF THE SNARK**  
*inspired by the poem  
by Lewis Carroll*



**DRACULA**  
*based on  
Bram Stoker's classic*



**SLEEPY HOLLOW**  
*based on the short story by  
Washington Irving*



**THE GREAT GATSBY**  
*based on the novella by F.  
Scott Fitzgerald*

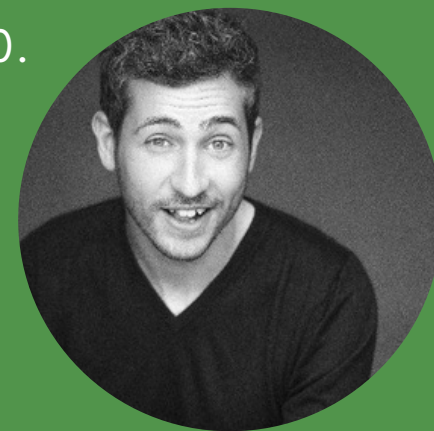
## ABOUT JOSH

Josh Mathieson is a Essex/London-based playwright, adaptor and director who began writing for the stage shortly after studying Drama and Creative Writing at Kingston University. He co-created several original works that toured across UK fringe and education venues, including productions at the Edinburgh Fringe. His 2014 play *Bits & Box* won the inaugural Best of the Fest award at the International Youth Arts Festival.

Since then, his writing has focused largely on literary adaptations for the stage, reimagining classic texts for contemporary audiences. He is a frequent freelancer and collaborator with the Rose Theatre, who boast one of the largest youth theatres in the country.

Additionally, Josh has worked as a writer and dramaturg on devised projects, including a performance at the V&A Museum, and wrote and directed the award-winning short film *Things That Grow* in 2020.

As director, Josh is associate on Lucy Bailey's Olivier Award-nominated *Witness for the Prosecution*, resident director on Stephen Daldry's seminal production of *An Inspector Calls* and directed the 2026 UK Tour of *Dial M for Murder*.



## KEY INFO

Characters: **28**

Min. suggested cast size: **14**

Approx. length: **1hour 45mins**

Page count: **75**

Suggested cast age: **11-16years**

Audience: **7+**

Trigger warnings: **Mild violence and peril, references to war, classism**



**Note:** songs included at additional cost

*Gulliver's Travels* is told through the eyes of Demelza Reldresal, a young court official in war-torn Lilliput. When the shipwrecked Gulliver—a giant “Man Mountain”—arrives, his presence unsettles the fragile balance between Lilliput and its rival, Blefuscu.

As Demelza teaches Gulliver the language, he begins to win public favour, though powerful figures seek to use him as a weapon. The Emperor hopes for peace, but others push for conquest. When conflict escalates, Gulliver averts war by seizing the enemy fleet without violence, becoming a celebrated hero. However, his refusal to support imperial expansion exposes divisions within the court. Blending humour and satire, the play explores power, morality, and whether compassion can prevail over ambition.

## KEY INFO

Characters: **35**

Min. suggested cast size: **12**

Approx. length: **1hour 45mins**

Page count: **73**

Suggested cast age: **11-16years**

Audience: **7+**

Trigger warnings: **Mild violence and peril, references to murder and violence**



*The House at the Centre of the World* is a theatrical reimagining of Grimm tales, set in a mysterious house that appears once a year to lost travellers. Bound by a curse, four musicians host “Strangers’ Night,” where guests must share their stories. Among them, Jonas seeks to understand fear, Elsa escapes a murderous bridegroom, and Lily searches for a cursed lion she loves. As more strangers arrive, their stories intertwine—revealing danger, desire, and transformation. In this liminal space, truth surfaces and fates begin to shift. The house becomes a crossroads where courage is tested, justice pursued, and hope flickers against darkness—suggesting that even the most broken stories may yet be rewritten.

## KEY INFO

Characters: **37**

Min. suggested cast size: **12**

Approx. length: **1hour 45mins**

Page count: **75**

Suggested cast age: **11-18years**

Audience: **7+**

Trigger warnings: **Mild violence and peril, death and loss, sexism**



Odysseus, long absent after the Trojan War, is presumed dead in Ithaca, where his son Telemachus comes of age amid pressure for his mother Penelope to remarry. Refusing to accept his father's fate, Telemachus sets out to discover the truth. Meanwhile, Odysseus struggles to return home, recounting his perilous journey through strange lands: from the seductive Lotus-Eaters to the deadly Cyclops Polyphemus and beyond. Rescued by the Phaeacians, he finally reveals his identity and the trials that have kept him from home. As past and present intertwine, both father and son fight to reclaim their family and kingdom. This fast-paced, ensemble-driven retelling blends humour, myth and adventure to explore loyalty, identity and the enduring pull of home.

## KEY INFO

Characters: **16**

Min. suggested cast size: **10**

Approx. length: **1hour 15mins**

Page count: **56**

Suggested cast age: **11-16years**

Audience: **7+**

Trigger warnings: **Mild violence and peril, intimidation, classism**

THE  
HUNTING  
OF THE SNARK



The play follows Billie Bellman, the determined daughter of legendary hunter Bartholomew Bellman, who becomes obsessed with completing her father's lifelong quest to capture the mysterious Snark. After a childhood shaped by strict lessons in hunting and preservation, Billie assembles an eccentric crew of specialists and misfits, including a forgetful Baker, an anxious Beaver, and a boastful Banker, and sets sail on the ship Great Calloo. As they journey into uncharted lands, tensions, ambitions, and unlikely friendships emerge, revealing deeper truths about courage, cruelty, and curiosity. Guided by cryptic rules and her father's legacy, Billie leads the group into a dangerous hunt where the line between discovery and obsession blurs, and the terrifying possibility of the deadly Boojum Snark threatens everything they seek. Ultimately, the expedition tests loyalty, identity, and the meaning of exploration.

## KEY INFO

Characters: **21**

Min. suggested cast size: **10**

Approx. length: **1hour 30mins**

Page count: **71**

Suggested cast age: **13-19years**

Audience: **12+**

Trigger warnings: **Supernatural horror, violence, psychological trauma, blood**



This adaptation of *Dracula* presents a fragmented, investigative retelling of the classic Gothic tale. In 1897, Mina Harker and her allies piece together a series of journals and testimonies to uncover the truth behind a spreading supernatural threat. Jonathan Harker's account reveals his imprisonment in the castle of the enigmatic Count Dracula, who plans to invade England. As Dracula arrives, his influence spreads through madness and disease, most tragically seen in Lucy Westenra's decline and transformation into the undead. Confronted with the limits of science, Professor Van Helsing guides the group toward a darker understanding of their enemy. When Mina herself becomes targeted, the investigation turns into a desperate hunt. Uniting knowledge, faith, and sacrifice, they pursue Dracula to stop his growing power before it consumes them all.

## KEY INFO

Characters: **11**Min. suggested cast size: **10**Approx. length: **1hour 10mins**Page count: **45**Suggested cast age: **13-19years**Audience: **12+**Trigger warnings: **Violence and peril, ritual sacrifice, cult fanaticism**

This dark adaptation is set in 1798 in the traditional Dutch village of *Sleepy Hollow*, which faces a clash between its long-held customs and the modernizing influence of Ichabod Crane, the new schoolmaster. During the annual Harvest Festival, Ichabod attempts to introduce American nationalistic pride and "modern" hymns, much to the skepticism of the locals. His pursuit of the intelligent and wealthy heiress Katrina van Tassel fuels a bitter rivalry with Brom van Brunt, a local "disturber of the peace". The tension culminates during the festival when Brom and Luuk pull a prank on Ichabod, leading to a disastrous choir performance. As ghost stories and the legend of the Headless Horseman permeate the atmosphere, the play explores themes of identity, tradition, and the lingering shadows of the American Revolution. Ultimately, the isolated community must reconcile its past with an encroaching future.

## KEY INFO

Characters: **18**

Min. suggested cast size: **9**

Approx. length: **1hour 30mins**

Page count: **53**

Suggested cast age: **11-19years**

Audience: **9+**

Trigger warnings: **Mild violence and domestic abuse, coercive control, substance abuse, sexism**



In this ensemble-driven adaptation of F. Scott Fitzgerald's classic, Nick Carraway moves to Long Island in 1922 and becomes entangled in the lives of his wealthy cousin Daisy, her unfaithful husband Tom, and his enigmatic neighbor, Jay Gatsby. Known for his extravagant parties, Gatsby is revealed to be a man driven by an obsessive love for Daisy, whom he lost years earlier due to his lack of fortune. As Gatsby attempts to reclaim his past with Daisy, the tension between the characters reaches a breaking point during a sweltering afternoon in Manhattan. The resulting conflict leads to a tragic hit-and-run accident that kills Tom's mistress, Myrtle Wilson. Ultimately, a chain of deception and vengeance culminates in Gatsby's murder, exposing the hollow morality and indifference of the elite.

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If you are interested in producing an adaptation, would like to read sample scenes from any of the plays, or would simply like to know more, please get in touch via email.

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THANK YOU



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