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Multimedia Review VIDEO

Grumpuss: The World Premiere Benefit Performance

videocassette. color, 99 min. Otherworld Entertainment Corp. 1998, 1999 release. \$19.95 (pub. perf.)

Gr4Up — Wandering poet and storyteller, Travis Edward Pike, stumbles upon a fairy mound. Threatened with terrible punishment by the fairy queen, he must tell a story which is riveting, funny, scary — all in rhyme. Pike tells of a celery-loving knight, Sir Ellery, charged with subduing the Grumpuss, a fierce, cat-like beast large as a horse. Courageous yet tender-hearted, Sir Ellery receives help from a dwarf wizard who suggests that the Grumpuss might be befriended, not killed. Sir Ellery's plans to parade triumphantly through the kingdom turn to disaster when the Grumpuss's allergies to grain and celery cause him to attack the knight. Sir Ellery's just nature prevents him from harming the Grumpuss. He arrives at a solution fair to the innocent Grumpuss and all wild creatures in the kingdom. Filmed at Blenheim Castle in Oxfordshire, England for Save the Children, this narrative poem is imaginative and absorbing. Pike's superb telling of his original poem is witty, dramatic and sometimes wistful. The music (also composed by Pike) is a mix of medieval and contemporary, a perfect complement to the tale. An intricate dance blending acrobatics and ballet performed by three young girls (the fairies) as an intermission adds an ethereal touch. Themes of peace, compassion, and courage echo through this story, but Pike's telling makes them wonderfully fun yet thought-provoking and never heavy-handed. An outstanding choice for school and public library collections.—*Nancy L. Chu, Western Illinois University, Macomb*