

A TINY TERN OF THE WHOLE WIDE WORLD

A one-act comedy for young audiences by
Kemuel DeMoville

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

ARCTIC TERN, male or female. A tiny tern with a motto.

HARE, male or female. A hare.

DALL SHEEP, male or female. A sheep.

SNOWY OWL, male or female. An owl.

CLOUD 1, male or female. A cloud.

CLOUD 2, male or female. Another cloud.

NENE GOOSE, male or female. A friend from the volcano.

STEVE, male or female. A penguin brother.

STEVE TOO, male or female. Another penguin brother.

STEVE ALSO, male or female. The final penguin brother.

Actors can be cast in more than one role should the director wish.

Any gender denotations amongst the characters of the play can easily be changed to suit the cast of the production.

If the director wishes, the penguin names can be changed from variations on Steve to Stephanie depending on the gender of the performers.

The Cloud roles can be divided up between more than two actors—making a kind of cloud chorus—if the production requires more speaking roles.

SETTING

I see the set for the play being multifunctional and transformative. The ice and snow should change as Arctic Tern flies around and arrives at various locations. For me, the set should act as a storytelling device, and at times a character within the play itself.

Cast members or dancers should be able to move and manipulate the set in order to create new environments and new characters. I see the set comprised mostly of blocks of ice of various shapes and sizes, complimented by fabrics or similar billowy material.

Ultimately, the set can be anything the designer wishes. I simply want to explain the way in which I envisioned the playing space during the writing of the piece. Take from it what you like, leave out whatever you wish.

NOTE

The use of puppets for various characters is possible. I leave it up to the individual productions to decide which character(s) to make into a puppet character.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

A Tiny Tern of the Whole Wide World was commissioned and first produced in 2008 by the Kennedy Theatre at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, with the title *The Little Snow Fox and Other Tales of the North Pacific*. The play premiered with the following cast:

| | |
|-------------|---------------------|
| ARCTIC TERN | Erin Chung |
| HARE | Nicholas Atiburcio |
| DALL SHEEP | Stephen Meyers |
| SNOWY OWL | Andrew Cottrell |
| CLOUD | Miriam Joanne Jones |
| CLOUD | Kaitlin Steer |
| NENE GOOSE | Tony Young |
| STEVE | Andrew Cottrell |
| STEVE TOO | Nicholas Atiburcio |

STEVE ALSO

Stephen Meyers

PACIFIC RIM DANCERS—Clara Bowden-Kirby, Shealin Johnson, Parrish Massey, Rebecca McGarvey, and Lauren Santos

DEDICATION

This play is dedicated to Robert, Virginia, and Kathryn DeMoville & Richard and Karen Elrod—for always believing in big things.

(Lights up. CLOUDS gather on the stage.)

CLOUD 1: Blow, wind! Howl! Howl!

CLOUD 2: Whipping wildly! Whooshing! Whirling!

CLOUD 1: Clouds cluster. Bumping. Thumping. Lumping. Layering the top of the world.

CLOUD 2: Arctic tundra turning whiter. Winter wrapping, lapping up the land and shore.

CLOUD 1: Summers ending. Now the long dark is looming.

CLOUD 2: Cold black waters turn to ice. Snowy blankets tuck the grass and stones up tight.

CLOUD 1: Far below a tiny tern –

CLOUD 2: Who since hatching has only seen the summer –

CLOUD 1: The two-summer bird. The great daylight flier.

CLOUD 1: Looks to the snow to the ice

CLOUD 2: To the sea to the sky

CLOUD 1 & 2: And wonders what the world has in store.

(HARE pops its head up.)

HARE: Dall Sheep! Dall Sheep! Come out and play!

(DALL SHEEP enters.)

DALL SHEEP: What is it, Hare?

(Sees all the snow around him.)

Winter!! Winter is here! Finally!

HARE: Okay. So, what are we going to do today? I feel like an adventure.

DALL SHEEP: Why don't we race along ice cliffs or balance along the end of an ice sheet. That's always fun.

(ARCTIC TERN enters, running.)

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ARCTIC TERN: Hey guys! Guys! Wait up. I want to go on an adventure with you.

HARE: What?!

ARCTIC TERN: I want to go balance along ice sheets, hop along icy cliffs.

(Dall Sheep and Hare look at him for a moment, then laugh.)

DALL SHEEP: You?! You want to do that with us? You're just a little Arctic tern.

HARE: You have to be joking.

ARCTIC TERN: Why would I be joking? I want to have adventures too.

DALL SHEEP: I'm going off to climb big, tall mountains.

ARCTIC TERN: I want to do that too.

DALL SHEEP: You're too small to climb up so high.

HARE: I'm going to hop as high and as fast as I can across the ice fields.

ARCTIC TERN: I want to do that too!

HARE: You can't. Your legs don't bend like mine, they're not for hopping and they're way too small.

ARCTIC TERN: Yeah... Well... I may be little, but I can do big things.

DALL SHEEP: Keep dreaming there, short stack. I'm off to climb that giant mountain.

ARCTIC TERN: But it's true! I may be little, but I can do big things.

HARE: Sure you can. Now why don't you just run back home; with those tiny legs it'll only take you a week or so to get there.

(Dall Sheep and Hare laugh and exit.)

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ARCTIC TERN: Well... Well... Just because I'm little doesn't mean I can't do big things!

(Laughter is heard from offstage.)

It's no fair. Just because they're bigger they get to do so much more than I can. They always have cool adventures and leave me back here. It's just not fair. I'm just too little. Why do I have to be so small?

(Arctic Tern cries. SNOWY OWL pops out.)

SNOWY OWL: Who's there? Is that Arctic Tern?

ARCTIC TERN: Yes.

SNOWY OWL: What are you doing?

ARCTIC TERN: I'm not doing anything because I can't do anything. I can't climb tall mountains, I can't hop across the ice fields, I can't swim out to the ice floes, and I can't sprint through the woods. How can I do big things when I'm too small to do anything at all?

SNOWY OWL: But there is something you can do. Something you can do very well, you just don't know it yet.

ARCTIC TERN: What? Beat a mouse in a foot race?

SNOWY OWL: You can fly!

ARCTIC TERN: I can?

SNOWY OWL: You're an Arctic tern. You're one of the best fliers in the world.

ARCTIC TERN: I am?!

SNOWY OWL: No one ever told you that?

ARCTIC TERN: No, but it seems like something they should have mentioned before now.

SNOWY OWL: Go figure.

ARCTIC TERN: So, how do I do it?

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SNOWY OWL: Do what?

ARCTIC TERN: Fly! How do I fly?

SNOWY OWL: Come on, I'll show you.

(Both Snowy Owl and Arctic Tern cross to center.)

Just put out your wings, give them a few flaps, and pretty soon all you'll feel beneath you is the wind and all you'll have to talk to is the clouds.

ARCTIC TERN: That seems like such a big thing to do, and I'm such a little tern. I'll never be able to do all that.

SNOWY OWL: You have to think big thoughts if you want to do big things. Remember what you told Hare and Dall Sheep?

ARCTIC TERN: I may be little, but I can do big things...? But that isn't true — it's just a saying.

SNOWY OWL: Of course it's true. Try it again now. Put out your wings, give a few flaps, and shout out your motto until it echoes off the sea cliffs.

(Arctic Tern closes its eyes and does so. The Clouds form around him, leaving the Arctic far below.)

ARCTIC TERN: *(Shouting:)* I may be little, but I can do big things! I may be little, but I can do big things! I may be little, but I can do big things! *(Opens its eyes and can see it is flying:)* I'm doing it! I'm flying! *(Shouting below:)* Thank you, Snowy Owl! This is wonderful! I'm flying faster than Hare can run on the ice fields. I'm flying higher than the mountains Dall Sheep likes to climb. I may be little, but I am doing a big, big thing.

(As the Clouds speak, they color Arctic Tern's wings grey and a volcano forms on stage.)

CLOUD 1: Months passed as he flew through the air.

CLOUD 2: He didn't know where he was going...

CLOUD 1: Or why...

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CLOUD 2: But he knew he was going far.

CLOUD 1: A very big adventure for such a tiny tern.

CLOUD 2: A very long journey for such a small bird.

CLOUD 1: He could see lands and islands below him.

CLOUD 2: But he didn't want to stop. He wanted to fly.

CLOUD 1: And fly far. He didn't know it...

CLOUD 2: But he was flying south.

CLOUD 1: Away from the snow.

CLOUD 2: Away from his Arctic home.

(Arctic Tern tries to land by the volcano but lava burns him and turns its feet and beak red. Arctic Tern reacts to each appropriately [i.e., coughing and sputtering, hopping on its hot feet and pecking at the lava with its beak].)

ARCTIC TERN: Ow! Ow! Ow! Stop it! Stop it! Stop it!

(NENE enters.)

NENE: What's all this, "Ow! Ow! Ow! Stop! Stop! Stop!" about?! I'm trying to take a nap over here.

ARCTIC TERN: Sorry, that was me.

NENE: You got some nerve. Can't you read all those signs? They say, "Quiet. Nene nesting." I'm Nene and I'm nesting. So, be quiet.

ARCTIC TERN: I think I'm lost.

NENE: Tourists. You should have brought a map.

ARCTIC TERN: I'm sorry, but I've come a really long way...from up North.

NENE: Like North Shore? Woah. That is a long way.

ARCTIC TERN: No, further north.

NENE: Nothing's further north than North Shore.

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ARCTIC TERN: Sure there is. The North Pole.

NENE: What do you mean the North Pole?! Are you trying to tell me that you just flew over ice and snow and miles and miles of ocean all by yourself?!

ARCTIC TERN: Yep!

NENE: And you flew here? Like with your wings, not on Hawaiian Airlines?

ARCTIC TERN: Flew the whole way with my own two wings.

NENE: Oh wow! You must work out. I could probably fly across the ocean too, but I don't want to spend all day at the gym. Too much training for that kind of flight.

ARCTIC TERN: It's not that big of a deal.

NENE: Not that big of a deal?!? It's a huge deal. Flying that far for that long is an amazing feat. Most birds can't even begin to think of something that big, let alone do it. What you're doing is a really big deal.

ARCTIC TERN: I guess when you put it that way...

NENE: I would love to go on a vacation like that. But some of us work for a living. We aren't all born with a silver bird feeder in our mouth. Soaring through the air, diving through the clouds; it sounds wonderful, though. All I ever do is wander around this volcano, talk story with one mongoose I know.

ARCTIC TERN: A volcano! Really? You live next to a volcano?

NENE: Yep. Pele's back yard.

ARCTIC TERN: I didn't know this was a volcano. I was just flying along, minding my own business, when all of a sudden I got hit in the face with a big puff of ash. Now my wings and feathers are all dusty gray. I look terrible!

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NENE: I think it makes you look pretty cool. You look too small when you're just one color, now with those gray feathers you look like a completely different bird. Have you ever considered modeling? Because I know a guy.

ARCTIC TERN: I never thought of it that way. Okay, I'll keep the gray feathers, but look at my feet and beak! When I came down to land and wash the smoke out of my eyes, this hot lava started burning my feet and blistering my beak bright red.

NENE: Yeah. Madame Pele has marked you. Makes you look like one Ohi'a blossom.

ARCTIC TERN: With all that lava around I don't know how you can be brave enough to live up here.

NENE: That's nothing. You wanna do something brave, go down to Waikiki on Halloween. That's brave.

ARCTIC TERN: But you live around a volcano! A volcano! Most people run from hot lava, you live right next to it. It's an amazing and scary place to live, but you do it everyday. You're not a very big bird either, but you're braver than anyone I've ever met.

NENE: Just because you're little doesn't mean you can't do big things. Big things that are just as special and just as important as anything anyone else has ever done. Besides, I don't like the cold.

ARCTIC TERN: Yeah. Yeah, you're right.

NENE: I know. I'm always right. It's a burden sometimes, but I've learned to live with it.

ARCTIC TERN: Well, if you don't mind, it's getting kind of late and I should really keep going on my journey. Which way is south?

NENE: Let me think. Mauka, makai, gotta go past Na‘alehu. So... That way.

ARCTIC TERN: Goodbye. See you again sometime.

NENE: See you. And remember: you do big things too!

(Nene exits and the volcano fades into the Clouds again as Arctic Tern takes flight. As the Clouds speak, the set transforms into the ice fields of Antarctica.)

CLOUD 1: Months passed as the little Arctic tern flew farther south.

CLOUD 2: He looked beautiful flying through the air with his gray wings.

CLOUD 1: And his red beak and feet.

CLOUD 2: He glided along strong breezes.

CLOUD 1: He danced around storms and squalls.

CLOUD 2: At night he would sleep while coasting on the wind.

CLOUD 1: Underneath him was the dark stretch of sea, above him were thousands of stars.

CLOUD 2: During the day he would ride the wind far above the clouds.

CLOUD 1: Warming his wings in the noonday sun.

CLOUD 2: Then,

CLOUD 1: After many months,

CLOUD 2: He saw a white landmass.

CLOUD 1: As white as the clouds.

CLOUD 2: Sitting in the midst of a dark blue sea.

CLOUD 1: As blue as the mid-morning sky.

CLOUD 2: So, he decided to land.

(Clouds exit. Arctic Tern lands.)

ARCTIC TERN: Look at this place. It looks just like home.

(Penguins STEVE, STEVE TOO and STEVE ALSO enter from the audience. They zip around the audience as if they were swimming through the sea. Eventually, they come onto stage, waddling as penguins do.)

STEVE: Well, look what we got here, boys. A loiterer.

ARCTIC TERN: I'm sorry, a what?

STEVE TOO: A lookie-loo.

STEVE ALSO: A rogue peeper.

ARCTIC TERN: I just landed here. I was only taking a little rest.

STEVE: A rest, he says.

ARCTIC TERN: A break.

STEVE TOO: It's a break now.

ARCTIC TERN: I just need to catch my breath.

STEVE ALSO: Looks like someone's gone and lost his wind.

STEVE: You can quit with the charade. We know why you're really here.

ARCTIC TERN: You do?

STEVE TOO: You're here for our secret.

ARCTIC TERN: Your secret?

STEVE ALSO: Our fish catching secret.

ARCTIC TERN: I think there's been some kind of misunderstanding.

STEVE: We know those other penguins from over the ridge sent you. They want to know how we catch so many fish, don't they?

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ARCTIC TERN: What's a penguin?

STEVE: What's...? What's a penguin, he says.

STEVE TOO: Don't trust him, Steve. Those over-the-ridge-penguins are tricky.

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