CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE

THE GREAT CROSS COUNTRY RACE
A Children's Theatre Project

An abstract submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in
Drama
by
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ABSTRACT

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The Great Cross Country Race, a play for child audiences, was staged in the Laboratory Theatre at California State University, Northridge on September 28, 29, 30, 1973. The cast consisted of twelve undergraduate and graduate students from the university. The play is based upon the classic folktale, "The Tortoise and the Hare".

The production concept involved placing the audience on four cushioned areas in the center of the theatre. The sets were located on the periphery with the racetrack running around and through the audience. This intensified the theatrical experience by allowing the audience to be close to the action. All areas of the theatre were used. In designing the production the emphasis was on simplicity. Sets, makeup and costumes suggested, but did not attempt to create realistic animals in a naturalistic woodland environment. Minimum scenery such as a bridge, a wall, a grassy mound, and a few rocks and trees, was all that was provided. The
basic pattern of the costumes and makeup required the actors to develop physical, vocal and facial qualities to enhance their characters.

Each of the actors established a definite rhythm and movement pattern which conveyed and distinguished his individual animal. Greater variation was achieved through vocal rate and pitch.

Music was composed especially for the show and was provided by five musicians and a conductor. An overture created atmosphere, prepared the audience, and introduced the animals in their woodland environment. Background music was used at selected intervals throughout the play. The arrangement was an unobtrusive asset heightening the action and providing the three main characters with a musical theme.