

CINDERELLA

by Diane Vanden Hoven

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SYNOPSIS: In this classic children's tale of triumph over adversity, Cinderella is condemned to a life of servitude by an uncaring stepmother and the constant torment of her jealous stepsisters. Throughout her suffering, Cinderella maintains her kindness, until one day she is rewarded by meeting her true love—the handsome Prince.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(5-6 females, 4 males, 1 either)

NARRATOR (m/f)	(24 lines)
CINDERELLA (f).....	(164 lines)
OLD WOMAN/FAIRY GODMOTHER (f).....	(41 lines)
ESME (f).....	(64 lines)
AGATHA (f).....	(57 lines)
STEPMOTHER (f)	(65 lines)
KING (m).....	(29 lines)
PRINCE HENRY (m).....	(57 lines)
MESSENGER (m)	(29 lines)
RENÉE (m).....	(4 lines)
MOTHER (f).....	This role can be doubled. (1 line)

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Scan the QR Code below to purchase the professional Audio Recording of *Cinderella*. Featuring ATC Seneca Award Nominee Georgia Lee Schultz as Cinderella, Mary Ellen Herder as the Stepmother and Michael Dick as the Narrator.



SCENE 1

NARRATOR: Once upon a time in a land not too far away, there lived a young girl. Her father was an honoured gentleman, wealthy and kind, and her mother was a woman of charm and grace. They lived in a grand house on a cobblestone street.

SFX: STREET SOUNDS, HORSES HOOVES ON COBBLESTONE.

NARRATOR: For many years, the little family was very happy until one day the mother grew ill. She called for her daughter to sit by her bed.

MOTHER: My dear child, stay as good and kind as you are now and remember, when I am gone, I will keep watch over you.

NARRATOR: With those words, the woman closed her eyes and took her last breath. Heartbroken, the young girl wept and wept, and would not leave the spot where her mother lay buried. Winter came and laid a blanket of the snow over her grave, and in the spring when the sun had melted it off, her father remarried.

SFX: MUTED WEDDING BELLS.

NARRATOR: His new wife was proud and haughty and she brought with her two vain daughters. In time, the man fell ill and was laid to rest. In an instant, the young girl's life was changed, and she was banished to the kitchen below the stairs where she toiled, all but forgotten. She made her bed by the fire and was always covered with the soot from cinders, so they called her Cinderella. (*Beat.*) One day as the sun winked over the horizon....

SFX: TOLLING BELLS OF CLOCK TOWER.

SCENE 2*CINDERELLA'S HOUSE—THE KITCHEN*

CINDERELLA: (*Yawning.*) Is it six bells already? I had just barely closed my eyes.

SFX: MEOW.

CINDERELLA: You're right, Monsieur Pettypaws. It is far too early to be awake.

SFX: MEOW.

CINDERELLA: But I do get to see the sun rise. Isn't it beautiful? Orange and purple and full of promise. The world opening just for us. I think it's going to be another beautiful day.

SFX: MEOW.

CINDERELLA: What do you have to complain about? You get to lie in the sun all day. If only I could do that. One day I will. I will do as I please and not be ruled by the bells. But not today.

SFX: MEOW.

CINDERELLA: No food for us, not until I clean the hearth and make the meals. (*CINDERELLA hums as she works.*)

SFX: IRON SCRAPPING ON GRATE.

CINDERELLA: A little song always makes things so much better. It will not always be like this. We just have to believe and someday things will change.

SFX: MEOW.

CINDERELLA: Alright. Alright. You many have one piece. And in return you must promise to stay away from the mice.

SFX: CLASH OF POTS AND PANS.

CINDERELLA: Now shoo, I have to hurry with my chores or surely I will be—

SFX: KNOCK AT DOOR.

CINDERELLA: Oh, who can that be?

SFX: DOOR OPENING.

OLD WOMAN: Good morning, my child. Spare a morsel of food for a hungry old woman?

CINDERELLA: I'm very sorry, but we have nothing.

OLD WOMAN: No charity in a grand place like this?

CINDERELLA: All our money goes to the daughters of the house. They must keep up their appearances so that they may make good marriages.

OLD WOMAN: Are you not a daughter of the house?

CINDERELLA: Only by half. It is through the kindness of my step-mother that I live here.

OLD WOMAN: By the look of ye, her kindness is wanting.

SFX: TINKLING OF SERVANT BELL IN KITCHEN.

CINDERELLA: That's her. I must hurry and attend to them.

OLD WOMAN: One small bite is all I ask. Your kitchen garden is so well tended. Why, look, it is full of ripe vegetables. Surely, you can spare a one.

CINDERELLA: Oh, it troubles me to see anyone go without food. Take a squash from the garden but be quick lest someone sees you.

SFX: CAT MEOW.

CINDERELLA: (*To the cat.*) Shhh, I know. Don't tell anyone.

OLD WOMAN: Thank you, child. One day your kindness will be rewarded.

SFX: SERVANT BELL TINKLING LOUDER.

CINDERELLA: If only you could reward me by silencing the bells. I must go. Good day to you, Old Woman.

SFX: DOOR CLOSING. DISHES CLATTER AS BREAKFAST IS PLACED ON A TRAY.

SFX: SERVANT BELL TINKLING FURIOUSLY.

CINDERELLA: (*To herself.*) I'm only one girl; I can only do so much. (*Yelling.*) Yes, yes, I'm coming!

NARRATOR: And so, Cinderella did as she did every morning and ran up the three flights of stairs, laden with trays of food for her sisters.

SCENE 3

CINDERELLA'S HOUSE—STEPSISTERS' BEDROOM

SFX: VOICES OF SISTERS SQUABBLING GROWING LOUDER AS CINDERELLA APPROACHES THEIR ROOM.

ESME: Give it to me; I will wear the blue today.

AGATHA: But it matches my eyes.

ESME: Your eyes are green.

AGATHA: No, your eyes are green. Green with envy.

ESME: There you are Cinderella. Where have you been, you lazy creature?

AGATHA: We've practically perished from starvation. Look how thin my arms are.

ESME: And look at the hollows under my cheeks. Do I look old, Agatha?

AGATHA: You're as beautiful as ever, Esme. How do I look?

ESME: You look lovely too. Though not quite as lovely as I. But then who is?

CINDERELLA: I'm terribly sorry I'm late; there was someone at the door.

ESME: Always an excuse. Give us our trays.

SFX: CLINKING OF TRAY AND CUTLERY.

ESME: (*Spitting out food.*) Ew! These eggs are cold.

AGATHA: And these biscuits are burnt.

CINDERELLA: I think they look perfectly fine.

ESME: You know how delicate my digestion is.

AGATHA: She does this on purpose so she can give food to the beggars.

ESME: She does it so she can have it herself. Selfish girl.

CINDERELLA: This biscuit is nice and fluffy—

ESME: (*Screaming.*) Ah!

AGATHA: What is it?

ESME: A mouse! A mouse!

AGATHA: Where? Where? There it is! Filthy thing! Ah! Let me get on the chair with you.

ESME: There isn't enough room up here for both of us. Get off!

AGATHA: They will eat my ankles, horrible creatures.

CINDERELLA: Don't be silly. They will do no such thing. They are more afraid of you. (*To the mouse.*) Shoo, shoo. Get back to your hole.

SFX: SQUEAKING.

AGATHA: She talks to them as if they understand.

ESME: What do you expect; she has no other friends.

AGATHA: Except for that cat.

ESME: Where is that lazy thing? He's as bad as you are, Cinderella.

AGATHA: She keeps feeding him so it has no appetite for mice.

SFX: TINKLING OF SMALL HAND HELD BELL.

AGATHA: Oh, oh.

ESME: That's Mama.

AGATHA: You had better attend to her before she gets angry.

ESME: Because you know what happens when she's angry...

AGATHA: And when you're done with her, come back and help us get dressed.

NARRATOR: Cinderella left her sisters and hurried down the hall to the room that was once filled with sunshine and laughter but now lay shrouded in darkness.

SCENE 4

CINDERELLA'S HOUSE—STEPMOTHER'S BEDROOM

STEPMOTHER: You're late.

CINDERELLA: I'm terribly sorry, Stepmother.

STEPMOTHER: How many times must I tell you not to call me that?

CINDERELLA: Yes, Madam. Would you like me to open the drapes?

It is sure to be a beautiful day.

STEPMOTHER: No, leave them be! My eyes are too sensitive for the morning light.

CINDERELLA: Yes, Madam.

STEPMOTHER: Give me my breakfast.

SFX: CLINKING OF PLATES ON A TRAY.

STEPMOTHER: What is this? You call this tea. It is as weak as water. Here, take it back.

SFX: CUP FALLS TO THE FLOOR, GLASS BREAKING.

STEPMOTHER: Now, look what you've done, you clumsy girl.

CINDERELLA: It slipped from my hand.

STEPMOTHER: A fine piece of crystal ruined.

CINDERELLA: I can mend it.

STEPMOTHER: Don't be foolish. We have no use for broken glass. You will need to work twice as hard to replace its value.

CINDERELLA: I will clean it up right away.

STEPMOTHER: I've been looking over the household accounts. We are in a sad, sad state. You have no idea the strain I'm under, trying to give my daughters the life they deserve. We must reign in all unnecessary spending. I will be doing an inspection of the larder this morning. I don't want to find anything missing.

CINDERELLA: No, Madam.

STEPMOTHER: And I don't want to hear any more of you giving food to beggars. We will never be able to maintain ourselves if we give everything away to the undeserving.

CINDERELLA: Madam, if I may. You promised that I could have a few coins for my work.

STEPMOTHER: Impudent girl. Did I not just say we were almost in the poor house?

CINDERELLA: Yes, but I don't understand where all the money has gone. My father had a great fortune.

STEPMOTHER: You couldn't possibly understand how complicated it is to run a house. Be grateful that I let you stay here.

CINDERELLA: But this was my father's house.

STEPMOTHER: But he left it to me. Your incessant chatter has given me a headache. Here take this. It is a list of your duties for the day.

CINDERELLA: It's very long.

STEPMOTHER: Then you had best get started.

NARRATOR: Cinderella picked up the tiny shards of glass and put them in her apron pocket.

CINDERELLA: *(To herself.)* Oh well, no sense in crying over what is broken. *(She hums as she cleans.)*

STEPMOTHER: And stop that infernal humming.

CINDERELLA: I find that it makes my chores easier to bear.

STEPMOTHER: Well, it's not easy on my nerves. Do you know what is?

CINDERELLA: No, Madam.

STEPMOTHER: Peace and quiet.

CINDERELLA: Yes, Madam.

NARRATOR: So Cinderella carried on with her chores, making sure to hum quietly, unaware of what was happening only a bird's wing away....

SCENE 5

THE PALACE—THE KING'S CHAMBER

PRINCE: I will not do it.

KING: Yes, you will. It is your duty.

PRINCE: A ball, what a ridiculous idea. How am I to choose a wife after only one dance?

KING: Either you will choose a wife or I will choose one for you.

PRINCE: But all the girls at court are appalling. They are vain and flighty and only care for me because I am a Prince. How am I to know if the woman truly loves me for who I am?

KING: One does not marry for love—one marries for the Kingdom.

PRINCE: I don't see why I have to marry at all.

KING: You are a prince, and it is your obligation to carry on the royal line.

PRINCE: But there is still so much I have not done. I want to travel, study faraway lands, learn the ways of other people.

KING: There is nothing out there that you cannot learn within these walls. I have given you the best tutors and the finest books.

PRINCE: But how can I rule the people if I do not know them?

KING: Who put that foolish notion in your head?

PRINCE: The tutors and the books.

KING: Oh, such insolence. No one knows the burden I carry.

PRINCE: You make me aware of it every day, Father.

KING: You will do as you are commanded.

PRINCE: You may command me to go to the ball but I will marry whomever I choose. And until that time I will do as I please.

KING: You have not been dismissed!

SFX: DOOR SLAMS.

KING: Infuriating boy. When will he learn to take his responsibilities seriously? It is only through me that this Kingdom is all that it is today. I shall die without a grandson and all my work will be for nothing. Messenger! Messenger, come here!

MESSENGER: Yes, your highness.

KING: Send out a royal decree—a ball is to be held in three days' time. Invitations must be delivered to every eligible young lady in the land.

MESSENGER: Yes, your highness.

KING: We must assemble a host of ladies of such beauty and charm that the Prince will have no excuse not to find a wife among them.

MESSENGER: Yes, your highness.

KING: If even one girl is overlooked, I will know. I will have your hide and feed it to the turtles.

MESSENGER: Yes, your highness.

SFX: MUSIC BRIDGE.

SCENE 6**CINDERELLA'S HOUSE—THE VESTIBULE**

SFX: RING OF ANTIQUE DOOR BELL.

CINDERELLA: Will these bells ever cease?

MESSENGER: Good morning, Mademoiselle. I come with a message from the King.

CINDERELLA: The King!

MESSENGER: In honour of his son Prince Henry, a ball will be held in three days' time. All eligible young ladies of gentle birth are commanded to attend.

CINDERELLA: A ball!

STEPMOTHER: Let me see that.

SFX: RUSTLING OF PAPER AS THE STEPMOTHER GRABS THE INVITATION.

CINDERELLA: Madam, I did not hear you come down.

STEPMOTHER: Esme! Agatha! Come here at once.

SFX: THUMPING OF GIRLS RUNNING DOWN THE STAIRS.

ESME: Ouch! Get out of my way!

AGATHA: You stepped on my toe!

ESME: Maybe if your feet weren't so big.

AGATHA: Maybe if you could see past your crooked nose.

STEPMOTHER: Girls, remember, you are young ladies of grace and refinement.

ESME: I'm the oldest, she should let me go first.

AGATHA: That's right. Age before beauty.

ESME: Why you little—*(She pinches Agatha.)*

AGATHA: Ow! Mama, she just pinched me!

ESME: You deserved it!

STEPMOTHER: Girls! I called you here for a reason.

ESME: Yes, Mama, what is it?

AGATHA: Who is he?

STEPMOTHER: A messenger from the King. He comes with an invitation to a ball.

MESSENGER: It has come time for the Prince to take a wife.

ESME: A wife!

AGATHA: I've always wanted to marry a prince.

ESME: Imagine me, Princess Esme.

AGATHA: Better yet, Princess Agatha.

ESME: I will need a new dress.

AGATHA: And a necklace. And a tiara.

ESME: And satin slippers. Don't forget those. Especially now that Agatha's feet have grown two sizes.

AGATHA: Oh, can we, Mama? May we get new gowns?

STEPMOTHER: Of course, my darlings.

ESME: We will go to Renée's. He has the finest dresses.

AGATHA: I know just the colour.

MESSANGER: And you, mademoiselle? I have it noted that there are three young ladies in this house.

CINDERELLA: Me?

ESME: Her?

MESSANGER: The King has ordered me to find every eligible young lady in the land.

STEPMOTHER: Tell the King that all the worthy daughters of my house will attend.

MESSANGER: Because if I miss one the King will have my hide and—

STEPMOTHER: (*Overlapping with messenger.*) Yes, yes, of course.

SFX: DOOR SLAMS.

STEPMOTHER: Annoying little creature.

AGATHA: But Mama, surely you don't mean for Cinderella to go. Look at her.

ESME: She's filthy. She will bring us nothing but shame.

AGATHA: Yes, what about our reputation?

CINDERELLA: He did say all eligible young ladies of gentle birth.

STEPMOTHER: Do you think you are worthy?

CINDERELLA: My father was a gentleman.

STEPMOTHER: Hmm. I am in a generous mood today. You may go.

ESME/AGATHA: What?

CINDERELLA: Oh, thank you, Stepmother. I mean, Madam.

STEPMOTHER: On one condition; that you complete all your chores and that you find a suitable dress for the ball. For now, you will attend to Esme and Agatha.

MUSIC: BRIDGE TAKING US TO—

SCENE 7
RENÉE'S DRESS SHOP

SFX: TINKLING OF SHOP BELL.

ESME: I will wear green.

AGATHA: Do you think red would be too much?

ESME: Well, with your figure you have to be careful.

CINDERELLA: I have always liked blue.

AGATHA: Mama has given you no money for a gown.

CINDERELLA: I have a few coins. Perhaps if I found an old dress I could refashion it. All I need are beads and some trim.

ESME: You could never wear blue, not with your sallow skin and hair like straw. Why even bother? The Prince will never notice you.

AGATHA: Besides, Mama says you need to finish all your chores. Oooo, look at this fine silk.

ESME: With this colour for an underskirt. Here, Cinderella, hold this.

RENÉE: Ladies, ladies. Welcome. Welcome to Renée's. Always a pleasure to see such youth, such beauty. Except for you. You need some powder, some rouge, and your hair... Oh never mind, it would be too impossible. Back to you, Mes Cheries. What can I do for you?

ESME: We need new dresses.

AGATHA: For the ball.

RENÉE: Mais, oui, oui. It is all anyone is talking about. I have just the gowns for you.

SFX: SHOP BELL RINGS.

RENÉE: You, old woman, what do you want?

OLD WOMAN: Only a scrap of cloth to patch my cloak. The wind is bitter and runs right through it.

RENÉE: I have nothing for you. Be gone.

ESME: Such filth.

AGATHA: And the smell.

CINDERELLA: (*Whispering to attract the old woman's attention.*) Old woman. Old woman. Here, take this piece of trim. Is it large enough to mend the hole?

OLD WOMAN: But you may need it.

CINDERELLA: You are more in need than I. Here, take it.

OLD WOMAN: Thank you, child.

CINDERELLA: Now, go, before they throw you out.

SFX: SHOP BELL RINGS.

ESME: How can you stand to be near that ragged creature?

AGATHA: Mama says to never give money to beggars, they will only come back for more.

ESME: What is she going to do when we tell her?

CINDERELLA: Oh no, please don't tell her. She was only a poor old woman who came looking for food.

AGATHA: Did you give her food too?

ESME: Mama will certainly not like that.

AGATHA: She will not let her go to the ball now. We must tell Mama right away.

SCENE 8

CINDERELLA'S HOUSE—THE PARLOUR

SFX: TICKING OF A GRANDFATHER CLOCK BECOMING LOUDER
ENDING IN AN OMINOUS CHIME.

STEPMOTHER: I am very disappointed in you, Cinderella.

CINDERELLA: Please, let me explain—

STEPMOTHER: Agatha tells me that you have been giving away food to beggars.

CINDERELLA: It was only a few scraps.

STEPMOTHER: Is it your food to give away?

CINDERELLA: No, Madam.

STEPMOTHER: Did you ask my permission?

CINDERELLA: No, Madam.

STEPMOTHER: Did we not have a discussion this morning about this very subject?

CINDERELLA: Yes, Madam.

STEPMOTHER: This family would be in ruin if not for my skillful management. You have a duty to this house.

CINDERELLA: Do we not have a duty to others less fortunate?

STEPMOTHER: Silence! How dare you talk back to me after all that I have sacrificed? You have left me no choice. If you disobey me again, you will be out on the street. It is only due to the memory of your dear departed father that I permit you to live beneath my roof. That, and my great kindness. Do not test my good will.

CINDERELLA: Yes, Madam. I mean no, Madam.

STEPMOTHER: And the state of this house is appalling. You have been lax in your duties.

CINDERELLA: I have scrubbed the floors, aired the rooms, polished the silver—

STEPMOTHER: But the walls. The walls are filthy. And the curtains, so dusty. I have added these chores to your list.

CINDERELLA: This list is without end. I will have no time to make a dress.

STEPMOTHER: Oh, what a pity. I'm sure a clever girl like you will find a way.

NARRATOR: As the day of the ball drew near, Cinderella worked tirelessly, cleaning the house from top to bottom. Her hands were red and raw and her knees sore, but she worked diligently so that she would have time to make a dress. If only she could have one delivered.

SCENE 9

CINDERELLA'S HOUSE—THE STEPSISTERS' BEDROOM

CINDERELLA: Esme! Agatha! Your dresses have arrived.

ESME: It's about time. I was worried they wouldn't get here before the ball.

CINDERELLA: There's still one day left.

AGATHA: Here, give the boxes to me. We don't want your filthy hands all over everything.

ESME: Give them to me.

AGATHA: You don't have to snatch them from me.

ESME: Mine is the one on top.

AGATHA: No, that's mine.

SFX: BOXES OPENING, TISSUE PAPER RUSTLING.

AGATHA: Isn't it absolutely gorgeous.

ESME: Yes, but not as pretty as mine.

CINDERELLA: They are both so lovely.

ESME: It's such a relief to have this new gown. I don't know how I ever wore that old blue dress. Agatha, why did you let me go out in that hideous rag?

AGATHA: I thought the blue matched your eyes.

ESME: My eyes are green, silly. That dress isn't even fit for the trash.
Here Cinderella, you take it and put it in the dustbin.

CINDERELLA: Why, this dress is perfectly fine.

ESME: That's because you have no taste. Am I right, Agatha?

AGATHA: If you knew anything, Cinderella, you would see that dress is from last season. Our gowns from Renée's are ten times better.

CINDERELLA: All it needs is a few beads, and the sleeves let out, the waist taken in—

ESME: I don't care what you do with it; just get it out of my sight.

AGATHA: Come on let's try on our dresses.

CINDERELLA: (*To herself.*) If Esme doesn't want the dress, then I can use it. There is just enough time to alter it. I'll go to the market this evening and find some trimmings.

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By Diane Vanden Hoven

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